

Digital public relations strategy of the Yogyakarta city government through Instagram in building a responsive government image in 2024

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Abstract

The development of digital communication technology has encouraged governments to adapt in disseminating information and building effective relationships with the public. Social media, particularly Instagram, has become a strategic platform in Digital Public Relations practices to construct a responsive, open, and participatory government image. The Yogyakarta City Government, through its official account @pemkotjogja, actively utilizes social media to establish interactive and transparent communication with the public. The growing use of social media among citizens presents challenges for the government in managing information, maintaining content consistency, and fostering active public engagement. This study examines how the Yogyakarta City Government implements its Digital Public Relations strategy through Instagram in building a responsive government image. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method, with data collected through in-depth interviews involving the public relations staff, @pemkotjogja's content management team, and two active followers of the account, complemented by observation and documentation of uploaded content. Data validity was tested using triangulation of techniques and sources, while analysis followed Miles and Huberman's interactive model through data reduction, presentation, and conclusion drawing. The results show that the Yogyakarta City Government applies a multi-platform, collaborative, and technology-adaptive strategy. Instagram serves as the main medium for disseminating information, facilitating two-way interaction, and strengthening a transparent and responsive government image. Quick responses to public inquiries, a human-centered communication style, and consistent information delivery have proven effective in building trust and closeness between the government and the public.

Keywords

Public relations, Instagram, Government communication, Responsive governance, Government image

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Introduction

The rapid advancement of digital communication technology has transformed how governments interact with citizens. Social media platforms, particularly Instagram, have become essential tools for public institutions to share information, promote transparency, and foster public engagement. According to Nasrullah [1], this platform focuses on the existence of users, facilitating activities and collaboration among them, while also serving as a medium that strengthens relationships between users through online networks. In Indonesia, the rise of social media usage has reached more than 139 million active users in January 2024, equivalent to 49.9 percent of the total population [2], which has encouraged various government bodies to adopt digital strategies in their public relations work. As governments move towards digital platforms, the role of public relations becomes more central. Public relations involves communication efforts aimed at building mutual understanding and shaping a positive image to maintain harmonious relationships between an organisation and its public, both internally and externally [3]. This transformation highlights a major issue faced by local governments today, which concerns how to effectively use digital media not only as an information channel but also as a means to build a responsive and trustworthy image in the eyes of the public.

Previous research in the field of Digital public relations has explored how public institutions use social media to communicate with citizens. Studies by Rahmata, Nurjanah & Nurnisya, and Putri & Khoiruddin [4][6] found that government communication through Instagram can improve engagement and transparency when executed strategically. While these studies highlight the importance of planning, managing, and engaging with audiences, most of them focus on the functional aspects of digital communication, such as content management and engagement metrics, without examining how such strategies influence the responsiveness of government institutions as perceived by citizens.

This gap reveals an area that has received limited attention: the integration of digital responsiveness into public relations strategies. In other words, previous studies have not yet explored how governments can use social media not only to inform but to listen, respond, and act quickly on public feedback as part of building a responsive image. The potential of platforms like Instagram to create real-time, interactive, and emotional connections between the government and the public remains underutilized in many local administrations.

Despite the increasing use of Instagram by local governments in Indonesia, limited studies clearly explain how Digital Public Relations strategies contribute to building a responsive government image. Most previous research focuses on engagement metrics and content management rather than examining responsiveness as a strategic communication construct. Therefore, the core problem addressed in this study is how the Yogyakarta City Government implements its Digital Public Relations strategy through Instagram to build a responsive government image in 2024.

This study is positioned within the field of Communication Studies, particularly in Digital Public Relations and Government Communication. It contributes by conceptualizing responsiveness as a strategic communication dimension that shapes government image formation in digital platforms, rather than merely as an indicator of service performance.

The objective of this research is to identify and analyze how the Yogyakarta City Government implements Digital Public Relations strategies through Instagram to realize a responsive government image. The study employs a qualitative descriptive approach, using interviews and documentation to provide a comprehensive understanding of the strategies applied. The findings are expected to contribute both theoretically and practically, enhancing the body of knowledge on Digital Public Relations and offering insights for other local governments seeking to optimize social media for effective, responsive public communication.

Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive research method to explore how the Yogyakarta City Government implements Digital Public Relations strategies through Instagram in shaping a responsive government image. This method is used to study the natural conditions of objects, where researchers are the key instruments, data collection techniques are carried out using triangulation (combination), data analysis is inductive, and qualitative research results emphasize meaning rather than generalization [7]. The qualitative descriptive approach was chosen because it aligns with the research objective of obtaining an in-depth understanding of communication patterns, strategies, and social interactions that cannot be quantified but can be systematically and contextually described [7]. It also reflects a shift in perspective towards understanding reality and social phenomena as dynamic constructs that are best interpreted through contextual observation and interpretation [7].

This study uses primary and secondary data to examine the Digital Public Relations strategy of the Yogyakarta City Government on Instagram. Primary data were gathered through in-depth interviews with informants selected using a purposive sampling technique. The criteria included: (1) public relations staff directly involved in digital communication strategy, (2) Instagram content management team members responsible for content planning and publishing, and (3) active followers who frequently interact through comments or direct messages. A total of four informants were interviewed, and each interview lasted approximately 45–60 minutes. Observation was conducted using non-participant observation by systematically reviewing posts, captions, comments, and engagement patterns on @pemkotjogja from January to December 2024. Data analysis followed the interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994) in Qommarudin & Sa'diyah [8], comprising three key components such as data reduction, data display, and drawing or verifying conclusions. Using this systematic approach to integrate both primary and secondary data provides a strong

empirical basis for analyzing digital communication management and public perception of government responsiveness on Instagram.

Results and discussion

Results

This study reveals how the Yogyakarta City Government uses Instagram for Digital Public Relations to project an image of responsiveness and trustworthiness. Data were obtained through in-depth interviews, observations, and documentation of the official Instagram account, @pemkotjogja.

The findings show that the Yogyakarta City Government, through the Department of Communication, Informatics, and Encryption (Diskominfosan), has implemented a multi-platform communication strategy involving the city's website Warta Jogja, and social media platforms, including Instagram, Facebook, Twitter (X), and YouTube, aligning with the strategies of other Indonesian local governments that employ various digital platforms to engage the public [9]. This multi-platform approach ensures that information reaches different audience segments quickly and effectively, strengthening the government's image as transparent and adaptive to technological change. This structure illustrates the government's commitment to inclusive communication, where each platform plays a distinct yet complementary role in maintaining message coherence, expanding public reach, and facilitating real-time feedback across digital touchpoints [10]. The consistency among these platforms shows that responsiveness involves more than just speed; it also involves message alignment and coordination.

On Instagram, the government prioritizes responsiveness and interactivity. Each post is designed to inform and encourage dialogue between the government and the public. Studies of Indonesian local governments have shown that Instagram can function effectively as a medium for public information, two-way communication, and as part of a public relations strategy [11]. Posts such as the "Ayo Pilah Sampah, Jaga Kota Yogyakarta!" campaign demonstrate proactive communication that promotes public participation and environmental awareness in Figure 1. The clear, empathetic, and human-centered communication tone has successfully built engagement and reduced the perceived distance between the government and citizens.

Another key finding emphasizes the importance of collaboration and innovation in the Yogyakarta City Government's Digital Public Relations strategy. This collaboration is realized through various public campaigns and events, such as the "Festival Kreatif Yogyakarta," in which the government partners with local communities, universities, creative industries, and private institutions. This approach embodies the local *Gandeng Gendong* principle, a philosophy of collective cooperation emphasizing working hand in hand with all stakeholders to achieve shared public goals. Such collaborative communication broadens the reach of messages and enhances the legitimacy and authenticity of government initiatives in the eyes of the public. This demonstrates that

responsiveness can be expressed not only through digital immediacy but also through structural inclusion by inviting diverse participants into the communication process [12].



Figure 1. Instagram post from @pemkotjogja promoting the campaign “Ayo Pilah Sampah, Jaga Kota Yogyakarta!” (Research documentation, 2025)

In addition to collaboration, technological innovation plays a crucial role in optimizing the government’s communication effectiveness. The use of social media by Indonesian public institutions has been analyzed in research as part of public information strategy and modern public service delivery via digital platforms [13]. The government utilizes artificial intelligence (AI) not for content generation, but rather to evaluate narrative quality, language clarity, and public sentiment toward posted content. This data-driven approach allows the communication team to evaluate audience engagement and adjust messages to align with public expectations. Combining human creativity with AI-assisted analysis ensures that government communication remains empathetic and evidence-based, reflecting a modern, adaptive, citizen-oriented approach to digital governance.

This study also found that a structured editorial team plans and executes the Instagram content strategy. Content is categorized as informative, service-oriented, or image-building. Using accessible language and local identity markers, such as the greeting “Sobat YK,” the team successfully projects a friendly and relatable public image. This structured categorization reveals a deliberate effort to balance rational (informational) and emotional (relational) communication. It shows that the government is responsive on multiple levels, providing facts, facilitating services, and building trust simultaneously.

Finally, followers perceive @pemkotjogja as a responsive and credible information source. Respondents acknowledged the government’s quick responses via comments or direct messages, as well as the account’s verified status, as indicators of reliability.

Through consistent, interactive, and visually engaging communication, the Yogyakarta City Government has built a positive and responsive public image, fostering trust and participation among its citizens.

Discussion

This study aims to explain how the Yogyakarta City Government implements Digital Public Relations strategies through Instagram to build a responsive government image. Based on the findings, responsiveness is constructed through four main elements such as multi-platform integration, interactive communication, collaborative engagement, and technology adaptation.

In the framework of Cyber Public Relations, Instagram functions not merely as an information dissemination tool but as a relational communication space. As argued by Mutiah et al. [14], Cyber Public Relations emphasizes the strategic use of digital platforms to establish interactive, real-time, and relationship-oriented communication between institutions and their publics. This concept highlights the shift from one-way information delivery to dialogic engagement in digital environments. The Yogyakarta City Government's active use of Instagram's interactive features, such as comments, direct messages, stories, and polls, demonstrates this dialogic approach. Timely responses to public inquiries strengthen the perception of accessibility and accountability, which are essential components of a responsive government image.

A distinctive finding of this research is the use of the greeting 'Sobat YK' as a marker of communicative identity. Its consistent use reflects a deliberate, human-centred communication strategy aimed at reducing the psychological distance between the government and its citizens. In the context of cyber public relations, relational language plays a crucial role in fostering emotional closeness and engagement. By addressing followers as 'Sobat YK', the government positions itself as a communicative partner within the digital public sphere rather than a distant authority. This linguistic strategy fosters familiarity, inclusivity and a sense of belonging among followers, thereby contributing to image formation.

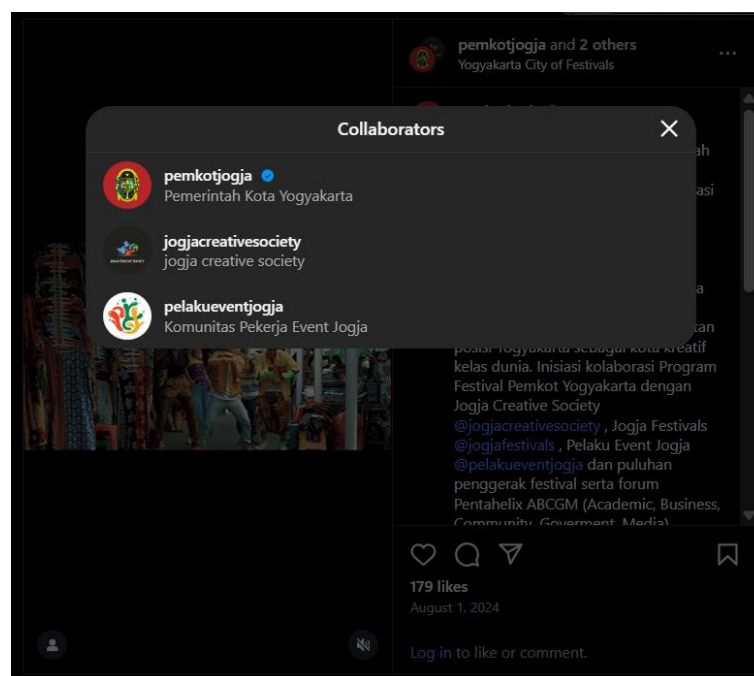
Based on Image Theory by Kazt on Soemirat & Ardianto [15], the communication strategies used by @pemkotjogja effectively support the three dimensions of perception, cognition, and attitude. Transparent and consistent information shapes positive public perception, while factual and service-oriented content enhances the public's cognitive understanding of government performance. Empathetic, personalised language, such as 'Sobat YK', encourages favourable public attitudes. Through this integrated process, responsiveness is demonstrated not only through speed, but also communicated symbolically through tone, language and interaction style.

Furthermore, the multi-platform integration strategy strengthens institutional coherence in digital communication. By aligning content across Instagram, Facebook, Twitter (X), YouTube and the official website, the government can ensure consistent

messaging and reach a broad audience. This strategic alignment builds credibility and signals organisational professionalism in managing digital communication.

Collaboration and innovation also emerge as central components of responsiveness. Implementing the *Gandeng Gendong* principle involves communities, universities, and the private sector in communication initiatives, reflecting participatory governance. This inclusive approach enhances legitimacy and demonstrates structural responsiveness. Furthermore, using artificial intelligence (AI) to evaluate narrative clarity and public sentiment demonstrates technological adaptability, ensuring communication remains relevant and data driven.

Through human-centered communication, visual storytelling, and timely responses, the @pemkotjogja account successfully establishes closeness and trust with the public, particularly with younger audiences at [Figure 2](#).



[Figure 2](#). Collaborative post between @pemkotjogja and @jogjacreativesociety during the Yogyakarta Creative Festival 2024 (Research documentation, 2025)

Overall, the Digital Public Relations strategy implemented by the Yogyakarta City Government aligns with the Cyber Public Relations perspective described, where digital platforms function as interactive spaces for dialogue, relationship building, and institutional image construction. Through transparency, relational language, collaboration, and technological innovation, the government successfully positions itself as a responsive and citizen-oriented public institution in the digital era.

Conclusion

This study concludes that the Yogyakarta City Government has effectively implemented a Digital Public Relations strategy on Instagram to strengthen its responsive and trustworthy public image. The government's multi-platform communication approach,

supported by transparency, collaboration, and innovation, demonstrates its adaptability to the dynamics of digital communication. Instagram serves as more than just an information channel; it is also an interactive platform that facilitates dialogue, encourages participation, and reinforces the perception of government accountability. The research findings show that responsiveness, consistency, and empathy are key to shaping a positive government image. The incorporation of artificial intelligence (AI) in content evaluation and the *Gandeng Gendong* principle (collaborative partnership) further illustrate the city government's commitment to participatory and innovative governance. Overall, the strategic use of Instagram within the Digital Public Relations framework establishes the Yogyakarta City Government as a model of transparent, adaptive, citizen-oriented local digital governance.

Future communication strategies should strengthen audience engagement by incorporating interactive digital features and data-driven insights. The government should develop a formal standard operating procedure (SOP) for social media management to ensure consistent messaging and continuity across departments. Periodically evaluating public sentiment and content effectiveness with digital analytics and AI tools will enhance message accuracy and responsiveness. For further research, comparative studies across regional governments or longitudinal analyses could provide a deeper understanding of how Digital Public Relations contributes to sustained government credibility and citizen trust in the evolving digital landscape.

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