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The Government Communication Strategy through Social Media to Increase Public Awareness

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ABSTRACT

Public communication for the government is crucial to establish interaction and build public trust. This study aims to identify the goals and forms of government communication strategies using social media. This research uses the SLNA (Systematic Literature Network Analysis) method with limitations on emerald and science direct data sources published in the 2018-2022 range. Network Analysis is used to map keywords from selected articles to find theme patterns. The findings of this study indicate that the government uses social media not always to show reputation or transparency, but rather to socialize to increase awareness and interaction. However, the impact of using social media shows more community participation than awareness.

Keywords: *Public communications, government, social media, awareness, participation*

ABSTRAK

Komunikasi publik bagi pemerintah menjadi hal krusial untuk menjalin interaksi dan membangun kepercayaan masyarakat. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi tujuan dan bentuk strategi komunikasi pemerintah melalui pemanfaatan media sosial. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode SLNA (*Systematic Literature Network Analysis*) dengan batasan pada sumber data emerald dan science direct yang terbit rentang tahun 2018-2022. Network Analysis digunakan untuk memetakan kata kunci dari artikel terseleksi guna menemukan pola tema. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tujuan pemerintah memanfaatkan media sosial tidak selalu untuk menunjukkan reputasi atau transparansi, namun lebih kepada sosialisasi untuk menumbuhkan *awareness* dan interaksi. Namun, dampak dari pemanfaatan media sosial lebih banyak menunjukkan adanya partisipasi masyarakat dari pada *awareness*.

Kata Kunci: Komunikasi publik, pemerintah, media sosial, *awareness*, partisipasi

INTRODUCTION

Social media has become a new platform that allows every individual to interact with each other. Referring to data from Hootsuite (2023), Internet users in Indonesia reached 212.9 million. Active social media users in Indonesia reached 167 million. The increase of the usage of social media by the public is accompanied by the growth of various social media platforms that the public can utilize. Ten years ago, there were not many social media available, but today their number has skyrocketed. These newly emerging platforms provide utilities for people to create contents in various types or forms

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By providing increasingly diverse forms of content, social media also often become a place to express expressions and opinions. More than that, social media are also used as a platform to convey complaints to the government, service providers, and others. The public was presented with the viral phenomenon of the account @awbimax who used TikTok to criticize The Provincial Government of Lampung. The video has been watched more than 124 thousand times, has succeeded in getting the attention of the President of the Republic of Indonesia and the entire audience of this country. This phenomenon has received a lot of appreciation and criticism from various parties and almost dragged its creator in a lawsuit. In line with Hogreve (2013) stated that social media offers consumers a public stage to voice their dissatisfaction to a global audience.

Social media as a public space allows the exchange of information and views regarding public issues or concerns, forming public opinion and monitoring the government (Asri, 2021). In line with this, the government is required to adapt to meet public expectations for a modern, open, and effective government sector through technology. Some government agencies already have and manage social media accounts for sharing information, outreach, branding, and increasing community participation. Some examples include a Facebook account managed by the Jordanian Government that has increased engagement by up to 200% (Khasawneh & Abu-Shanab, 2013) or a Twitter account managed by the Indonesian Meteorology, Climatology and Geophysics Agency routinely provides information regarding impending disasters. Furthermore, American social media significantly drive the campaign for government and political programs Mergel n.d (2016). This was discovered through media framing analysis of the handling of the COVID-19 pandemic in Indonesia.

Kavanaugh et al.'s research (2012) revealed that local governments lack knowledge in managing social media. This relates to costs, benefits, information about the audience, mechanisms for monitoring activity, how to handle responses, and assessing the impact of social media communications on society. Immature communication strategies have caused public confusion over the policies issued to control the pandemic. Based on this case, an appropriate public communication strategy is needed to accommodate mature communication planning and management to achieve goals through communication strategies. Communication strategy is another term for campaign planning or branding (Smith, 2021). This communication strategy aims to obtain public participation and involvement regarding a program or issue being conveyed. Effective communication strategies with the public and making it easier for entities to spread their messages (Abroms & Maibach, 2008). Communication strategies are needed so that the public can be more aware of programs or policies issued by the government. As stated by Karens et al (2016), that branding not only

shows where a product or service comes from but also what makes it identifiable to help generate participatory feelings with the target group (Corner & Pels, 2003).

The government's communication strategy using social media provides many opportunities for the government to develop and strengthen relationships with society and its citizens, while facing many challenges related to rapid changes in this emerging environment (Yousefinaghani et al., 2021). Furthermore, the use of social media by the government can also increase credibility, accountability, and transparency. Leijerholt et al (2019) states that there is a need from the public and private sectors to carry out branding. However, branding in the government sector has several challenges, especially related to internal and external perceptions of the organization. However, Leijerholt et al (2019) research is not limited to branding via social media alone. This research seeks to capture trends in scientific writing regarding government communications using social media over the last five years. Furthermore, this research aims to find the best form of communication strategy carried out by the government using social media using the Systematic Literature Review and Network Analysis (SLNA) method.

Government Communication Strategy

The Government Communications Strategy explains the main objectives and values of government communications and sets out the shared communications model that will be applied to provide information about progress and change. Furthermore, the government's communication strategy needs to include values and principles, namely: the ideals of openness, reliability, impartiality, completeness, interactivity, and service attitude. In theory, the government's communication strategy aims to ensure that the public can simultaneously know and experience the impact of the implemented policies and programs. This is as stated in Alon-Barkat (2020) research that branding carried out by the government is a form of communication, in the form of institutional names, logos, colors and images. This has a positive emotional effect on citizens to view public organizations and their policies and services more favourably.

Communication strategy includes stages from planning, implementation to evaluation. Furthermore, at the implementation stage, it is built through tactics with more strategic steps (Gregory, 2010). Communication strategy planning consists of stages such as *participation selected methods, facilitation of information elicitation, response mode, information input, medium of information transfer, and facilitation of aggregation*, (Rowe & Frewer, 2005). Strategy is part of planning to support implementation, such as determining

goals, audiences, and actors, and identifying challenges, while tactics are formulated for the implementation. In short, strategy is how to carry out communication in order to achieve goals and tactics are what will be done.

Social Media for Government

The use of social media for government is an effort to manage transparency, sharing, openness, and collaboration that is facilitated (or fostered) by social media (Khan, 2017). Governments use social media for more than tweets, posts, likes, and shares. It is a communication strategy through efforts to build a social media presence (for example, creating a Facebook fan page or a government Twitter account), but must be complemented by a governance culture of sharing, transparency, openness, and collaboration.

The use of social media in government as well as the use of technology, information, and other communications. This requires several strategies to be effective designing a social media utilization strategy, determining the need for a social media policy, designing online tactics, and regular social media measurement. (Mergel, n.d 2016), defines three main strategies for integrating social media activities in government:

1. Representation in the form of push-forward information activities that rely on official publications and existing information such as press releases, public announcements, and general dissemination of official data;
2. Engagement is receiving information from users and following office or agency representatives on social media;
3. Networks where the government listens passively and monitors the responses and information that users bring to social media discourse.

Her follow-up research, recommends stages in the use of social media for government including experimentation, consolidation, and formalization of norms and behaviour.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative approach with the Systematic Literature Network Analysis (SLNA) method. This method combines the search structure in a Systematic Literature Review and analysis in Network Analysis. According to Kitchenham (2007), Systematic Literature Review is an appropriate method for identifying available research that is relevant to a

particular research question, topic area, or particular phenomenon. Furthermore, Network Analysis itself aims to carry out analysis and visualization of bibliographic networks (Strozzi et al., 2017).

Planning

At the planning stage, the researcher identified the focus and limitations of the research using the PICOC (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes and Context) approach, as follows:

Table 1. Research Coverage

Criteria	Coverage
<i>Population</i>	Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes dan Context
<i>Intervention</i>	Branding
<i>Comparison</i>	-
<i>Outcomes</i>	Branding, Social Media, Public Sector or Government
<i>Context</i>	Branding using social media for Public Sector or Government

This research uses two data sources, namely through the aggregator Emerald Insight (<https://www.emerald.com/insight/>) and Science Direct (<https://www.sciencedirect.com>). These two data sources were chosen because they have easy access to articles and keyword searches, by searching scientific articles in this study using the Boolean operator search method, which includes the use of OR, AND, and NOT together with keywords. The following are the search criteria used:

Table 2. Search Strategy

Data source	Search Strategy
Emerald Insight	("public" OR "government") AND ("branding" OR "brand" OR "mark") AND "social media"
Science Direct	("public" OR "government") AND ("branding" OR "brand" OR "mark") AND "social media"

Selection Criteria

Based on the search strategy in table 2, inclusion and exclusion criteria were also prepared to sort articles based on scope and research needs with the criteria detailed in table 3.

Table 3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Selection Phase	Inclusion	Exclusion
Keywords	Research Paper	Not Research Access
	Open Access	Close Access
	2018-2022	Not in between 2018-2022
	English	Other than English
Title & Abstract	Contains three discussions regarding government/public sector, social media, and branding.	Contains a discussion from government/public sector, social media, and branding.

This research uses the tools <https://picoportal.net/> to screen the title and abstract stages so that they comply with the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

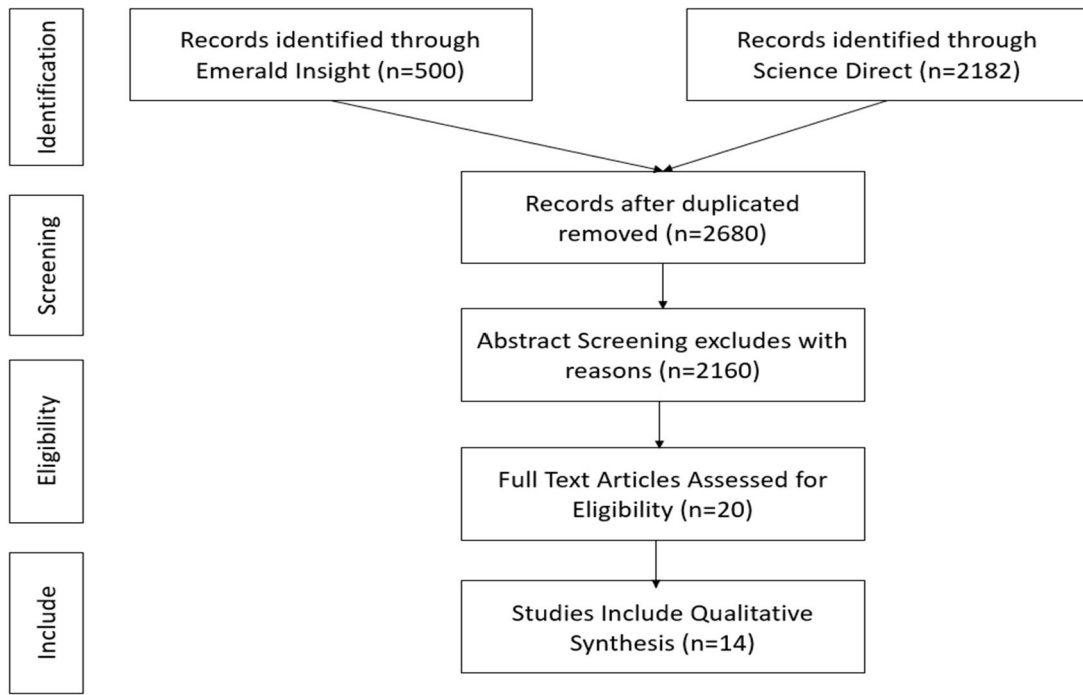
Report

Articles that have passed the screening phase need to undergo quality testing to ensure that the data and information needed in the research are included in the article.

Table 4. Search Results Quality Assessment

Test	Criteria
1	Have a clear background explanation of the problem
2	Have clear research objectives
3	Contains State of the Art or includes previous research
4	Explain the research methods used
5	Explain the research results
6	Have clear research conclusions
7	Determine suggestions for further research or include research limitations

Based on the quality test assessment, 14 articles were found that could be extracted. The details of the selection at each stage can be seen in the following image:

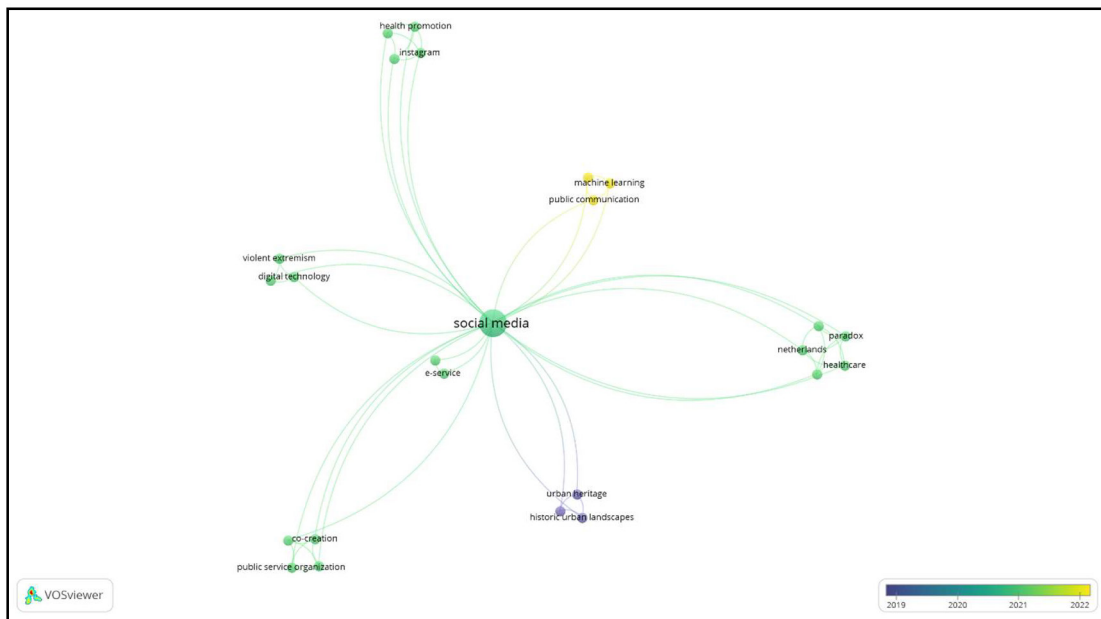


PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta Analyses)

The analysis in this research uses two types of analysis, namely network analysis and descriptive qualitative analysis. Network analysis is used to see the interconnectedness of keywords and patterns of research topics regarding social media in the 2018-2022 period. Furthermore, descriptive qualitative analysis is used to map the extraction results according to the problem formulation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the selected articles, it was mapped that there were no articles published in 2018 that were included in the extraction stage. Meanwhile, there are two articles published in 2019 and four articles published in 2020, 2021 and 2022 each.



Article Keyword Mapping Using Vosviewer

RQ1: Government Programs or Policies Communicated via Social Media

Based on VosViewer’s analysis, it is known that the selected articles in 2019 discussed the use of social media to disseminate information related to urban heritage and the history of urban landscapes (van der Hoeven, 2019). Meanwhile, in selected articles published in 2020-2021, the discussion is more diverse, such as the use of social media to carry out health campaigns (Pinto et al., 2021; Jalonen et al., 2021). This is in line with the Covid-19 pandemic that year. Apart from that, discussions regarding the use of technology in the government sector for public services are also found in four articles. Other selected article topics discuss efforts to communicate about tourism (Chatterjee & Dsilva, 2021) and extreme violence (Amit et al., 2021a). Furthermore, selected articles published in 2022 discuss politics (Hamid et al., 2022) and climate change (Ling et al., 2022).

The selected articles specifically discuss the use of social media as a way for the government to carry out public communication without a specific context are 6 articles (Hariguna et al., 2019; Chaudhri et al., 2021; Mariutti & Engracia Giralddi, 2021; Kotnisa & Guzowska, 2021; Fissi et al., 2022; Müller, 2022). Apart from that, the use of machine learning analysis on social media data is also a new topic in research on social media (Reisach, 2021). The social media most widely used by the government is Instagram (Pinto et al., 2021; Kotnisa & Guzowska, 2021; Ling et al., 2022), and Facebook (van der Hoeven, 2019; Amit et al., 2021b; Kotnisa & Guzowska, 2021; Ling et al., 2022), then followed by Twitter

(van der Hoeven, 2019; Kotnisa & Guzowska, 2021; Ling et al., 2022) and blogs or websites (Hariguna et al., 2019; van der Hoeven, 2019). Meanwhile, other articles do not specifically mention the form of social media platforms used.

RQ2: Government Goals in Using Social Media

The government's range of issues via social media aims to increase public awareness along with community involvement, improve the government's reputation on these issues, and increase both social and economic impacts. The following is in line with (Khan, n.d.) that the aim of using social media by the government is for transparency, sharing, openness, and collaboration.

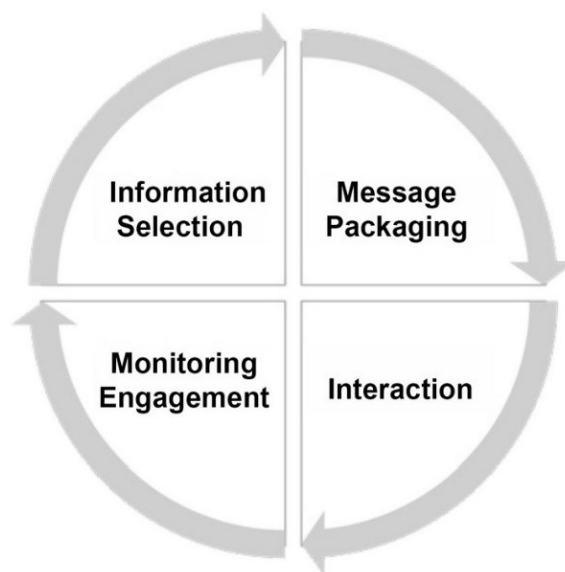
Based on selected articles, shows that awareness is the most frequently achieved communication goal in seven articles (Mariutti & Engracia Giraldi, 2021; Chatterjee & Dsilva, 2021; Pinto et al., 2021; Kotnisa & Guzowska, 2021; Amit et al., 2021b; Jalonen et al., 2021; Hamid et al., 2022). This is where government social media platforms provide quality information related to an issue. As found in Jalonen et al., 2021, there are groups of people who do not know how to get public services. So, government platforms on social media can reach this. Furthermore, it provides information to the public regarding programs, products, and even activities carried out by the government (Kotnisa & Guzowska, 2021).

Furthermore, engagement was found in five selected articles, namely (van der Hoeven, 2019; Hariguna et al., 2019; Ling et al., 2022; Müller, 2022; Fissi et al., 2022). One form of engagement found is in handling Covid-19. Social media platforms are useful as a forum for interaction between the government and society to find a middle ground between the needs of society and the efforts made by the government, even though in the end there is no public satisfaction with government policies (Fissi et al., 2022). Then the reputation was found in two selected articles (Chaudhri et al., 2021; Reisach, 2021). This form of reputation can be done to build the government's image, as per research (Chaudhri et al., 2021) which tries to evaluate the use of social media to restore the poor image of health services by the government.

RQ3: Government Communication Strategy in Utilizing Social Media

The government's communication strategy through the use of social media found in the selected articles mapped into four stages, namely the stage of identifying and selecting the information that needs to be conveyed, the second stage of packaging messages through content, the third stage of building interactions with other users, and finally monitoring the

reach of information. In line with (Mergel, n.d.) who states that the strategy for managing social media includes four stages, Pushing Content, Pulling Content, Networking/Mingling, and Customer Services. Furthermore, (“Social Media in the Public Sector,” 2016b) also states that communication strategies in social media include: designing social media utilization strategies, determining the need for social media policies, designing online tactics, and regular social media measurement.



Stages of Government Communication Strategy via Social Media

Source: Author’s Processed Results, 2023

- **The Information Selection Stage** is where it is necessary to prioritize facts, press releases, and web content on social media channels to inform and educate the public (Mergel, n.d.). Furthermore, in selected articles, the selection of information also needs to prioritize user interests, for example by adapting the information to current trends. Information regarding laws and the profile of government institutions is often of little interest (Pinto et al., 2021; Müller, 2022). Furthermore, the quality and accuracy of government information channels are important because they will be a reference for many parties (Chatterjee & Dsilva, 2021; Hamid et al., 2022; Ling et al., 2022).
- **The Message Packaging Stage** requires active efforts to present insights, feedback, and even product explanations, such as in the form of videos, images, comments, and even blog posts (Mergel, n.d.). Apart from that, managing messages received on social media

and packaging messages with discussion concepts or stories is more interactive than one-way messages, such as photos (van der Hoeven, 2019; Jalonen et al., 2021; Reisach, 2021; Müller, 2022). Apart from that, messages via interactive photos and hashtags can trigger interaction (Pinto et al., 2021).

- **The Interaction Stage** can be built through responding to comments or messages or re-posting information from other users (Chaudhri et al., 2021; Chatterjee & Dsilva, 2021). Collaborative activities with other users, such as influencers, can encourage broader interaction (Pinto et al., 2021). Interaction on social media can also be through passive listening, checking facts, and understanding current issues discussed (Mergel, n.d.)
- **The Monitoring Stage** which can be carried out through social media analysis or evaluating testimonials and messages submitted by users (Hariguna et al., 2019; Chaudhri et al., 2021; Jalonen et al., 2021). Analytical media can be used for accurate measurements.

RQ4: Impact of Government Public Communication through the Use of Social Media

The government uses social media for public communication with certain purposes. As discussed in RQ2, the results of the selected articles show that there are three objectives in public communication via social media, namely awareness, engagement, and reputation. In principle, impact is a measure of the success of achieving a goal. Impact is anything that arises as a result of an event and produces changes that have a positive or negative effect on individuals or groups in society (Irwan, 2015).

Based on 14 selected articles, it was found that the impact of the government's use of social media as part of its public communication strategy is three things, namely: awareness, engagement, and reputation. This impact indicator is no different from the government's goals in utilizing social media. However, there are differences in results between objectives and impacts. In terms of impact, engagement was found in seven selected articles (Hariguna et al., 2019; van der Hoeven, 2019; Chaudhri et al., 2021; Chatterjee & Dsilva, 2021; Fissi et al., 2022; Ling et al., 2022; Müller, 2022), awareness was found in six articles (Chaudhri et al., 2021; Pinto et al., 2021; Amit et al., 2021b; Jalonen et al., 2021; Kotnisa & Guzowska, 2021; Reisach, 2021), while reputation was only found in three articles (Hariguna et al., 2019; Mariutti & Engracia Giraldi, 2021; Hamid et al., 2022). This shows that not all strategies are successful in achieving awareness goals, but the right strategy to achieve awareness can also generate engagement.

Furthermore, the impact of awareness is manifested in a better public understanding of government services and policies, as well as the issues being communicated (Chaudhri et al., 2021; Jalonen et al., 2021; Reisach, 2021). Meanwhile, engagement takes the form of two-way interactions on social media platforms (van der Hoeven, 2019; Ling et al., 2022; Müller, 2022) as well as community involvement in showing action on government programs (Chatterjee & Dsilva, 2021). Reputation is demonstrated through increased public trust through interactions (Hariguna et al., 2019; Hamid et al., 2022). Apart from that, one article (Mariutti & Engracia Giraldi, 2021) states that social media is a component, the same way cultural and political dimensions, considering different country conditions. It is a form of communication that continually influences people's perceptions of a country's reputation.

The government needs to implement a communication strategy via social media in connection with the government's mission to build an Electronic-Based Government System (SPBE) based on Presidential Regulation No. 95 of 2018. The role of social media also increases government opportunities to gain support, involvement, and public trust. However, this needs to be encouraged with good social media management strategy. This is related to easy access and closer public information behaviour in using social media (Doni, 2017). However, the government's ability to manage social media is still lacking (Kavanaugh, et al, 2012). This can be seen from representation, involvement, and networking in social media management (Mergel, n.d). Representation is realized in the selection and packaging of information on social media that needs to prioritize user interests. Furthermore, engagement and networking include interactions with other users on social media, such as comments, liking, and sharing, as well as monitoring social media management.

Other sources also mention communication strategies to increase engagement with the community, as stated by Rowe & Frewer, (2005) that mechanisms for building communication for public engagement include participation selected methods, facilitation of information elicitation, response mode, information input, medium of information transfer, and facilitation of aggregation. This stage focuses on packaging information intended for communication and hopes to get feedback in the form of participation from the audience. Communication strategy is one of the important things and it influences up to 80% of a project (Galli, 2021). However, several things may have an impact on the communication strategy that has been prepared, for example: the social media channels used, the frequency of information delivery, and responding to feedback (Galli, 2021).

CONCLUSION

The government's communication strategy via social media is a public communication effort regarding ongoing programs or policies. The form communication strategy outlined in the tactical stages found in the selected articles is in the form of four stages, such as selecting information, packaging information, building interaction, and monitoring. Furthermore, the 14 selected articles show that the topics attempted to be communicated are regarding urban planning, health, public services in general, as well as crucial issues such as violence, politics, and tourism. Furthermore, social media utilization in government public communications aims for awareness, engagement, and increasing reputation. The findings of this research show that the government is using more social media to increase public awareness of an issue by providing accurate and reliable information.

However, the impact produced through the use of social media by the government shows more interaction than awareness. This research is limited to the methods used and the context of communication strategies within the scope of tactics. Further research needs to be carried out to find out more deeply about the components and values needed in carrying out public communication through the use of social media.

Based on this research, the government needs to have clear guidelines and policies on the use of social media, and continue to monitor technological developments and people's behavior to overcome these problems. In addition, listening to input from the public and communicating with them openly is also important to maintain good relations between the government and citizens.

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