

Analysis of the Role of Instagram as a Public Communication Medium: A Case Study of the Public Relations Division of Polresta Cirebon in Building Public Trust

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Abstract. This study examines the role of the Cirebon Police Public Relations Department in building public trust through the use of social media, particularly Instagram, as a means of public communication in the digital era. The research background is based on the importance of public trust in the police institution in carrying out its duties. Using the communication management theory of Culpit, Centre, and Broom, this study examines four stages of communication: problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation. The research method used was descriptive qualitative, with data collected through observation, documentation, and interviews, and analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. The results show that the Cirebon Police Public Relations Department consistently utilizes Instagram as a two-way interactive medium to convey information, educate the public, correct hoaxes, and build a positive image. Content such as the "Friday Curhat" program, morning roll call, and night patrols serve as strategic tools for creating transparency, participation, and emotional closeness with the community. Public sentiment analysis showed a majority of responses were positive (80%), neutral (20%), and no negative comments, indicating the success of this communication strategy in strengthening public trust. This research confirms that integrating social media with communication management strategies can support the effectiveness of police duties and enhance the institution's legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

Keywords: *Public Relations, Public Trust, Instagram.*

A. INTRODUCTION

The mass media plays a crucial role in shaping public opinion in today's fast-paced and dynamic information era. Maintaining a positive image and enhancing public trust are essential for institutions such as the Indonesian National Police (Polri). As a government institution responsible for maintaining security and public order, Polri is required to perform its duties professionally, honestly, and accountably (Tambunan, 2021). The success of Polri largely depends on the level of public trust. Without trust, the relationship between the public and this law enforcement institution can be disrupted, hindering the implementation of its duties (Sanusi et al., 2025).

The rise of digital and internet-based media has transformed how public institutions interact with society. According to Utami et al. (2024), new media influences online public relations practices how institutions communicate with the public through digital platforms. Since 2017, the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology (Kominfo) of the Republic of Indonesia has encouraged local governments to use official social media accounts to communicate with citizens (Utami et al., 2024). This allows for effective two-way communication in line with the growing use of the internet and social media in Indonesia.

Social media has evolved beyond being merely an information channel; it now serves as a participatory space for public dialogue. Effective public communication is vital in modern society, which is complex and rapidly changing (Kustiawan et al., 2024). The Public Relations Division of Polri, as a special staff unit, is responsible for carrying out public relations functions through information dissemination and media cooperation to shape public opinion that supports

police duties. This function involves the use of data units (penset) to distribute information either directly or through digital media (Tibo et al., 2024).

Advances in information and communication technology have also changed how institutions like Polri interact with the public. Instagram, as a visual-based medium, provides significant opportunities to strengthen public participation in police activities (Tibo et al., 2024). The Public Relations Team of the Cirebon City Police (Polresta Cirebon) plays an important role in disseminating information, documenting activities, and building the institution's positive image. However, public trust in the police remains a challenge, particularly due to negative perceptions arising from certain cases and the spread of inaccurate information on social media. This can reduce the legitimacy and image of Polri in the eyes of the public.

The emergence of social media has transformed the landscape of public communication from one-way to dialogical and participatory. Platforms such as Instagram enable public institutions to build more open and interactive relationships with the community, fostering increased public trust through transparency and responsiveness (Widjanarko, 2020). The content publication process begins with data processing and editing, followed by approval from superiors before uploading to Instagram. This demonstrates professionalism in delivering information to the public (Safitri & Mujahid, 2024). Instagram also serves as a channel for public complaints regarding traffic issues, security, and public order services.

However, the lack of public engagement in interactive dialogue with the police remains a significant issue. As a result, communication efforts often remain merely informative, failing to foster deeper trust. On the other hand, limited strategies in social media content management also pose challenges. If the content presented is unappealing, uncommunicative, or irrelevant to public needs, the messages intended by the police institution may not effectively reach all segments of society.

This study applies the communication management theory of Cutlip, Center, and Broom, which explains the public relations process from problem identification, planning, implementation, communication, to program evaluation. A previous study by Maharani et al. (2025) on the @humaspoldajatim account showed that a well-planned content strategy can build a positive image and increase public participation. Social, infographic, and interactive content such as live streaming are particularly effective in reaching audiences. The use of language suited to demographics and attractive content design also supports communication success. However, that study suggested updating content strategies and enhancing public information access. Unlike previous studies, this research focuses on the communication strategy of Humas Polresta Cirebon in building public trust through Instagram. Communication, which was once one-way through conventional media, has now evolved into a more digital, open, and interactive form.

Public support for Polri is a vital aspect of the institution's success in carrying out its duties. When the image of police officers is positive in the eyes of the public, a mutually reinforcing relationship between the institution and citizens can be established. Based on this background, the main research problem is: How does the Instagram account of Polresta Cirebon function as a medium of public communication in building public trust among the people of Cirebon City? The purpose of this study is to analyze how Instagram is used by Humas Polresta Cirebon as a public communication medium to build public trust in Cirebon City.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

The communication management model by Cutlip, Center, and Broom offers a systematic framework that is highly relevant to public relations practices within public

institutions such as Polresta Cirebon. This model consists of four stages: problem identification, planning and programming, communication implementation, and program evaluation (Maharani et al., 2025). The first stage, problem identification, is carried out by understanding the public's perception of the organization. This involves data collection and analysis of public attitudes and opinions. The second stage, planning and programming, involves developing a communication strategy to achieve specific goals, such as building public trust. In this stage, the public relations team defines communication objectives, prepares work programs, and considers the effectiveness and accountability of the messages to be delivered (Maharani et al., 2025).

The third stage is implementation, where messages are communicated through various media. Credibility, clarity, and consistency of the message are essential elements. Credibility is gained through the communicator's transparency and honesty, while messages must be composed clearly, truthfully, and in ways relevant to public needs. Finally, program evaluation is conducted to measure the success and effectiveness of the implemented communication strategies. The evaluation results then serve as the basis for improving future public relations strategies (Safitri & Mujahid, 2024).

One of the key channels in implementing this strategy is social media, particularly Instagram. In the context of public relations, social media such as Instagram is used to perform modern public relations functions. Public relations officers today are not only responsible for delivering information but also for building positive relationships, shaping public opinion, and strengthening institutional legitimacy (Tibo et al., 2024). The choice of media for delivering public information is strongly influenced by credibility, accessibility speed, and proximity to the audience. Electronic media, especially social media like Instagram, are considered more effective than print media because of their ability to deliver information quickly and interactively while enabling two-way communication that enhances public trust in the institution (Sudarmanti, 2017; Safitri & Mujahid, 2024).

In this study, public trust is the main focus, as it serves as the foundation for the success of law enforcement institutions. Trust is defined as the public's belief in an institution's integrity, competence, and good intentions. Trust does not emerge instantly but is built through continuous interaction and positive experiences with the institution (Sanusi et al., 2025). In this context, Instagram serves as an effective medium to strengthen public trust. Through transparent, informative, and communicative content, the Public Relations Division of Polresta can demonstrate its commitment to professional public service. The visual content shared on Instagram not only facilitates information dissemination but also fosters an emotional connection between the institution and the public.

C. METHOD

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach aimed at describing and explaining phenomena in depth using data in the form of words, narratives, or images (Nasution, 2019; Sulistyawati, 2023). Informants were selected through purposive sampling based on predetermined criteria. Data analysis refers to the Miles and Huberman model, which includes data reduction, data presentation, conclusion drawing, and verification. To ensure data validity, the triangulation method was used as a tool for accuracy testing and comparison (Zulfirman, 2022).

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Utilization of Instagram as a Public Communication Medium by the Public Relations Division of Polresta Cirebon can be understood through the framework of the communication management theory developed by Cutlip, Center, and Broom. This theory emphasizes four

main stages: problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation (Maharani et al., 2025). In practice, the Public Relations Division (Humas) of Polresta Cirebon has implemented these stages systematically. In the problem identification stage, the public relations team collects data, analyzes public opinion, and considers audience characteristics. This aligns with the statement by Police Brigadier (Bripka) Gugun Fatriana Gumelar, S.H, who explained that Instagram content must take into account audience age groups and promote two-way communication. Thus, problem identification is carried out not only internally but also by incorporating public feedback through comments and direct messages on Instagram.

Polresta Cirebon has several flagship programs to handle public complaints, as citizens often report public security and order issues through social media. One of these programs is the 110 Service, which assists people in reporting emergencies such as crimes, accidents, natural disasters, or other disturbances, while also providing information about police services. To ensure a quick response, calls are directed to the nearest police station.

In addition, the Humas Instagram account provides public service information, such as procedures for obtaining a driver's license (SIM), police clearance certificate (SKCK), and other complaint services. For example, the procedure for applying for a SIM has been published, making it easier for the public to access such information. During the problem identification stage, Humas Polresta Cirebon conducts situational analysis to understand public perception and the institution's image. This process involves research on public attitudes, behaviors, and understanding, as well as attention to internal policies, organizational coordination, and stakeholder attitudes toward publications. As reaffirmed by Bripka Gugun Fatriana Gumelar, S.H, who serves as Acting Head of the Public Information Subdivision (PS. KASUBSI PENMAS SIHUMAS):

"In identifying problems for content creation on Instagram, we must look at the target audience, for example, in terms of age. Moreover, when identifying problems, we must consider two-way communication." (Bripka Gugun Fatriana Gumelar, S.H, July 31, 2025)

In the process of identifying problems for content creation, it is important to pay attention to the target audience, including age demographics, and to ensure two-way communication with the public. This communication occurs through feedback or aspirations expressed by the community, either via direct messages or comments on the official Instagram account of Humas Polresta Cirebon. From this feedback, the police can identify various issues occurring in the field. For instance, there have been reports of citizens violating traffic rules by driving against the flow of traffic. In response, the police directly visit the location while simultaneously producing content to be uploaded on their official social media accounts. The purpose of such content is to educate the public so that similar violations are not repeated, fostering collective awareness of traffic order and safety.

In the planning stage, Humas develops communication strategies to build public trust. This includes program formulation based on programming, scheduling, budgeting, and accountability aspects, aimed at creating effective two-way communication between the institution and the public. This aligns with Safitri and Mujahid (2024), who emphasize that effective communication must consider message clarity, accountability, and relevance to public needs. The strategy also corresponds with findings from Maharani et al. (2025), which show that well-planned content such as infographics, social messages, and interactive materials are more effective in building a positive image and encouraging public participation.

The programming stage involves designing work programs as the foundation for strategies to build public trust. One flagship program is the Night Patrol, which follows the circular issued by the Governor of West Java regarding the restriction of student activities at night. This activity is preventive and educational, aiming to prevent juvenile delinquency and create a safe environment (Instagram @humaspolrestacirebon, 2025).

“In addition, there is the Night Patrol program, which is considered positive because it helps reduce the space for juvenile delinquency. The police collaborate with parents, neighborhood units (RT/RW), and relevant institutions to prevent young people from engaging in deviant behavior. Cross-institutional collaboration is also carried out in publications to expand information reach, counter misinformation, and spread positive content more quickly.” (Bripka Gugun Fatriana Gumelar, S.H, July 31, 2025)

Apart from dialogical communication programs, Polresta Cirebon also implements the Night Patrol program, which is considered to have a positive impact, particularly in reducing opportunities for juvenile delinquency. The program is carried out through collaboration with parents, local neighborhood units, and relevant agencies to prevent young people from engaging in deviant behavior. Beyond direct supervision, this cross-institutional collaboration is also expanded into the realm of publication. It aims to strengthen information dissemination, correct misinformation, and accelerate the spread of positive content within the community. Thus, the Night Patrol program not only serves as a preventive effort to maintain order but also as part of the police’s public communication strategy that emphasizes synergy and transparency.

Polresta Cirebon also demonstrates a commitment to building cross-institutional collaboration to strengthen its public communication strategy. This collaboration is reflected in its partnership with the Cirebon Government’s Public Communication and Information Bureau (Prokompim) during the 2025 Tirta Jati Regional Water Company Development Meeting (Instagram @prokompim.cirebonkab, 2025). In addition, Polresta Cirebon has also partnered with local media to celebrate Hari Bhayangkara, such as organizing the Cirebon Cup 2025 and holding a tug-of-war competition with the District Attorney’s Office (Instagram @cirebonevent & @kejarikab_cirebon, 2025). These collaborations not only expand publication reach but also strengthen the police institution’s positive image as an open, participatory entity capable of building synergy with various community and institutional stakeholders.

This communication pattern aligns with the findings of Utami et al. (2024), who note that social media has transformed public relations practices from one-way communication into more participatory, two-way interactions. Instagram was chosen because of its visual nature and algorithm, which allow messages to reach a wider audience (Hakim et al., 2024). In carrying out its programs, the public relations division follows a four-step technical process: (1) data collection by the public information section, (2) content processing by the public relations team, (3) content confirmation by the Head of Public Relations and the Police Chief, and (4) publication on the official Instagram account @humaspolrestacirebon. The next stage is scheduling, which involves determining the timing of publications based on case types. For incidental content, publication can be done immediately once data is complete and verified. One example of a scheduled program on the @humaspolrestacirebon account is the Morning Assembly and Friday Dialogue (Jumat Curhat).

“The Morning Assembly and Friday Dialogue are regular content. Moreover, Friday Dialogue serves as one way to increase public trust, where citizens can express their aspirations, criticisms, and suggestions.” (Bripka Gugun Fatriana Gumelar, S.H, July 31, 2025)

The Morning Assembly and Friday Dialogue programs conducted by Polresta Cirebon are routine agendas that play a strategic role in organizational communication management. Through the Morning Assembly, the Chief of Polresta provides direction and conducts weekly performance evaluations as a form of internal supervision. These activities not only maintain discipline and improve staff performance but are also published as a form of transparency to show the public that evaluation and improvement processes are carried out systematically from leadership to subordinates. The Friday Dialogue (Jum’at Curhat) program serves as an

interactive platform that opens a space for dialogue between the police and the community. Through this activity, citizens are given the opportunity to directly express their aspirations, criticisms, and suggestions to the police. Polresta Cirebon follows up on this feedback by providing guidance on important issues such as drug prevention, law enforcement, and the promotion of community safety and order.

These two programs demonstrate that Polresta Cirebon strives to build a positive image through transparent and participatory communication. On one hand, the Morning Assembly symbolizes the organization's internal commitment to performance evaluation, while Friday Dialogue serves as an external medium to enhance public trust. Thus, both programs complement each other in fostering a harmonious relationship between the police force and the community. In terms of budgeting, the public relations budget of Polresta Cirebon is considered adequate and is allocated according to the needs of each program, including video production and other content creation. The Polresta budget includes planning based on institutional policies and objectives, financial control to ensure expenditures align with the plan, and public accountability to maintain transparency and responsibility in fund management.

Finally, a tentative plan or trial phase is carried out before publication. The public relations team complies with publication regulations, filters content according to applicable guidelines, and obtains final approval from authorized officials to ensure that the uploaded content is appropriate and safe. During the action and communication stage, the Public Relations Division of Polresta Cirebon implements its message delivery strategy based on previously designed plans. Messages and media are carefully selected to ensure that communication is effective, ethical, and respectful on social media. Credibility is a crucial factor. Polresta Cirebon demonstrates objectivity and transparency by delivering information directly through Instagram. The uploaded content is generally factual, consisting of reports on official activities, routine programs such as Morning Assembly and Friday Dialogue, public safety advisories, and publications of interagency collaborations. Reliability is reinforced through visual evidence (photos and videos) that directly document activities. In addition, the inclusion of time, location, and information about involved parties adds to the accuracy and credibility of the information.

The context of content creation on the @humaspolrestacirebon account is always adjusted to public situations and informational needs. This is reflected in the selection of themes relevant to current conditions, such as traffic safety advisories during periods of increased mobility, public order messages ahead of major celebrations, and educational content addressing trending issues such as drug abuse or misinformation. The messages primarily focus on announcements and advisories, delivered in an honest, simple, and easily understood language. To maintain clarity, figurative language is avoided, and sentences are constructed briefly and concisely, especially in Instagram captions. Continuity and consistency are maintained by routinely uploading content such as Friday Dialogue and Morning Assembly every week, accompanied by official hashtags like #PolriPresisi and #PolrestaCirebon. Various communication channels are used, but Instagram serves as the main platform because it is considered the most effective. This platform's algorithm aligns with the needs of public communication by targeting users based on interests, interaction patterns, and timeliness.

After the programs are carried out, the Public Relations Division conducts evaluations to measure the effectiveness of the programs and assess the results of the public communication efforts. These evaluations form an important foundation for determining whether the program's objectives have been achieved and for providing feedback for future improvements. In this context, Humas Polresta Cirebon actively provides information and interacts with the public through social media, particularly Instagram. They not only share information but also engage in two-way communication and foster positive relationships with the community. Public

perception of police policies in the field is crucial for maintaining trust, whether in criminal case handling, conflict resolution, or crisis management, as stated by Fitri Sri Rahayu and Jesica Prameswaari Yapasaputri (2024). These findings are consistent with the view of Sanusi et al. (2025), who argue that public trust does not emerge instantly but is built through continuous interaction and positive experiences between the public and the institution.

Based on the researcher's analysis using APIFY, the majority of comments were categorized as positive, totaling eight comments or 80% of all responses. This indicates that most respondents provided supportive and appreciative feedback. Meanwhile, there were two neutral comments (20%), which did not explicitly show support or rejection but were more informational or indifferent. Interestingly, no negative comments were found (0%), suggesting that the overall sentiment was positive and did not generate harmful responses. Based on the comments observed, most public reactions were favorable. Remarks such as "Great," "Thank you, kind police officers," and "Keep up the spirit, sir," reflect appreciation for Polresta Cirebon's performance. Some neutral comments did not express a clear stance, but none were negative. This shows that the content shared by Polresta Cirebon has been well received by the public.

E. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the Public Relations Division of Polresta Cirebon has successfully utilized Instagram as an effective medium of public communication in building community trust. By applying the communication management model of Cutlip, Center, and Broom, the communication process has been carried out systematically through the stages of problem identification, planning, implementation, and evaluation. This structured approach makes the public relations communication strategy more focused and responsive to the public's informational needs. The results of the analysis show that the content shared through the @humaspolrestacirebon account such as the Friday Dialogue (Jumat Curhat) program, Morning Assembly, and Night Patrol has effectively fostered transparency and openness of information. The presence of interactive content not only helps build a positive institutional image but also strengthens community participation in maintaining public safety and order. The predominantly positive public responses (80%) and the absence of negative comments indicate that the communication strategies implemented have been well received by the public.

Furthermore, the communication strategy of Humas Polresta Cirebon highlights the importance of cross-institutional collaboration and the use of social media as a two-way dialogue platform. These efforts not only expand the reach of information dissemination but also enhance the credibility and legitimacy of Polresta Cirebon in the eyes of the public. Therefore, it can be concluded that the use of Instagram as a medium of public communication has helped Polresta Cirebon build trust, strengthen a positive image, and support the successful execution of police duties in the digital era.

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