



## Communication Strategy of the Provincial Government of North Sumatra Through Instagram Accounts @pemprovsumut in Increasing the Positive Image of the Provincial Government of North Sumatra

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### ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to find out how the communication strategy implemented by the Provincial Government of North Sumatra in forming a positive image through Instagram social media @pemprovsumut and the obstacles encountered in carrying out this communication strategy. This study uses the constructivism paradigm with a qualitative descriptive approach. Data collection techniques were carried out through in-depth interviews, non-participatory observation, and document/library study collection. An important finding of this study is that the North Sumatra Province Communication and Information Service has carried out a communication strategy that includes (1) Establishing communicators, (2) Establishing targets, (3) Establishing work teams, (4) Establishing message delivery mechanisms, (5) Dissemination of communication media, and (6) preparation of an activity schedule (schedule). The six strategies are efforts to increase a positive image in society. However, the communication strategy implemented by the North Sumatra Province Communication and Information Service is still not effective enough to enhance a positive image. Some of the problems faced are budget constraints, professionalism and limited human resources, the function of the e-Government Service Division as manager of the @pemprovsumut Instagram admin which is not yet optimal, the competence of the leadership and members in understanding communication on social media is not yet good, and the lack of coordination and synergy between the e-Government Service Sector and the Public Information Management Sector in terms of providing up to date information.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Since its first appearance in public, the field of Communication Studies has grown rapidly. Communication studies is an interdisciplinary field within the social sciences. The science of communication has moved away from the fields of psychology, sociology, anthropology, mathematics, physics, and biology as it has progressed. (Abidin, 2016:1). In a simple sense, the science of communication has a close track record in the development of human life. Communication research focuses exclusively on the context of mass communication in its early stages of development. However, with the development of the times and various influences from other sciences, communication science moves to study not only social phenomena resulting from mass communication processes, but also interpersonal communication, or communication between individuals and groups.

In early 2021, there will be 202.6 million people using the internet in Indonesia. When compared to January 2020, there are now 27 million more people on the planet, up 15.5%. Currently, 274.9 million people are living in Indonesia. If this trend continues, by early 2021, 73.7% of Indonesians will have internet access. Recently, social media marketing firm We Are Social and content management provider HootSuite conducted a study called "Digital 2021" in which they predicted this trend<sup>2</sup>. According to the same survey, the average time Indonesians spend online is 8 hours and 52 minutes. Among Indonesian internet users, social media accounts for the majority of time spent online. Currently in Indonesia, there are approximately 170 million social media users, where on average, they spend 3 hours and 14 minutes each week on social media. The following chart provides an overview of how the Internet is currently developing in Indonesia.

Looking at the facts above, we can see that the large number of internet users is a strong potential in making information widely disseminated, one of which is through social media which is currently an effective medium for disseminating information. Information circulating on social media is now increasingly diverse like mass media. One of the information that is easily accessible through social media is information about public information disclosure and public services provided by the government to the public. Currently, social media is not only used by individuals and companies, but also by government circles, and the tendency to use social media is increasing in line with the flow of information in the globalization era, so it is necessary to provide fast and accurate information.

Sectoral Statistics Implementation Program, and 12. Information Management and Public Communication Program. The programs related to public service information are the 6th and 12th programs.

The implementation of programs related to the delivery of public service information is carried out by the Provincial Government of North Sumatra through the preparation of an appropriate public communication strategy. The preparation of this public communication strategy was carried out by the Communication and Informatics Office of Sumatra Province as the responsible Regional Apparatus Organization (OPD), as stated in the Minister of Communication and Informatics Regulation Number 8 of 2019 concerning Implementation of Concurrent Government Affairs in the Communication and Informatics Sector. In Article 8 paragraph 1 of the Minister of Communication and Informatics, it is stated that the Service carries out content management and planning of Public Communication Media which includes (1) preparation of a public communication strategy, and (2) content packaging.

In response to this, the Provincial Government of North Sumatra through the Office of Communication and Informatics, as stated by Mr. Porman Juanda Marpomari Mahulae, ST, as the Head of the Public Information Section, carried out several communication strategies to convey public information. This communication strategy is based on Harold Lasswell's famous theory, namely Who Says What In Which Channel To Whom With What Effect (who says what through what channel to whom with what effect). Based on Lasswell's theory, one of the points described is related to the communication channel used. The North Sumatra Province Communication and Information Office divides these channels into two categories, namely internal media and external media. Internal media is media that is managed directly by OPD, which includes websites, social media, print, and external media. While external media is media managed by outsiders, such as mass media and electronic media. Seeing the current development of information technology, the Office of Communication and Informatics is also trying to adapt, one of which is by increasing the delivery of public information through social media.

Looking at the data above, it can be seen that even though the Instagram account @pemprovsumut has the most number of followers and media uploads in the top five, in many aspects related to public reciprocity, such as Engagement Rate, Average Likes, and Average Comments, it is in the bottom position. This shows that policymakers must not only be observant in identifying what social media is most effectively used, with so many social media currently circulating in society, as a media liaison between the oversight institution and the public, but also wise in deciding the appropriate communication strategy regarding the use of the social media. The proper use of social media can improve the image or reputation of the institution and deliver the right information to the public. The amount of information that has been done by the Provincial Government of North Sumatra through media

uploads that have been done is a positive thing, but this is still considered insufficient. This can be seen from the lack of public response to the news that is conveyed. Therefore, further research is needed regarding appropriate communication strategies in the use of social media.

As a result, social media content management requires methods to convey information. Researchers are interested in learning more about the communication strategy of the North Sumatra provincial government through social media due to the increasing importance of the platform as a means of outreach to the public. The provincial government of North Sumatra in Indonesia has found the most success using Instagram. The title of this research work is *The Communication Strategy of the North Sumatra Provincial Government to Increase its Positive Image on Instagram (@pemprovsumut)*.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Definition of Government Communication**

Communication within the government is similar to communication within the business. In the real world, communication is an important cog in the government machine. Government communication refers to interactions between individuals within the framework of government institutions. Government communication, as defined by Sedarmayanti (2018; 179), is the dissemination of official government messages to the wider community to advance national interests (in this case the government can be assumed to be the communicator and the public as information providers). but in certain circumstances it can be the other way around, the public can be in a position to convey ideas or ideas, and the government can be in a position to observe what the community is doing). In such cases, the government is obliged and authorized to pay attention to the wishes of the people and act accordingly. As government representatives, officials are responsible for conveying all relevant information.

According to Myers and Myers (1982) in Abidin (2016; 81), government communication is an important element in government organizations, both for managing staff and managing people. There are two main outlets. for government communications. The first step is to improve the internal dialogue. There are three components to this type of bureaucratic internal communication:

- a) Information as a basis for making decisions
- b) The decision and the basis for the reasons must be disseminated so that the members of the organization carry it out
- c) The medium for "organizational talks", is regular daily chats to get things done; people talk about as they go about their business to make themselves useful contributors to the social fabric at large.

Second, the use of media to reach other people. Communication routes between government and the general public, market niches, legislators, and other government bodies are all part of the media landscape.

Communication Functions in Government Organizations Sendjaja (1994) (Abidin, 2016: 40) states the function of communication in government organizations, namely as follows:

a. Informative Function

It is possible to think of organizations, especially governmental organizations, as large computer systems. This means that everyone who works for the government wants access to more accurate and up-to-date data. Leaders, spokespersons, and subordinates are all good sources of this type of data. The data collected increases the efficiency and effectiveness of all team members.

b. Regulatory Function

The rules governing the organization have a role to play in this capacity. The regulatory function is influenced by two factors, namely as follows:

1). Refers to upper management or those who have the final say over any communications.

2). Communication is involved, with leads mostly focused on business matters.

c. Persuasive Function

Some bosses prefer to convince their employees rather than tell them to. This is because people are more likely to worry about work being done voluntarily than under orders.

d. Integrative Function

e. Every company or group will try to provide lines of communication that help employees do their job well. We have official and informal means of contact at our disposal to make this happen.

### **The Importance of Government Communication**

Looking briefly at the ins and outs of government communication, some basic things need to be emphasized in government communication. Sedarmayanti (2018, 179) concludes several things about government communication as follows:

- a. The process of conveying thoughts, opinions expressed by one group of people to another group of people regarding government actions in carrying out its main tasks (such as administering security, order, justice, social welfare, the economy, public works, maintenance of natural resources and the environment, etc.).

- b. The process of transferring ideas, ideas, thoughts, to unite forces, and interactions occur to carry out the main tasks of the state government.
- c. The process of sharing or utilizing shared information, and interrelationships between people/parties, in carrying out government functions towards good governance (good governance).
- d. To develop and carry out various government actions that cover all sectors of the life and livelihood of citizens and society, the process of transferring information between two people or parties is more important than ever.
- e. Legal certainty, orderly administration of the state, public interest, transparency, proportionality, professionalism, accountability, efficiency and effectiveness in gathering and mobilizing people/parties and utilizing resources are the principles governing government communication.
- f. The primary goal of government communications is for the communicator and receiver to reach an agreement on how to help the state government achieve its vision of good governance.
- g. Communication from the government to the general public to advance policies, programs, and official agendas.
- h. The State Civil Apparatus as a government communicator from below is responsible for conveying all official government messages.

### **Definition of strategy**

The Greek words "Stratos" for the army and "again" for commander-in-waiting, combined to signify "leader of an army in waiting", form the root of our modern term "strategy". The word for "high-level military command", as in "strategic planning" (Cangara, 2017: 64). Martin-Anderson The capacity of the mind to mobilize all resources towards a common goal is a key component of the art of strategy formulation. In simple terms, strategy is the deliberate application of thought and preparation to act to achieve the desired result of the activity.

According to one of the definitions offered by communication planning specialist Middleton, a communication strategy is the most effective plan for achieving a set of communication objectives by coordinating the efforts of all parties involved in the communication process, including but not limited to the communicator, the message, channels (media), recipients, and influencers. When trying to

Solving problems with communication, planners face various challenges, especially in terms of techniques utilizing existing communication resources to achieve the desired results. (Canara, 2017: 64).

### **Communication Strategy Components**

When developing a communications plan, it is important to keep in mind both the supporting and limiting elements associated with each communication component. Included in this category are communicators, various forms of media, various messages, and the act of communicating itself.

a. Identify communication goals

The communicator must first choose whether the purpose of the communication is simply to inform (using informative techniques) or persuade (using persuasive methods) before any communication can begin. Several aspects of the communicator need attention:

- 1) The frame of reference factor, a person's worldview is shaped by his life history, upbringing, culture, social group, economic status, political leanings, and other factors. One person's point of view will be different from other people's.
- 2) Factors of situation and condition, the context in which the message will be received by the recipient is what is meant here. What is meant here is the communicant's personality condition at the time of receiving the message, which includes the communicant's body and mental condition.

b. Selection of communication media

Depending on the purpose, message, and method used, we can choose one medium or combine many media to achieve our communication goals.

c. Assessment of the purpose of communication messages

Messages used in communication have a specific function. It decides whether an informational approach, a persuasive approach, or an instructional approach will be taken.

d. The Role of the Communicator in Communication

The success of the communicator depends on the communicant's perception of the attractiveness of the source; if the communicant feels personally involved with the communicator, the communicator is more likely to persuade the communicant to change his attitude, opinion, and behavior. Trust between the communicator and commutator is another component that may contribute to effective communication. This point of view is heavily influenced by the communicator's field of study or experience. Because of these two considerations, a communicator needs to be empathetic when interacting with the communicant (Effendy, 2017:35).

### **Government Image**

According to Pratama (2017; 15), the image of government consists of two parts, namely political and bureaucratic images. A bureaucratic image is a perception of bureaucracy and its completeness, which can be identified from four basic dimensions, namely. performance, moral, technical, and legal-procedural dimensions. In addition to the image of the bureaucracy, the image of the government is also formed by political image, namely the image that appears related to responses to political officials or bureaucratic leaders, where this can be analyzed through three dimensions, namely competence, trust, and goodwill/political will.

The two dimensions of the image, namely the image of politics and bureaucracy are things that are interrelated with one another. Pratama further states that four typological models can be used to assess the position of the image of public organizations based on the previous concept of bureaucratic image and political image. This model consists of four types of images, namely mutual benefit, asymmetric political heavy, collateral disadvantage, and asymmetric bureaucratic heavy.

- a. Mutual benefit, this condition sees the condition of both parties, be it the bureaucracy or political officials, which are positively perceived by external parties.
- b. Asymmetric political heavy, in this situation political officials are perceived positively, on the other hand, the bureaucracy is perceived negatively by external parties.
- c. Collateral disadvantage, in this situation both parties, both the bureaucracy and political officials, are perceived negatively by parties outside the government.
- d. Asymmetric bureaucratic heavy, this situation is the opposite. Asymmetric political heavy, where the bureaucracy is perceived positively, while political

## **METHODOLOGY**

To gain insight into the phenomenon under study, researchers conducting qualitative research must immerse themselves in the circumstances and history of the phenomenon of interest and focus their attention on lived experiences related to the research setting. Phenomenology, ethnomethodology, symbolic interaction, ethnography, and cultural studies are examples of what Thomas Lindlof calls an "interpretive paradigm" (Lindlof, 1995:27-28) in his book *Qualitative Communication Research Methods in Kuswarno (2004)*.

Interviews and non-participant observation, in which the researcher does not actively participate in the activities of the research object, are used to collect this qualitative research data, which is then analyzed inductively. Because the stages of qualitative research go beyond the various stages of critical-scientific thinking, in which the researcher thinks inductively, and captures various facts or phenomena, the research process in the qualitative research tradition is not as easy as in the quantitative research tradition. -society by seeing it in action, analyzing it, and speculating from the results (Bungin, 2011: 6). Researchers will use this methodology to detail the North Sumatra Provincial Government's approach to communicating via Instagram and the challenges they have faced so far. These sources of information include. interview manuscripts, field notes, photographs, videotapes, personal documents, notes or memos, and other official documents related to @pemprovsumut.

## **RESEARCH RESULT**

To realize the dissemination of information to the public through social media, updated information, and interesting content are important factors that must be considered by the Instagram admin @pemprovsumut. Various

strategies for maximizing social media are efforts to generate maximum publicity and a positive image for the government of North Sumatra.

The use of Instagram by the Provincial Government of North Sumatra (at @pemprovsumut) to disseminate information about governance and development has not yielded optimal results, as can be seen from the statistics above. Several problems with the implementation of techniques for communicating via social media led to this situation

Based on observations in the field, the researchers concluded that the social media communication plan carried out by the North Sumatra Provincial Government was not perfect, but the province was making progress. The following table shows the results of this comparison.

**Table 1. Data Comparison of The @Pemprovsumu Instagram Account With Several Other Provincial Government Instagram Accounts As of April 2022**

No	Provincial Government	Amount followers	Media Uploads	Engagement Rate	Average Likes	Average Comments
1	North Sumatra	61,927	5039	0.06%	34.5	0.13
2	Jakarta	607,653	4,854	0.50%	2,929.44	102.31
3	West Java	161,437	5,793	0.22%	346.5	13.69
4	East Java	242,714	1855	0.63%	1,478.94	39,56
5	Central Java	32,989	1,716	0.42%	137,13	2.94
6	aceh	32,397	2,701	0.22%	71.38	1.06
7	Riau	21,321	1994	1.64%	342.38	7
8	Padang	33,866	1,809	0.44%	142.88	6
9	South Sumatra	46,921	6,266	0.53%	246.38	0.69
10	Lampung	52,498	6.133	0.46%	237,13	3,5

**Table 2. Data Comparison Of The @Pemprovsumu Instagram Account With Several Other Provincial Government Instagram Accounts As Of April 2023**

No	Provincial Government	Amount followers	Media Uploads	Engagement Rate	Average Likes	Average Comments
1	North Sumatra	64,766	6,647	0.18%	109.25	4.88
2	Jakarta	687,590	6,369	0.15%	1013,2	40,63
3	West Java	192,487	7,564	0.22%	408	9,31
4	East Java	252,238	2,722	0.34%	847.56	11.06
5	Central Java	55,456	2,574	0.32%	178.44	1.31
6	aceh	34,319	3,001	0.30%	102.75	1.63
7	Riau	21,525	2008	1.64%	343,13	10.56
8	Padang	36,227	2.109	0.86%	308.81	3.88
9	South Sumatra	51,050	7,681	0.24%	122.06	0.63
10	Lampung	53,295	8,438	0.13%	70,44	1.06

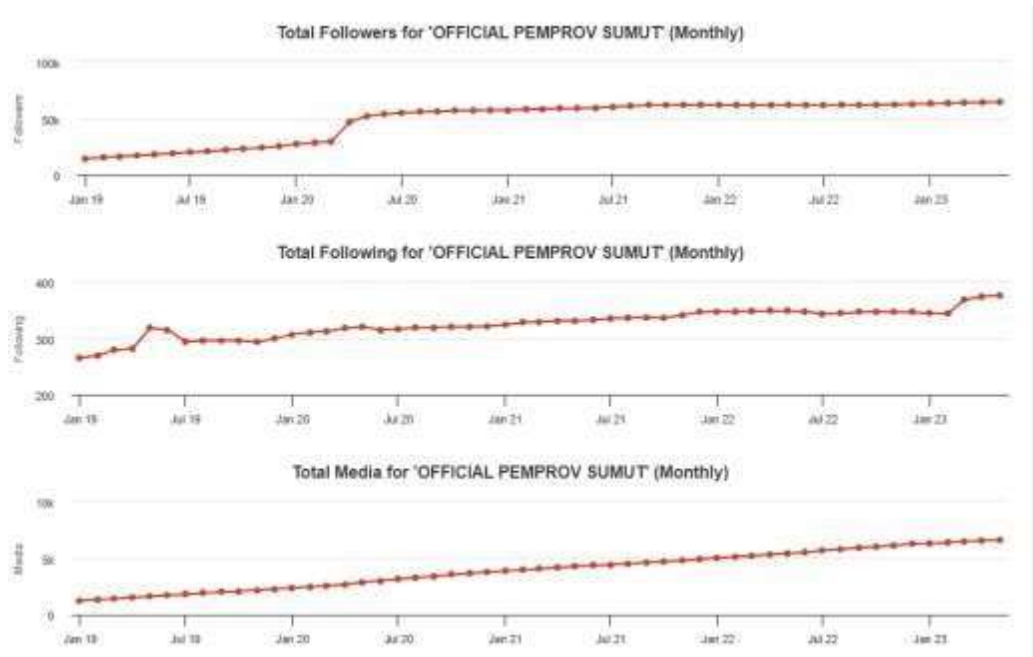
From the graph, it can be seen that at the beginning of the study in April 2022, the number of followers was 61,927, and experienced ups and downs in the number of followers until August, which became 61,922 followers. However, starting in September 2022 the movement of the number of followers began to increase to 100 followers consistently per month. The increase became even more significant from November 2022 to April 2023, when the number of followers that increased per month was around 300 followers. So in general, within 12 months there has been an average increase in followers by 200 accounts, where the current condition of followers has reached 64,766.

Looking at the typology of images that appear on Instagram @pemprovsumut, the positive images that are formed tend to alternate between asymmetric political heavy and asymmetric bureaucratic heavy. This actually cannot be predicted precisely but is temporary, because the interactions that arise in the form of comments are still minimal on Instagram @pemprovsumut. So this needs to be investigated further.

Through various efforts in conveying information on policies and activities of the North Sumatra provincial government via Instagram @pemprovsumut, where this can be seen from the number of media uploads made, it is hoped that the image formed in society will also become more positive. From various media uploaded on Instagram @pemprovsumut, it can be seen that some of the public's responses are generally still giving positive responses, although there are still negative comments, this is also common in various other government social media accounts. In general, the positive image of the Provincial Government of North Sumatra as reflected in Instagram @pemprovsumut can be seen from the increased engagement rates and average likes within one year of research.

Experienced a significant increase in various ways, both in terms of the number of followers, media uploads, engagement rate, average likes, and average comments. These five factors provide a simple picture of how in general the image of the North Sumatra provincial government has increased significantly, especially how the Instagram account @pemprovsumut attracts public interest in providing comments and other responses.

The increase in the number of followers and media uploads obtained on Instagram @pemprovsumut is one indication of how positive the image the Provincial Government of North Sumatra has received. This can be seen in the graphic regarding the increase since Instagram @pemprovsumut appeared until April 2023



**Figure 1. Data On The Development Of The Number Of Followers And Media Uploads For The @Pemprovsumu Instagram Account Per Month From January 2019 - April 2023**

## DISCUSSION

To implement the government's communication strategy, the communication carried out must of course follow existing scientific principles. This is reflected in the implementation of the communication strategy carried out by the Provincial Government of North Sumatra, where based on the Laswell paradigm, there are five elements in it, namely:

- a) The communicator, communicator referred to in this communication strategy is the Instagram admin management team @pemprovsumut which has been established through a Decree of the Head of the Communication and Informatics Service.
- b) The messages conveyed are in the form of various kinds of information related to activities that are specifically related to the Governor, Deputy Governor, Mrs. Governor, and Mrs. Deputy Governor, as well as the Regional Secretary.
- c) Media (channel), the communication channel chosen in this strategy is the social media Instagram @pemprovsumut.
- d) The communicant, the communicant who receives information from the communicator in this communication strategy is the people of North Sumatra who are Instagram social media users.
- e) Effects, effects that are expected to arise from existing communicants related to the positive image of the North Sumatra Provincial Government. As part of the communication strategy undertaken, the North Sumatra Government has issued North Sumatra Governor

Regulation Number 49 of 2012 concerning the North Sumatra Province e-Government Development Master Plan 2013-2017, which was later updated with North Sumatra Governor Regulation Number 19 of 2019 concerning the Development of e-Government of North Sumatra Province 2019-2023.

Determining the right social media will determine the extent to which the information conveyed can be received by the public, as well as the expected information effect at the beginning of the delivery of information. Of the various social media owned by the Provincial Government of North Sumatra, namely Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and websites, Instagram @pemprovsumut is a media that is considered to have great potential with much larger followers than other social media. Apart from that, with the current social media trends, Instagram is indeed the number 2 most used social media in Indonesia, under Wahyu Hidayatatsapp. With these initial considerations, the Provincial Government of Sumatra, according to Mr. Franky Sihaloho,

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the findings and discussion, several conclusions can be drawn as follows:

1. The communication strategy implemented by the North Sumatra Provincial Government is (1) Appointing a communicator which in this case is carried out by the North Sumatra Provincial Communication and Information Service; (2) Setting targets, where the general target to be achieved from the dissemination of existing information is the people of North Sumatra in general with an age range of 17-55 years with different types of work, education, religion, income level, and ethnicity; (3) Establish a work team as Instagram admin manager @pemprovsumut, which in this case is the responsibility of the e-Government Service Sector; (4) Establish a message delivery mechanism, namely in the form of initial collection of information originating from the Public Information Management Sector to the e-Government Service Sector as Instagram admin @pemprovsumut; (5) Dissemination of communication media, namely through social media Instagram @pemprovsumut; and (6) Preparation of a time schedule, namely information submitted at a predetermined time based on the analysis of the @pemprovsumut Instagram admin, namely at 9 am, 2 pm and 8 pm.
2. In enhancing a positive image to the public, the North Sumatra Provincial Government sorts incoming news before it is displayed on Instagram posts @pemprovsumut. Existing material is not utilized considering the existing trends among Instagram users because the planning has not been carried

out properly both in terms of uploaded content and utilization of existing features on Instagram. This has resulted in not being optimal in improving the image of the North Sumatra Provincial Government significantly.

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