

Public Relations Strategies in Managing Instagram Content: A Case Study of East Jakarta City Government

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Abstract

This study examines public relations strategies in managing Instagram content within a local government context, focusing on the North Jakarta City Government. As social media increasingly becomes a primary channel for public communication, government institutions are required to balance openness, interactivity, and speed with accountability and regulatory compliance. Using a qualitative case study approach, this research explores how public relations practices are implemented across the stages of content planning, production, distribution, interaction, and evaluation on Instagram. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with public relations personnel, systematic observation of Instagram content, and analysis of institutional documents related to digital communication management. The findings reveal that Instagram is strategically positioned as an official communication interface rather than a promotional platform. Communication practices are characterized by liquid communication, where information flows dynamically through posts, stories, comments, and shares, enabling real-time interaction with the public. To manage the risks associated with such fluid communication, the government applies mechanisms of liquid communication capture, including documentation, verification, and compliance with legal and administrative requirements. The study concludes that effective government public relations on Instagram relies on integrating digital communication practices with governance principles such as accountability, integrity, and evaluation. This integration supports institutional legitimacy and strengthens public trust in government communication within the digital public sphere.

Keywords: Accountability, Governance, Instagram, Liquid Communication, Public Relations

1. Introduction

Local governments increasingly rely on social media to translate public service mandates into everyday, accessible information for citizens, especially in fast-moving urban contexts where policy updates and service announcements must compete with entertainment-driven feeds [1]. Among platforms, Instagram has become strategically important because its visual and short-form affordances allow government organizations to package services, regulations, events, and behavioral appeals into persuasive micro-narratives [2]. In digital government scholarship, government social media is no longer treated as a “supplement” to websites, but as a core interface for citizen participation, trust formation, and the perceived responsiveness of public institutions. This shift implies that public relations (PR) units inside government must treat content management as a strategic function that connects institutional legitimacy

with measurable interaction patterns such as comments, shares, saves, and direct messages [3]. Recent studies show that engagement in government contexts is multidimensional and shaped by both “structure” one-way vs two-way interaction and “content” informational, relational, participatory, or mobilizing messages. During public issues and disruptions, citizens also use government social media as a cue for credibility and risk interpretation, which places additional demands on clarity, consistency, and audience-centered framing [4]. Research on crisis and emergency communication demonstrates that Instagram messaging is often judged by its ability to combine threat information with efficacy cues and concrete actions that people can follow. Because Instagram is highly visual, the design of posts (layout, readability, iconography, and short captions) becomes inseparable from PR outcomes such as comprehension and compliance.

In public relations theory development, scholars increasingly call for platform-sensitive PR concepts because older models do not fully explain algorithmic visibility, interaction norms, and the hybrid nature of user-generated feedback [5]. Systematic reviews in PR also emphasize that social media research has grown rapidly but still needs stronger integration between theory, operational measures of engagement, and actionable strategy frameworks [6]. Within government PR (GPR), the literature stresses that public sector communication operates under unique constraints political scrutiny, legal mandates, and expectations of fairness which makes message design and response protocols especially consequential [7]. Accordingly, the strategic value of government Instagram content lies not only in broadcasting information but in sustaining organization public relationships under continuous public evaluation [8].

Empirical studies in local government communication further indicate that citizen engagement tends to increase when posts are timely, locally relevant, and provide recognizable cues that encourage interaction, including prompts, service links, and participatory invitations [9]. Dialogic communication research during the first wave of COVID-19 shows that two-way cues (replying, addressing concerns, and acknowledging publics) help strengthen perceived responsiveness, even when institutions face high uncertainty [10]. At the same time, public trust can be undermined by inconsistent messages across channels or by “contradictions” between what government communicates and what citizens experience in service delivery [11]. Therefore, PR strategy for a government Instagram account must be evaluated as an integrated system: planning, production, publishing rhythm, interaction management, and feedback-based adjustment.

Evidence from multiple contexts also suggests that policy environments and citizens’ attitudes toward regulation shape social media use patterns and online trust, which means platform strategies must be culturally and institutionally grounded rather than copied from corporate templates [12]. Digital participation studies show that perceived information quality, privacy concerns, and perceived trust in government social media can influence citizens’ willingness to participate in government digital initiatives. In Indonesia, survey-based findings on social media usage and protective behavior during COVID-19 illustrate that online information exposure and perceived credibility are associated with public behavioral responses, reinforcing the need for accountable content governance [13]. In parallel, public sector PR scholarship highlights that managerial competencies and institutional support matter because strategic communication requires cross-unit coordination, analytics literacy, and consistent policy interpretation [14].

Despite this progress, a practical gap remains in explaining how local government PR teams operationalize “strategy” on Instagram as a day-to-day content workflow, including editorial planning, content pillars, visual standardization, tone management, and response governance. Many studies prioritize platform

outcomes (likes, comments, engagement rates) but give less detail about internal strategic reasoning why certain themes are selected, how issues are prioritized, and how institutional constraints shape content decisions. This limitation is particularly important for metropolitan administrations, where service complexity and high citizen expectations demand sustained relationship-building, not only episodic communication. A case-study approach is therefore suitable to unpack how strategies are enacted in context and how Instagram content functions as a public interface for legitimacy, responsiveness, and service orientation.

East Jakarta (Jakarta Timur) provides a relevant setting because local government Instagram communication must address dense urban services (administration, public order, disaster readiness, mobility, and community programs) while managing high-volume public feedback in real time. In such settings, PR strategies must balance informational transparency with relational engagement while maintaining institutional tone and compliance with public-sector communication rules. Prior Indonesian PR research also indicates that strategic image maintenance in government institutions depends on coherent message framing and environmental scanning, which is increasingly performed through digital channels. Building on these insights, this study examines how the East Jakarta City Government applies PR strategies to manage Instagram content, focusing on content planning, message design, interaction management, and evaluative practices that shape citizen engagement and perceived responsiveness.

2. Research Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research approach with a descriptive case study design to examine public relations strategies in managing Instagram content within a local government context [15]. Qualitative methods are appropriate for exploring organizational practices, strategic decision-making processes, and meaning-making activities that cannot be adequately captured through numerical indicators alone [16]. A case study design is employed to allow an in-depth and contextualized understanding of how public relations strategies are conceptualized and implemented in a real institutional setting. Case studies are particularly suitable for public sector communication research because they enable researchers to analyze complex interactions between organizational structures, communication goals, and public responses within bounded systems [17].

Research Site

The case selected for this study is the East Jakarta City Government, with a specific focus on the Public Relations unit of the Communication, Informatics, and Statistics Office (Diskominfo) as the administrator of the official Instagram account @kotajakartatimur. This case was chosen based on three considerations. First, the account represents an official digital communication channel used to disseminate public information, government programs, and service announcements to urban citizens. Second, East Jakarta is one of the largest administrative cities in Indonesia, characterized by high population density and diverse public service needs, making social media communication strategically significant. Third, the account demonstrates consistent activity and audience engagement, allowing systematic observation of content strategies and interaction patterns.

Data Collection and Data Analysis Techniques

In-depth interviews were conducted using semi-structured interview guides to explore strategic considerations behind content planning, message framing, interaction management, and evaluation practices. Semi-structured interviews provide flexibility to probe emerging themes while maintaining

consistency across informants. Observation was carried out systematically by documenting content characteristics, posting frequency, thematic patterns, visual styles, and audience responses over a defined observation period. Observational data enable researchers to capture actual communication practices rather than solely relying on self-reported accounts. Document analysis was used to contextualize interview and observational findings by examining formal policies and internal communication frameworks that shape social media practices. This method helps reveal institutional constraints and strategic rationales embedded in organizational texts. Data analysis followed a thematic analysis procedure involving several iterative stages [18]. First, interview transcripts, observational notes, and documents were read repeatedly to achieve familiarization with the data. Second, initial codes were generated to identify recurring patterns related to content planning, production, distribution, interaction, and evaluation. Third, codes were grouped into broader themes representing key public relations strategies employed in managing Instagram content.

Thematic analysis allows systematic interpretation of qualitative data while remaining flexible enough to capture context-specific meanings and strategic nuances. Analytical rigor was maintained through continuous comparison across data sources and reflective memo writing during the coding process. To ensure trustworthiness, this study applied four criteria commonly used in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. Credibility was enhanced through data triangulation and member checking with selected informants. Transferability was addressed by providing rich contextual descriptions of the research setting and communication practices. Dependability and confirmability were supported through transparent documentation of data collection and analysis procedures.

3. Results and Discussion Data

Results

The official Instagram account of the North Jakarta City Government functions as a formal digital communication channel managed by the local public relations unit under the Communication, Informatics, and Statistics Office. The account clearly identifies itself as a government organization, as indicated by the verified badge, institutional logo, and profile description that explicitly states its status as the official public relations account of the North Jakarta City Administration.

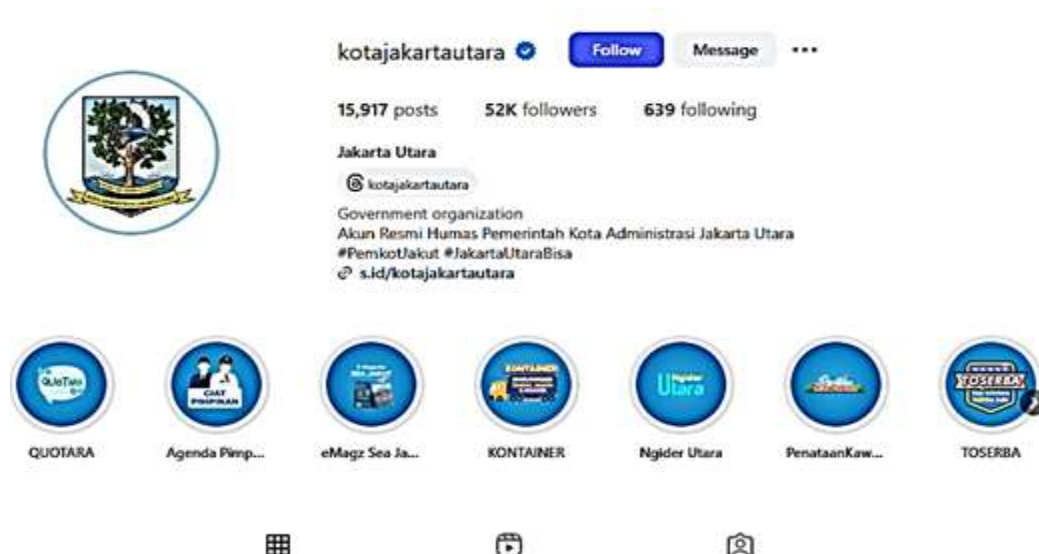


Figure 1. Profile appearance of the official Instagram account of North Jakarta City Government

Figure 1 shows that the account is professionally managed, with a high volume of published posts, a substantial number of followers, and a structured visual identity. The profile displays the city emblem as the profile picture, reinforcing institutional legitimacy and official authority. The username and account name are consistent with the city government's formal identity, making the account easily recognizable as an official public information source. The bio section provides concise institutional information, including the designation as a government organization, references to public service hashtags, and a centralized service link directing users to official digital platforms. This configuration indicates that the Instagram account is positioned not merely as a social media presence, but as an entry point to broader public service and information systems.

A prominent feature observed is the systematic use of Instagram Highlights, which categorize content into thematic sections such as leadership agendas, public programs, electronic magazines, urban initiatives, and community services. These highlights function as a curated archive, allowing users to access key information without scrolling through the entire feed. The existence of these categories reflects deliberate content planning and audience-oriented information structuring. From a visual standpoint, the feed emphasizes consistent color schemes, graphic styles, and iconography that align with government communication norms. The dominance of informational visuals, program documentation, and public service announcements indicates that the primary orientation of the account is informational and service-driven rather than promotional. Overall, the account's appearance demonstrates that Instagram is treated as a formal communication interface supporting transparency, accessibility, and institutional credibility. Field findings reveal that content planning is closely aligned with the official agenda of the city government. Content topics are determined through internal coordination and are primarily derived from scheduled governmental activities, policy dissemination needs, and public service priorities. This approach ensures that Instagram content remains consistent with institutional objectives and avoids contradictions with official regulations or leadership statements. Planning is conducted through thematic grouping, where posts are organized around recurring categories such as public services, leadership activities, community programs, and national commemorations. This thematic consistency helps audiences anticipate the type of information shared and strengthens message coherence across time. The production of Instagram content prioritizes clarity, accuracy, and visual accessibility. Posts are presented in the form of photographs, infographics, short videos, and carousel posts, depending on the complexity of the information conveyed. Infographics are particularly used to simplify administrative procedures and policy explanations, making them more understandable for the general public.

Language use in captions is predominantly formal and informative, reflecting the institutional character of government communication. However, the tone is adapted to remain concise and readable within the constraints of social media consumption patterns. Hashtags and location tags are consistently applied to increase content reach while maintaining relevance to the local context. Observations indicate that content distribution follows a relatively consistent posting rhythm. Posts are published at strategic times to maximize visibility, while Instagram Stories are used for real-time documentation of activities, brief announcements, and immediate public updates. Highlights are then used to preserve selected Stories for long-term access.

This layered distribution strategy enables information to circulate dynamically while also maintaining an organized archive of key messages. The use of multiple Instagram features suggests an adaptive approach to platform affordances. Interaction with audiences occurs primarily through comment sections and direct messages. While not all comments receive responses, questions related to public services and clarifications

are generally addressed in an informative and courteous manner. This practice reflects an attempt to maintain two-way communication while operating within bureaucratic and resource constraints. The Instagram account thus functions as a semi-interactive public space, where citizen feedback is visible and acknowledged, even if response intensity remains selective.

Discussion

This study demonstrates that the management of Instagram content by the North Jakarta City Government follows a cyclical public relations strategy that integrates dynamic digital communication with institutional governance requirements. The revised model presented in Figure 2 conceptualizes this strategy as a four-stage process: social media utilization, liquid communication, liquid communication capture, and governance of liquid communication. This structure reflects how public relations practices operate in a government context where openness and interactivity must coexist with accountability and regulatory compliance. The first stage of the strategy positions Instagram as the primary operational platform for public communication. Field findings confirm that Instagram is used to disseminate official information, document leadership activities, promote public services, and communicate government programs in visually accessible formats. Features such as posts, Stories, comments, and shares function as entry points through which government messages reach the public.

At this stage, public relations activities emphasize visibility, accessibility, and immediacy. Instagram allows the government to maintain a continuous presence in citizens' daily media consumption. However, the findings also show that social media use is not driven by engagement maximization alone. Content publication remains guided by institutional identity and public service orientation, reinforcing the role of Instagram as an official communication interface rather than an informal promotional tool. The second stage, liquid communication, captures the dynamic nature of Instagram-based interaction. Communication at this level is characterized by real-time updates, audience engagement, visual storytelling, and rapid circulation of information. Posts generate comments, shares, and reactions that reshape how messages are interpreted and disseminated beyond their original context.

Empirical evidence from the study shows that this liquidity enables the government to respond quickly to public information needs and emerging issues. Instagram Stories are particularly important in facilitating real-time documentation and short-lived updates that signal responsiveness and presence. However, liquid communication also introduces uncertainty. Messages may be fragmented, recontextualized, or permanently stored by users, reducing government control over interpretation. This condition explains why liquid communication, while necessary for contemporary public relations, cannot operate without institutional safeguards.

The third stage, liquid communication capture, represents the transition from open digital interaction to structured institutional control. At this stage, public relations units selectively document, archive, and manage Instagram content to meet administrative and legal requirements. The findings indicate that not all content is treated equally; posts related to policies, official statements, and public services are more likely to be documented as formal records. This capture process reflects the dual responsibility of government public relations. On one hand, PR officers must operate within the fast-paced logic of social media. On the other hand, they must ensure that communication outputs can be traced, verified, and justified within bureaucratic systems. Liquid communication capture therefore functions as a stabilizing mechanism that transforms ephemeral digital interactions into accountable institutional communication.

The final stage, governance of liquid communication, forms the core of government public relations strategy. Governance principles such as accountability, integrity, compliance, data retention, and evaluation shape how Instagram content is approved, published, and reviewed. Unlike corporate social media strategies that prioritize engagement metrics, government strategies are constrained by regulatory frameworks and public service ethics. The findings show that governance requirements influence response behavior and interaction intensity. Public comments are monitored, but responses are selective, especially when issues require cross-department verification or involve sensitive policy matters. This selective engagement should not be interpreted as disengagement, but as a reflection of institutional responsibility and risk management. Evaluation at this stage focuses on content effectiveness in conveying information accurately and maintaining institutional credibility, rather than solely increasing likes or follower counts.



Figure 2. Public Relations strategy for managing Instagram content in North Jakarta City Government

Figure 2 illustrates that these four stages form a continuous cycle, not a linear sequence. Governance outcomes inform future content planning, while captured communication shapes subsequent social media use. This cyclical model highlights that managing Instagram content in a government context is an ongoing strategic process rather than a series of isolated actions. Overall, the revised model confirms that the North Jakarta City Government adopts a hybrid public relations strategy. Instagram is leveraged as a liquid, interactive medium, yet firmly embedded within governance structures that ensure accountability and legitimacy. This integration allows the government to maintain transparency and responsiveness while preserving institutional control over public communication. The discussion suggests that effective government public relations on Instagram depends less on increasing interaction volume and more on strengthening coordination between digital communication practices and governance mechanisms. The strategy outlined in Figure 2 provides a practical framework for understanding how local governments can navigate the tension between openness and control in digital public communication.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the management of Instagram content by the North Jakarta City Government represents a structured public relations strategy that integrates digital communication practices with institutional governance. Instagram is not merely utilized as a dissemination tool, but functions as an official public communication interface that supports transparency, information accessibility, and the delivery of public services. Through systematic content planning, visual presentation, and platform feature utilization, the government is able to maintain a consistent institutional presence within the digital public sphere. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that public relations practices operate within a liquid communication environment, characterized by dynamic interaction, rapid information circulation, and continuous audience engagement. While this environment enables real-time communication and enhances perceived government responsiveness, it also introduces uncertainty and risks related to message interpretation and permanence. To address these challenges, the public relations unit implements a process of liquid communication capture, ensuring that key content is documented, verified, and aligned with administrative and legal requirements. Finally, the study highlights that effective government public relations on Instagram depends on the integration of communication fluidity with governance principles such as accountability, integrity, compliance, and evaluation. The proposed strategy model emphasizes that interaction and engagement must be balanced with institutional responsibility. This research contributes to public relations scholarship by offering an empirically grounded framework for understanding how local governments manage social media strategically, and it provides practical insights for public sector communication practitioners seeking to strengthen digital governance and public trust in the era of social media.

5. Acknowledgement

The author would like to thank Dr. Veranus Sidharta for his assistance in completing this research article. Furthermore, the author would like to thank the informants who provided necessary information during the research process.

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