



# Analyzing the Communication, Informatics and Statistics Agency's Social Media Strategy in Preventing Hoax at Wajo Regency

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**Abstract.** Improper social media use can potentially result in hoaxes, misleading information engineered mainly to distract the real information. The present study aims to describe the social media strategies applied by the Wajo Regional Agency of Communication, Informatics, and Statistics for preventing hoaxes. To this end, the qualitative descriptive approach was applied. The data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and social media documentation. This study found that the agency's strategies included (1) monitoring of social media, (2) immediate clarification on hoaxes, and (3) publishing information regarding the dangers of hoaxes.

**Keywords:** Social Media · Hoax · Agency of Communication · Informatics and Statistics

## 1 Introduction

The rapid advancement of information and communication technology in recent years has significantly changed daily human habits. One of the fruitages of this advancement is the internet, allowing humans to obtain information far more easily. 73.7% of the Indonesian population are internet users, and they spend around 8 h 36 min every day accessing the internet [1]. This shows that Indonesian people see the internet as a new daily need, in which most of them use the internet to access social media. Social media is an effective and efficient means to deliver information to others and exchange information globally in a relatively short time. The survey conducted by We Are Social shows that 68.9% of the Indonesian population, equal to approximately 191 million people, are active social media users. Indonesian people spend 3 h 17 min a day accessing social media. Instagram and Facebook are social media preferred by Indonesian people. Indonesian people access Instagram and Facebook 16 h and 15 h per month. This shows that social media are popular among Indonesian people.

The information distribution and social media use grow along with the technology advancement, affecting various life aspects in this digital era. The swiftness of accessing and accepting information may be helpful in supporting people's daily activity, especially when the information is useful for them [2]. A high number of social media users in

Indonesia can bring both positive and negative impacts. Inappropriate social media use, as shown recently, results in incorrect and misleading information, commonly known as hoaxes.

Hoax is likely to exist on the internet and social media. It becomes a serious problem amid the Indonesian people's high enthusiasm for using social media. Stopping the hoax spread is still becoming a difficult challenge, as the number of hoaxes on various platforms in Indonesia kept increasing in recent years. The data compiled by Masyarakat Anti-Fitnah Indonesia (Mafindo) shows that there was 1221 hoax in 2019 and 2298 hoax in 2020 [3]. The report published by the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Informatics shows that 5156 hoaxes were spread between August 2018–31 March 2020, and most of which is related to politics, government, and health [4].

Hoax issues have become a national problem leading to disunity, political instability, and security problems that potentially hinder national development. The survey conducted by Masyarakat Telematika (Mastel) in 2019 reveals that 34.60% of their respondents receive hoaxes every day and 14.70% of them receive more than one hoax every day. Social media was also found to be the most frequent media used to spread hoaxes (87.50%), indicating that social media is the most popular channel to spread hoaxes in Indonesia [5]. This should be unsurprising, considering that the internet is far faster than other media (e.g., TV, radio, print media, etc.) in spreading the information [6]. Mastel's 2019 survey also showed that most hoaxes are related to socio-political issues (93.20%), Ethnicity, Race, and Religion (76.20%), and the government (61.70%). Indonesian people see that hoax harms the unity and hinder the country's development.

Hoax in Indonesia stems from complex issues. In addition to people's poor digital literacy, hoax also comes from political polarization, lack of trust in government and press media, and the increased role of citizen journalism amid lack of knowledge of journalism ethics. Hoax is intentionally made by irresponsible individuals. Its widespread, according to 54.3% respondents of Mastel 2019 survey, is because the hoax is used to drive public opinion, including the black campaign. 5.84% of survey respondents argue that some people use hoaxes for business purposes. In other words, people in that study believe that 60% of hoax spreading aims to drive public opinion.

The hoax spread in Indonesia's big cities is inseparable from an increased number of internet users in this country. A survey conducted by the Indonesian Internet Service Providers Association in 2020 revealed that South Sulawesi province has the highest number of internet users in East Indonesia, with 5,750,314 users [7]. This considerable number, along with the increased hoax spread, may threaten the South Sulawesi citizen. SUBDIT V Cyber Crime of the South Sulawesi Regional Police Department has handled 382 cases related to hoax, hate speech, negative content, and defamation in social media between 2011 and 2019 [8].

The prevention of hoaxes in Indonesia should begin from the bottom-most governmental layer, namely the regional government. Effective prevention at the regional level is likely to minimize the hoax spread in Indonesia. The regional government, especially Wajo Regency, should play an active role in preventing hoax spread. In the Wajo Regency, 13 hoax cases were reported between August 2021 and February 2022.

One of the hoaxes stated that Parigi Village heads died due to the Covid-19 vaccine. Responding to the issue, the spokesperson of the Wajo Regional Covid-19 Task Force

stated that such information cannot be confirmed yet. In this regard, the Regional Health Agency states that following the diagnosis done by Lamaddukkeleng General Hospital, the village head suffered from pleural effusion, i.e., an accumulation of fluid in lungs, and no Adverse events following immunization (AEFI) was found. In other words, she did not die due to the vaccine [9]. The health agency works together with the agency of communication, informatics, and Statistics to clarify and announce that it was a hoax.

The Agency of Communication, Informatics, and Statistics is directly related to hoax issues. One of the policy directions stated in this agency's 2019–2024 strategic plan is improving quality public information spread. A hoax case described earlier is among the agency's efforts to provide people in Wajo Regency with quality information and protect them from hoaxes. The present study mainly aims to describe the strategy applied by the Wajo Regional Agency of Communication, Informatics, and Statistics in social media to prevent hoax spread.

## 2 Methods

This study applied a qualitative approach, an approach aiming to holistically understand the phenomenon experienced by the subject of the study (e.g., behavior, perception, and motivation, among others) by describing it through words and using various scientific methods [10]. More specifically, this study aimed to objectively scrutinize the social media use by Wajo Regional Agency of Communication, Informatics, and Statistics social media use in preventing hoax spread.

This descriptive study systematically depicts and presents the condition of the study object, i.e., how the Wajo Regional Agency of Communication, Informatics, and Statistics formulate social media use strategy to prevent hoax spread. As a qualitative descriptive study heavily relies on the researchers' perspective, the result of this study could not be generalized.

Informants in this study were employees of the Public Relations Department of Wajo Regional Agency of Communication, Informatics, and Statistics who understand the organizational working plan. The data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Direct observation was carried out to find out the social media use strategy applied by the study object to prevent hoax information. Meanwhile, interviews were conducted with the PR Department. The documents relevant to the focus of this study were collected through the agency's social media account, among other sources. This study collected primary and secondary data. While the former was collected through observation, interview, and documentation, the latter was obtained from the literature review.

The data validity was tested using triangulation and member check. As Sugiyono (2013:273) states, triangulation aims to check the data from different sources, methods, and times. There are three types of triangulation: source, technique, and time triangulation methods. The source triangulation was done to test the data's credibility by checking several sources. Technique triangulation tested the credibility of the data from the same source using a different technique. For instance, the data obtained from interviews were checked through observation, documentation, or questionnaires. Time triangulation involves different times or situations to check the data's credibility. Member check

refers to how the researcher checks the data to the informant. This process aims to see how data suits the informants' data [11].

### 3 Result and Discussion

#### 3.1 Social Media Strategy

Safko and Brake (2009:675), in their book "The Social Media Bible," mention four pillars of social media strategy, described as follows [12]:

1. Communication

Communication refers to interaction, message, thought, and opinion exchange with other individuals. Each organization possesses various contents to communicate with audiences. An interactive communication may bring different impacts from traditional communication techniques. Through social media, audiences can respond directly to the presented content. It is virtually related to how to build interaction with audiences. Although the conversation cannot be controlled, it is believed that audiences can be influenced.

2. Collaboration

Collaboration refers to a combination of several social media tools. Some websites providing collaborative functions are Wikipedia, eBay, and gather, among others. The collaboration combines three types of social media: blog, microblog, and social network. One of the characteristics of social media lies in its potential to support collaboration with many parties. This collaborative potential was hardly found one decade ago. The collaborative function allows an organization to gather collective wisdom from the audience, which may be helpful for organizational growth.

3. Education

Social media functions to educate and train social media actors to support business success. The available social media equipment allows an easier, more dynamic educational process, thanks to social media's mass, fast, anonymous, and heterogeneous characteristics. Social media can serve as a means of education to audiences. This skill and knowledge-sharing process may also improve customer engagement. Using the various social media features, an organization's presence can be more meaningful. They can present different practical solutions to audiences' problems. Organizations should be able to take advantage of various social media platforms, such as Facebook, Path, Youtube, and Pinterest, among other media.

4. Entertainment

Social media is interesting due to its entertaining content, among others. In this regard, Organizations can optimize entertainment to develop closer relationships with the audience. Entertainment has become one of the new commodities offered by social media, although wrapped in non-commercial covers.

#### 3.2 Hoax

Hoax as dangerous information as it misleads individuals' perceptions. Hoax spread can considerably influence people. It is dangerous, as a hoax mainly aims to deceive the

readers or listener into believing the misleading information [13]. It spreads like a virus. Many hoaxes have drawn public attention in social media or even made them unintentionally spread the information. Many hoaxes spread to the public, making it difficult for common people to distinguish misleading information from true ones. Individuals can easily believe in hoaxes when they are in line with their opinion, belief, or attitude. The hoax spread is not substantially associated with time and spaces [14].

### 3.3 The Agency's Strategy

Hoax spreading in Indonesia has caused several social impacts. As of 10 March 2022, 2141 covid-19-related hoaxes are reported [15]. Increasingly rapid information spread due to ICT development makes it as if the presence of IT accelerates hoax spreading. Social media is an effective and efficient means to deliver and exchange information with others in a timely manner. On the other hand, it also helps irresponsible people spread hoaxes in no time. In this regard, the public should be able to filter the information they receive and ensure whether or not the information is misleading. Social media helps the Agency of Communication, Information, and Statistics to accelerate information to the public and respond to the public feedback on the government's policies.

The Wajo Regional Agency of Communication, Informatics, and Statistics currently has two active social media accounts to spread the information: Instagram and Facebook. Safko and Brake mention four pillars that support social media. In this study, these four pillars were associated with the study objects social media strategy.

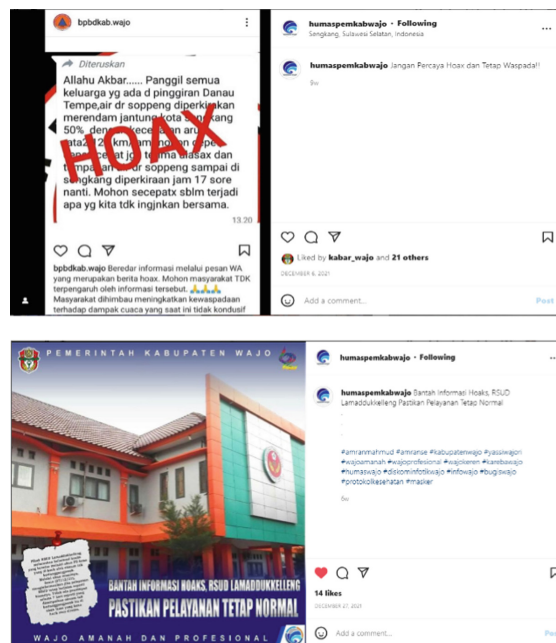
1. Communication  
Communication and social media are inseparable, as the latter's features of comments, likes, and direct message (as found in Instagram and Facebook) allow individuals to respond to the information posted by the Agency of Communication, Informatics, and Statistics.
2. Collaboration  
Regarding collaboration, a range of social media allows their users to connect one social media account to others. The agency benefits from this inter social media account collaboration as it facilitates easier information distribution to the people of Wajo Regency.
3. Education  
Concerning Education, social media's mass, speedy, anonymous, and heterogeneous properties make them effective means of public education. In this regard, the Agency of Communication, Information, and Statistics utilizes social media as a means of education by delivering helpful information.
4. Entertainment  
Entertainment feature is among social media's advantages that draws public attention, as it offers entertaining contents for users. In this regard, the Agency of Communication, Information, and Statistics posted entertaining, easy-to-understand phrases in its posts.

The Agency of Communication, Information, and Statistics of Wajo Regency applied several strategies to handle hoaxes spreading, consisting of a number of methods and

stages to achieve the goal. Hoax information spread in social media should be prevented to protect the public from hoaxes and to deliver quality information to them.

First, the agency's monitoring strategy on all social media does not in line with Safko and Brake's four pillars. According to the Head of the public relations department, the monitoring process is done through collaboration with other agencies and institutions, such as police, online media, and district office employees, to report non-credible information or hoax. Communication and education also play a pivotal role in social media monitoring strategies. In this regard, the Communication, Informatics, and Statistics Agency and its partners have been continuously monitoring the information distribution in social media. It is necessary to be more open and transparent to make the public more careful in accepting the information.

Second, the agency's immediate clarification on hoax is in line with Safko and Brake's three pillars, namely communication, collaboration, and education. As a part of the regional government, the Communication, Informatics, and Statistics Agency is responsible for providing the public with quality information and clarifying misleading information. The clarification and education can be exercised optimally by collaborating the agency's social media accounts. According to the head of the public relations department, all district offices' social media accounts are involved to clarify hoaxes (Fig. 1).



**Fig. 1.** Clarification on Hoaxes. (Source: Instagram Agency of Communication, Informatics and Statistics)

Third, regarding the information distribution, the agency used image and video posts about the dangers of hoax, employing four pillars of social media strategy (i.e., communication, collaboration, education, and entertainment). Persuasive posts or anti-hoax campaigns usually apply the four pillars. Communication is one of the efforts to develop interactions with the public through comments, likes, or direct messages on each post. The Communication, Informatics, and Statistics Agency collaborates with every social media account to spread persuasive posts and anti-hoax campaigns. Education on the dangers of hoax spread and good social media practices can improve public knowledge. Meanwhile, entertainment using light words and easy-to-understand captions can also be helpful to improve the public knowledge.

## 4 Conclusion

The agency's monitoring strategy on all social media does not in line with Safko and Brake's four pillars. Communication and education also play a pivotal role in social media monitoring strategies. Second, the agency's immediate clarification on hoax is in line with Safko and Brake's three pillars, namely communication, collaboration, and education. Third, regarding the information distribution, the agency used image and video posts about the dangers of hoax, employing four pillars of social media strategy (i.e., communication, collaboration, education, and entertainment).

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Concept and Research Question: Luthfi Fadlullah Ramadhan, Andi Alimuddin Unde and Muh.Akbar.

Conducting Research and Report Writing: Luthfi Fadlullah Ramadhan.

Reviewer Draft: Andi Alimuddin Unde and Muh.Akbar.

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