



# Dynamics of Digital Public Relations in Non-Government Organizations

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**Abstract.** Technological disruption has had an impact on the functions and activities of public relations in various organizations. The adoption of digital public relations does not only occur in commercial organizations but is also actively carried out by NGOs (non-governmental organizations such as ACT (Aksi Cepat Tanggap). The research will examine the development or dynamics of digital public relations at the NGO Aksi Cepat Tanggap (ACT). Then this research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods with in-depth interviews and documentation as data collection techniques. The result show that 1) Budding stage, ACT started to use email and websites to publish programs, but they were still considered too rigid, and communication was still dominated by e-mail; 2) Diversification stage, the use of the website has been growing, even ACT always updates the information every day on the website. In addition to the website, since 2013 ACT has also used social media Twitter and Facebook, to reach a wider audience; 3) Advancement stage, by following technological developments and the emergence of various social media platforms, ACT is increasingly aggressive in carrying out digital public relations by utilizing social media. Starting in 2016, ACT has utilized Instagram and Youtube by creating mini-series. The use of social media is considered effective because it can build strong engagement and various dialogues with the public. ACT is considered to have tried to adopt developments that occur in the digital world to support the success of digital public relations activities, their organization.

**Keywords:** digital public relations · non-Government · Organizations · public relations

## 1 Introduction

Day by day many aspects of life are increasingly becoming digital, many jobs can be done online using digital media and connected to the internet network. Data shows internet users in Indonesia in early 2021 increased by 15.5 percent to reach 202.6 million people [1].

The digital world not only changes the lifestyle and culture of human communication but also has an impact on changing the media world [2]. This impact will automatically have an impact on the PR profession. Previously, PR practitioners only needed to pay

attention and work with conventional media. Now, PR practitioners are encouraged to monitor all existing media such as Facebook, Instagram, Websites, online news portals, Twitter, and various other digital media. Migration and adoption of digital media in the PR world, PR practitioners.

must also be able to filter and sort information that comes in from various digital media for the sake of their company or brand image [3]. In addition to opportunities for relationship building, this largely unrestrained environment challenges the reputation and traditional role of public relations (PR) as a function of the span of boundaries between organizations and their publics [4].

The use of digital media that is connected to the internet network in PR activities is also called digital public relations, but there are several terminologies for this, such as cyber public relations and online public relations [5]. Currently, most organizations, both for-profit and non-profit, have begun to actively adopt digital public relations with extraordinary enthusiasm. One of the non-profit organizations or NGOs (non-government organizations) that is actively doing digital PR is the humanitarian agency ACT (Aksi Cepat Tanggap). In carrying out digital PR, ACT uses several communication channels such as websites, Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, and also Youtube. The ACT website is the landing page or the main media that is the main source of information between the organization and its public. ACT uses online media not only to maintain consistent communication with the public but also actively conducts crowdfunding to help solve social problems that exist both in Indonesia and internationally, such as Palestine. Therefore, digital PR activities are considered to be very helpful in the smooth running of crowdfunding. One of the elements needed in the smooth running of crowdfunding is the openness or transparency of information related to the disclosure of the implementation of the funds that have been collected. This transparency of information is a factor in the formation of public trust and is the basis for establishing long-term good relationships between organizations and their publics.

## 2 Literature Review

### **Digital public relations**

Before examining the definition and concept of digital public relations further, it is necessary to first understand what is meant by public relations itself. By definition, public relations are the interaction process creates public opinion as input that benefits both parties, and instils understanding, fosters motivation and public participation, aims to instil good will, trust in mutual understanding, and a good image of the public [6].

In other words, public relations are a specialized management function that helps build and maintain long-term relationships between an organization and its publics [7]. It also includes managing issues and helping management to be responsive to public opinion [8].

While digital public relations is a public relations process carried out in digital media, using new information technology [9]. In digital public relations, technology is the most important pillar of the media. The power and quality of technology determine the shape of the communication network. Technological advances every day influence

the simplification of communication. Huang et al. [10] also explains that digital public relations are the management of communication between organizations and their publics through internet applications (website, graphic, social media, games, video series and many others).

While Matt Haig [11] uses different terminology, namely E-PR, according to him, “e-PR refers to public relations activities on the internet. The “e” in e-PR is the same “e” that appears before letters and commerce to refer to the electronic medium of the internet. P is in general, more useful for thinking in different public contexts or audiences. R for relations. Building a relationship between your business and its audience is the key to success on the internet [12]. The definition explains that public relations practitioners in carrying out digital public relations activities are needed to understand communication patterns and the main components to persuade or persuade the public online or digitally. PR practitioners to be able to adapt and embrace various strategies in utilizing digital media to achieve organizational goals [13]. Alyaqoub and Adzrieman [14] argue that PR professionals should broaden their understanding of new technologies and their applications to view relational and social issues successfully rather than focusing solely on current practices.

There are three stages of development in digital public relations research, as follows:

1. Budding stage, at this early stage, digital public relations activities are still carried out simply. In general, at this stage in supporting digital public relations activities, organizations or public relations practices only use websites and email. Both tools are used for online communication media or bridges between organizations and their publics;
2. Diversification stage, at this stage digital public relations activities, have been further developed. No longer just relying on email and websites, but has started using social media platforms to communicate with the public. Even research at this stage has described the pattern of relationships and communication between organizations and their publics through social media. However, a more in-depth study at this stage is the analysis of websites as the main or official media used by an organization to support digital public relations activities.
3. Advancement stage, this third stage is a refinement of the previous stage, where at this stage the assessment related to the use of social media to support digital public relations activities is further sharpened. This is motivated by the massive use of social media by organizations, not even relying on only one type of social media platform, many organizations or practitioners combine or operate several official accounts on various social media. Among the social media that are often used by public relations practitioners are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Tiktok, Youtube, and also several podcast media [10].

### **NGO (Non-Governmental Organization)**

NGOs are also known as non-business entities, which are broadly defined as organizations other than for-profit purposes. However, NGOs exist for the public interest and often have social goals, to overcome social problems that exist in the community. While some of the NGOs provide traditionally charitable, educational, and religious services,

laws in many countries allow these organizations to provide almost all types of services on a not-for-profit basis [15].

Basically, an NGO is an organization that comes from the community to deal with fields such as social, environmental and economic. NGOs can also be financed by State agencies or Ministries, but the management is carried out independently and independently.

Responding to technological developments, especially communication and information, NGOs have also adopted these developments. One of them is by utilizing digital media to support the activities of public relations organizations. Of the several tools or digital media that are often used in digital public relations activities, social media is the dominant or favorite tool used. Three dimensions determine the success of NGOs using social media in disseminating organizational messages as follows: (1) Message volume, this dimension looks at how often NGOs deliver messages through social media; (2) Topics, this dimension is related to the consistency of topics delivered through social media. Whether the message or topic is being disseminated by the profile or image of the organization or not; (3) participants, this dimension is about the response of the intended target audience, how much response from the audience to the messages conveyed by NGOs through social media [16].

### 3 Methodology

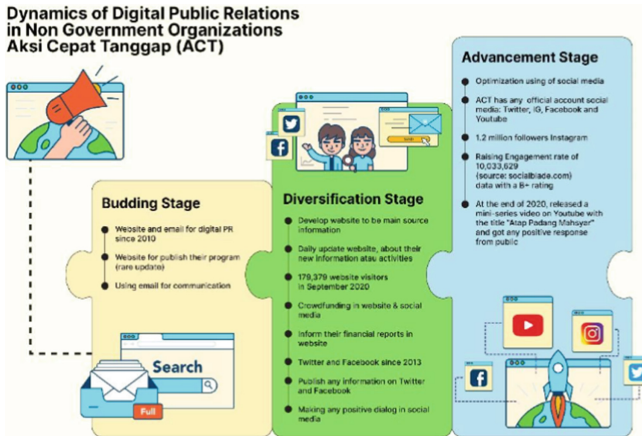
This study used the descriptive qualitative method. Creswell [17] also describes five types of qualitative research as follows; (1) phenomenological research; (2) grounded theory; (3) ethnography; (4) case studies; and (5) narrative research [18].

For the credibility and validity of research data, this study uses triangulation (a combination of observation, interviews and documentation. Korstjens and Moser [19] stated that one of the quality criteria for qualitative research is credibility. Then the elements in the credibility are prolonged engagement, triangulation, persistent observation and member check [19].

While the data analysis technique used in this research is descriptive analysis. The analysis is based on all the data collected, through various data collection techniques, namely observation and in-depth interviews with public relations practitioners from ACT, especially those who manage and develop the digital public relations activities of the ACT organization.

### 4 Result

Based on the research objectives that have been presented previously, which is to explain the dynamics of developments in NGO ACT's digital public relations activities. Before discussing the dynamics of digital public relations activities carried out by ACT, we will first describe a brief profile of ACT. ACT is a social and humanitarian foundation or institution that was established on April 21, 2005. At the beginning of its establishment, ACT carried out several programs such as emergency response, community empowerment, post-disaster recovery, as well as Qurban, Zakat, and Waqf. Not only that but ACT is also known as an institution that cares about social issues that exist abroad, with global

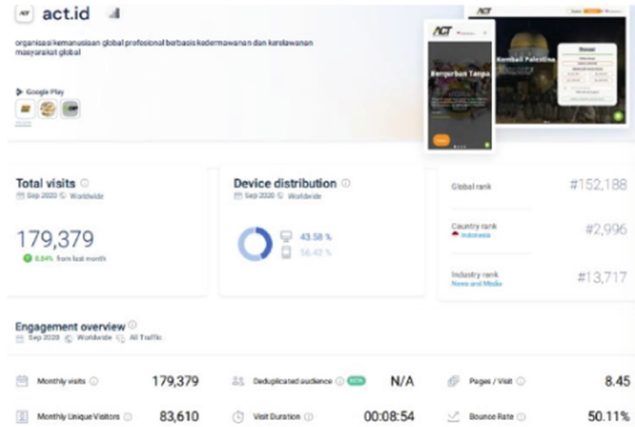


**Fig. 1.** The Result of Dynamics of Digital Public Relations in Non-Government Organizations  
Source: researcher owned

activities that have reached 22 countries in Southeast Asia, South Asia, Eastern Europe, and others.

With ACT's profile that continues to grow worldwide as described, it becomes the momentum and background for the importance of development or dynamics in digital public relations activities. Utilizing the website as well as social media will greatly help ACT to continue to exist and share important information with all its stakeholders. Adopting the three stages of digital public relations development presented by Huang et al. [10] namely 1) the budding stage, 2) the Diversification stage, and 3) the Advancement stage. So based on the results of in-depth interviews conducted with key informants, namely ACT public relations practitioners who are directly involved in handling their organization's digital public relations activities, the following research results were found;

1. Budding stage or early stage where the organization still uses email or website for simple communication media. Likewise, what happened to ACT, that in the early stages of the beginning of ACT's digital public relations activities, they used email and websites which started in 2010. At this stage, ACT PR only used the website (<https://act.id/home/id>) as a medium for publishing programs owned by their organization. However, it is not yet active or in other words, it is not as dynamic as it is now in 2021. Even the crew of journali'sts as well as donors and stakeholders, still often communicate via email or telephone to get more info related to ACT.
2. Diversification stage, at this stage, as stated by Huang 2017 that observations were made not only on the website but also on the use of social media. However, further observations will be made on the development of a website to support the organization's digital public relations activities, namely ACT. The following is an overview of data from the ACT website for 2020.



**Fig. 2.** Analysis of website ACT 2021

From Figure 1, it can be seen that the ACT website had 179,379 visitors in September 2020. This figure is quite high because from year to year until now ACT has been very active in using the website as the main channel of information for their organization for all stakeholders, be it the media, donors, or others. If you look at the website itself, it can be seen that ACT is actively uploading information in the ACT News column, through that column or sidebar ACT always provides the latest information regarding the activities carried out by their organization. This information is also a support to increase the trust of donors. In addition to the website, ACT has also used social media, namely Twitter and Facebook since 2013. These social media are used by ACT to continue to build engagement with the public and to continue to publish their programs. PR practitioners or ACT social media managers are also often involved in positive dialogue with the public on Twitter. Then at this stage, ACT also uses social media and website for crowdfunding. Their website that strongly supports crowdfunding, because through the website, ACT can share the latest activities consistently as a communication of responsibility for the funds that have been collected. One of the most important and major uses of the website by ACT is to submit financial reports.

3. Advancement stage, at this stage the observation is more focused on the use and development of social media because until 2021 many social media platforms can support the success of an organization's digital public relations activities. This also happened to ACT, starting in 2016 ACT has also used Instagram and Youtube to support its organization's digital public relations activities. Until now, ACT already has 1.2 million Instagram followers with an engagement rate of 10,033,629 seen from socialblade.com data with a B + rating, this rating is a good value for social media management like Instagram. Then at the end of 2020, ACT released a mini-series video on Youtube with the title "Atap Padang Mahsyar". In this series, ACT invites the public to continue to give alms so that in the afterlife, they will receive shelter in Padang Mahsyar. This series received an extraordinary response from the public, based on the narrative of the informant stating that in addition to the enthusiasm of

the community to watch the video, several platforms such as umma and BBS TV were interested in rebroadcasting the series on their TV.

## 5 Discussion and Conclusion

From the description of the findings above, it can be concluded that the dynamics of the development of digital public relations at NGO ACT began in 2010 until now. If the stages are described based on the developmental stage categories proposed by Huang 2017 are as follows: 1) Budding stage, ACT started to use email and websites to publish programs, but they were still considered too rigid, and communication was still dominated by e-mail; 2) Diversification stage, at this stage the use of the website has been growing, even ACT always updates the information every day on the website. This consistent communication will be able to provide a good image or opinion in the eyes of the public. In addition to the website, since 2013 ACT has also used social media Twitter and Facebook, to reach a wider audience; 3) Advancement stage, by following technological developments and the emergence of various social media platforms, ACT is increasingly aggressive in carrying out digital public relations by utilizing social media, because it can build dialogue and engagement with the audience more intensely. Starting in 2016, ACT has utilized Instagram and Youtube by creating mini-series to support its organization's digital public relations activities. The use of social media is considered effective because it can build strong engagement and various dialogues with the public. So, if you look at the dynamics, ACT is considered to have tried to adopt developments that occur in the digital world to support the success of digital public relations activities, their organization. Based on the findings from ACT's digital public relations, it is hoped that other organizations, both commercial and NGOs, can adopt technological developments and implement digital public relations to support the achievement of organizational goals, one of which is public relations goals, whether it is building long-term good relationships, building opinions, image and also maintain public trust.

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