



# Public Relations Practitioner's Adaptation in the Big Data Era in Makassar City

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**Abstract.** This study aims to identify public relations practitioners' adaptation in the big data era in Makassar City. It used the descriptive qualitative method. Data were collected from in-depth interviews, observation, documentation, and relevant journals and media information. Data were analyzed based on the Miles and Huberman covering data reduction, presentation, and concluding. The validity of the data used data triangulation techniques. The results showed that the public relations practitioner's adaptation in the big data era in Makassar City covered the stages of increasing knowledge, following trends, and building creativity in the digital era. This study was based on the Adaptive Structuration Theory which examines the adaptation of new information technology in an organization based on the company structure. Through this adaptation process, public relations practitioners are expected to be able to survive in the big data era.

**Keywords:** Public Relations Practitioner's Adaptation · Adaptive Structuration Theory · Big Data Era

## 1 Introduction

The development of information technology 4.0 has both positive and negative impacts. The development of information technology makes work more effective and efficient. This development is unavoidable in various aspects of life, including the public relations (PR) profession, where conventional public relations activities start to shift toward digital [1]. This phenomenon occurs as one of the components of the 4.0 industrial revolution is big data.

Public relations are important in a company as a communication liaison between the company and the public where there is a strategic communication process that then forms a mutually beneficial relationship between the organization and the public [2]. Public relations run a word-of-mouth campaign and transfer what the company wants to convey verbally into a press release which is distributed to the media. The strength of their words and their attractive appearance in communicating are beneficial for their organization or company. The detailed development of the conventional PR into digital PR can be seen below.

First, dependence on mass media, conventional PR is very dependent on media relations in carrying out all PR activities. While for digital PR, the relationship is less dependent on mass media publicity. Digital PR has the freedom to publish news or information through their communication media [3].

The second is control communication. Conventional PR controls communication with verbal communication models and memo messages that are one-way, namely carrying out the interests and orders of the owners of the company. The third is from sharing to managing content. Content is one of the important things and assets in social media for public relations in managing company publications. The world has experienced rapid changes with the presence of the internet and it leads the world of public relations on a new evolutionary wave. The evolution of public relations enters a new and more complex phase in which public relations should have new and more adaptive skills in this technological era [3].

Big data technology has developed rapidly since early 2018. This technology can think like humans and learn to make decisions in which its size varies greatly from structured, semi-structured, to unstructured [4]. The application of big data in companies can help monitor all data management for better decision-making based on reliable data and facts. Big data is large amounts of data that are collected, stored, processed, and analyzed to produce useful information as the basis for decision or policy-making [5].

Based on previous study data, the Smart Indonesia Initiative Association (APIC) has analyzed public relations work which will slowly be replaced by digital technologies like big data [6] (Table 1).

Industrial revolution 4.0 has disrupted various fields including public relations. This disruption leads to a fear of work automation. Finally, PR activities in the industrial era 4.0 produces a new profession. Therefore, in the big data era, PR has to be able to adapt to the situation enabling them to transform as information technology develops continuously.

**Table 1.** PR's jobs that will be replaced

PR's jobs	Percentage
Face-to-face Communication	19%
News Clipping	45%
Photo and Video Works	24%
Press release distribution	33%
Content Automation and Dissemination via social media	34%
Media Relations & Stakeholders	37%
Sosial Listening Media Monitoring	45%

Source: Smart Indonesia Initiative Association (APIC, 2019) [6]

## 2 Methods

This study used a qualitative descriptive method. A qualitative descriptive method produces descriptive data in the form of words, pictures, and books [7]. The data were based on interview scripts, notes, memos, and other official documents. It can be said that this method produces written descriptive and qualitative data with information from people who generate hypotheses from field studies.

This study tries to get accurate and complete data by going directly to the field to see the facts. Then, data were analyzed to obtain appropriate results based on the objectives of the study. This study aims to analyze the public relations practitioner's adaptation in the big data era in Makassar City.

This study involved some public relations practitioners from State-Owned Enterprises (BUMN), private companies, and government companies in Makassar City namely Pertamina Regional Sulawesi, PT. Pelabuhan Indonesia IV (Persero), PT. Vale Indonesia, Tbk, Kalla Group, and the Communication, Informatics, Statistics and Encoding Office of South Sulawesi Province.

### 2.1 Source of Data

The main data were obtained from eligible informants. This study involved some informants who could support the completeness of the required data. Data were obtained from two sources, primary and secondary data sources.

#### 2.1.1 Primary Data

Primary data were collected directly from the main source. In this study, researchers obtained primary data or information directly from the source through observation, interviews, and documentation.

#### 2.1.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data were in the form of literature obtained from library studies by looking for theoretical references through reading relevant books, journals, and previous studies, as well as from the internet. Secondary data function to strengthen and support the primary data source.

The determination of informants was based on purposive sampling with the following predetermined criteria:

1. Work in Public Relations and understand the functions and duties of public relations
2. Understand the development of digital information technology in the 4.0 era and understand big data technology (Table 2).

**Table 2.** List of Informant

No.	Informants	Occupation
1.	Muhammad Kharji Muhajir	<i>Corporate Communications Senior Officer of Kalla Group</i>
2.	Fahril Muhammad	<i>Corporate Communications Officer of Kalla Group</i>
3.	Taufiq Kurniawan	<i>Senior Supervisor Communications And Relations at Pertamina Mor VII</i>
4.	Wiwiek Dwi Endah	<i>Public Relations at PT. Pelabuhan Indonesia IV (Persero)</i>
5.	Suwarny Dammar	<i>Senior Coordinator Communication at PT. Vale Indonesia, Tbk</i>
6.	Amson Padolo	Head of the Department of Communication, Informatics, Statistics and Encoding, South Sulawesi Province

## 2.2 Data Collection Techniques

Data collection techniques are the most important stage in research as the main purpose of research is to obtain data [8].

### 2.2.1 Observation

Observation is collecting data required in the study. Researchers observed the Public Relations practitioners' adaptation of State-owned enterprises, private companies, and government companies in Makassar City.

### 2.2.2 In-Depth Interview

An in-depth interview is a way of collecting data or information by directly meeting the informant in order to get complete and in-depth data. This interview was conducted intensively [9]. The interview was conducted with the eligible informant sources who know well the issues being studied.

### 2.2.3 Documentation Material

Documents are records of events that have passed in the form of writings, pictures, or monumental works of someone. In this research, the researcher used documentation materials to obtain the required information and data.

## 2.3 Data Analysis Techniques

This study used descriptive qualitative data analysis with data processing techniques and analysis carried out simultaneously. The method was based on Miles and Huberman's model [10].

### **2.3.1 Data Collection**

Data collection aims to obtain information in the form of sentences from in-depth interviews, documentation, and observation activities. The data obtained were unstructured, so they had to be analyzed to become structured.

### **2.3.2 Data Reduction**

The data were processed by selecting, focusing, simplifying, categorizing, and transforming into organized data in order to draw a conclusion. The reduced data were the conclusions of data obtained through interviews with Public Relations practitioners in Makassar City, and the collection of data or facts obtained during the field observations.

### **2.3.3 Data Presentation**

Data presentation is a collection of information or data that is structured and provides the possibility of drawing conclusions and taking action. In presenting the data, the researcher organized the data by establishing or connecting one data group with another data group.

### **2.3.4 Drawing Conclusion and Verification**

The presented data require evidence that supports the data collection stage that has been carried out. This conclusion must then be tested or verified by briefly reviewing the field notes to obtain a more precise understanding to obtain trusted conclusions.

The conclusions in this study may be and may not be able to answer the formulation of the problem that has been determined. It is because the problems formulated in qualitative research are temporary and will develop after the implementation of the research. The conclusion in qualitative research is in the form of new findings that have not existed before.

## **3 Findings and Discussion**

### **3.1 Increase Knowledge**

One of the public relations practitioner's adaptations in Makassar City in the big data era was increasing knowledge by improving literacy on information about the digital era, learning the big data, and learning new things concerning PR jobs. It was done by participating in various types of training or competence regarding PR in the digital era in order to hone the practitioner's skills in the digital era.

Public Relations are not only required to provide information to the public about the company or provide a positive image of the company but also to survive by increasing knowledge and learning about new things. The adaptation was done by first learning about big data, its application, and data processes according to the needs of the company. In the past, PR focused on improving the company's image, but currently, PR is also required to be familiar with big data or other technologies. In other words, PR has to be digital literate.

The adaptation performed by PR practitioners based on the competence or education of public relations becomes one of the benchmarks that PR understands, knows, and wants to adapt to the rapidly growing industrial revolution of big data. Big data encourages practitioners to always improve their competence to survive in the digital era. They only have 2 choices, namely to adapt or die. To adapt or die means surviving by increasing self-competence or falling behind in the digital era.

The explanation above is one of the findings that is integrated with adaptive structuration theory [11]. This theory considers the idea that rules continuously provide procedures and limits for group behavior by implementing rules based on previous expectations. This is in line with the adaptive structuration theory which examines the existence of new information technology and one form of adaptation is increasing knowledge of public relations in order to compete in the big data era [12].

### 3.2 Following the Trend

Following the trend in public relations, practitioners' adaptation in the big data era is important. It is because the trend refers to a phenomenon that is popular for a certain period. But the trend that should be performed is ways of showing how they or the company survive and face big data. The trend is performed so that we can quickly connect with company consumers, start new businesses, and develop faster in a more positive direction without missing information and communication.

Based on the results of the study, the adaptation process has to be faster and follow the trends including how PR updates information, knowledge, and skills which is a challenge for PR in adapting in the big data era. Big data can analyze unstructured data, structured data, and company sentiment. Besides, some PR practitioners can form their team consisting of young people who can determine appropriate schemes easily and creatively to follow trends during fast communication. It is interesting to follow the creative channels in the digital era.

Public relations practitioners follow the trends on social media. They manage social media accounts, such as Tiktok, Instagram, and YouTube as an effective medium of information for social media users and company consumers. This becomes one strategy to keep the information about the company up to date so the public can get the latest information. Following a trend in social media requires interesting and creative content in which the message to be conveyed can reach the public without excessively presenting the content.

Social media accounts like Instagram provides information that follows trends to increase the number of followers and engagement or consumer interaction with companies through social media accounts. Besides creating interesting content, the design and way of conveying information have to be creative and easy for readers to understand.

The adaptation is in line with the adaptive structuration theory that one of the ways to survive is following the trend. This is done by public relations as a form of adaptation effort. The existence of new information technology requires a certain company to be able to compete in the big data era [11].

### 3.3 Building Creativity in the Digital Era

Based on the results of the field observation, building creativity in the digital era is expected to be an adaptation of public relations practitioners. PR has to be creative and open-minded and listen to input from friends and other practitioners regarding decision-making. Then the adaptation is in the form of building creativity in terms of content in presenting information to the public. Content means information available in electronic media or products. Content delivery can be done through various media such as the internet, television, audio CDs, or live events such as conferences and shows.

Building creativity in the digital era, particularly on social media by arranging creative content requires a good strategy in its implementation. Almost all companies or organizations have their social media now as their way of conveying messages to their consumers. One form of creativity in the digital era is content.

Interesting content is content that is not excessive and the message reaches the target. Creativity in the digital era is not only seen in terms of the uniqueness in conveying messages to the public, but also in the impact of the content including the social media insights, interactions, followers, and responsiveness of followers to the posted content.

This is in line with the findings of the study that building creativity in the digital era tends to be the same as the assumption of adaptive structuration theory that tests new information technology, namely big data by adapting through building creativity [13].

### 3.4 Adaptive Structural Theory

This study used adaptive structuration theory. This theory examines the adaptation of new information technology in an organization based on a structure in the company [14]. This study also discusses the adaptation process of public relations practitioners in the big data era, an era in which there are changes in PR works.

The adaptive structuration theory refers to the adaptation process carried out by practitioners regarding the existence of new technologies in their companies, namely the existence of big data [11]. The benefits of big data can determine company sentiment, provide decisions made by PR, and help PR practitioners get a database about the company's customers. This theory believes that adaptation is carried out to survive in the midst of rapidly developing digital transformation [15].

Based on the results of the study, public relations practitioners made three adaptations to the big data era, namely increasing knowledge, following trends, and building creativity. These adaptations were done by the public relations practitioners in Makassar City to survive which is in line with the adaptive structuration theory.

## 4 Conclusion

Based on the results above, indicates that the adaptation made by the public relations in Makassar City includes increasing knowledge, following trends, and building creativity in the digital era. These results are obtained from some public relations practitioners such as PT. Pertamina Regional Sulawesi, PT. Pelindo Regional 4, Kalla Group, PT. Vale Indonesia, Tbk and the Communication, Informatics, Statistics and Encoding Office of

South Sulawesi Province. This study uses an adaptive structuration method that examines the adaptation of new information technology based on the structure of the company. The public relations practitioners make adaptations to be able to survive in the big data era.

**Author's Contributions.** The researchers are fully involved in this study concerning the adaptation process of public relations practitioners, analyzing all forms of the process, and confirming all results in the adaptation process in the big data era. The practitioners cover Pertamina Regional Sulawesi, PT. Pelabuhan Indonesia IV (Persero), PT. Vale Indonesia, Tbk, Kalla Group and the Communication, Informatics, Statistics and Encoding Office of South Sulawesi Province. By confirming all findings and related sections in the adaptation process of public relations in the era of big data.

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