Optimization of Cyber PR at Private Universities in Yogyakarta

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain the optimization of cyber PR at private universities in Yogyakarta. High internet penetration in the community forces public relations to utilize communication technology. Thus, this research was conducted at five universities in Yogyakarta based on webometrics rank of 2016/2017 i.e., UII, UMY, UAD, UAJY, and Amikom through observation, interview, and physical and online document search. It is revealed that the public relations in universities not only connect institutions and students or government but also form the universities' positive image to attract the public's attention. There are eight components played by private universities in their activities: credibility, context, content, clarity, channel, continuity and consistency, capability of the audience, and connectivity. Communication is the most influential key element in cyber-PR activity. Consequently, this should be managed maximally by universities to create a positive image.

Keywords: Cyber PR, communication, new media, university, Yogyakarta

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjelaskan optimalisasi cyber cyber di universitas swasta di Yogyakarta. Penetrasi internet yang tinggi di masyarakat memaksa public relations untuk memanfaatkan teknologi komunikasi. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini dilakukan di lima universitas di Yogyakarta berdasarkan peringkat webometrik 2016/2017 yaitu, UII, UMY, UAD, UAJY, dan Amikom melalui observasi, wawancara, dan pencarian dokumen fisik dan online. Terungkap bahwa hubungan masyarakat di universitas tidak hanya menghubungkan institusi dan mahasiswa atau pemerintah tetapi juga membentuk citra positif universitas untuk menarik perhatian publik. Ada delapan komponen yang dimainkan oleh universitas swasta dalam kegiatan mereka: kredibilitas, konteks, konten, kejelasan, saluran, kontinuitas dan konsistensi, kemampuan audiensi, dan konektivitas. Komunikasi adalah elemen kunci yang paling berpengaruh dalam aktivitas cyber-PR. Akibatnya, ini harus dikelola secara maksimal oleh universitas untuk menciptakan citra positif.

Kata kunci: Cyber PR, komunikasi, media baru, universitas, Yogyakarta

1.0 Introduction

Since it is breakthrough emergence in 1969 and rapid growth in the 90s, the internet has provided ease of work in various industries, including communications [1].

Owing to various innovations by the Internet, the communications industry has been able to solve communication constraints which are spatial and easy to consume. One of which is a public relations activity. If previously PR activities rely on information on conventional

media such as television and newspapers, then by the rapid growth of the Internet, public relations activities switch to a digital channel or what is referred to as Cyber PR. Generally, cyber PR is seen as a form of functional operation in cyberspace in the practice of PR work [2].

The concept of cyber PR is a dynamic touch in communicating using online media that allows public relations practitioners to design experience with their public in a more personal and interactive manner, resulting in individual interpretation of the communities involved. Some of the advantages of cyber homework are the ease of designing and sending messages, to become far more challenging to build relationships with people connected to technology, and intensify and accelerate the search for meaning [3].

Cyber PR becomes a popular activity as it is widely used by companies and organizations in public relations. In addition to being a perfect solution for communication spatial constraints, cyber PR provides advantages over PR activity by using conventional media. Among other things, it can build a strong relationship between companies or organizations with the public because it uses a two-way communication so that the interaction between the two become more personal, something which cannot be done directly by the media such as television and newspapers. Another advantage is saving money. In cyber homework, internet costs are much cheaper than ads used in newspapers or television [4].

The communication technology especially by way of Internet use has become a modern new culture. Thus, it is inevitable for the public relations profession to use the internet in carrying out its duties, because in addition to the demands of the times and circumstances, the use of internet is proven to bring about several benefits and advantages in the field of public relations. Especially in terms of imaging, the Internet can convey any information more quickly to the target public. In addition, the internet can also serve as a medium for advertising or marketing activities. Moreover, internet technology is not limited by space and time, and now everyone can access the internet easily. This

is evidenced by the data of internet users in Indonesia in 2016. According to the Association of Internet Service Providers Indonesia the internet users have reached the number of 132.7 million residents of the total population of 256.2 million people with penetration of 51.8%. This is seen as a huge leap taking place within only two years, since in 2014 the internet users in Indonesia amounted to 82.7 million people with penetration 34.9%. In other words, it means that internet users in Indonesia have increased approximately by 50 million people. Furthermore, it is noteworthy that Internet users access educational content with 93, 8% [5].

This gives an idea that the Indonesian people access various educational information about scholarship information, school information, and college information through the website and social media. The cyber PR allows a PR in carrying out its duties in shaping a positive image of a college. On this basis, this study aims to explain the optimization of cyber PR capacity at universities in Yogyakarta.

Vivian reveals that new media is a product emerging from new technology [6]. New media can also be defined as media that uses the internet, technologically-based online media characterized by flexibility, interactive potential and flexibility for both personal and public work [7]. According to Abrar in Iriantara [8], the presence of new media raises various consequences, including changes in the value system and norms and the transfer of some of that authority to communications technology. As for the social consequences, Abrar mentions social relations change and social transformation. Those ultimately lead to changes in human communication behavior. Not only to familiarize ourself with the communication activities that provide computers but also the increasing aspiration to the speed of information to the audience. The audience began to aspire information so that in an instant it could be conveyed completely and intact which may change the practice of journalism.

2.0   Method

Researcher chose five universities in Yogyakarta, UII, UMY, UAD, UAJY, and Amikom. The selection is based on the best private university rankings in Yogyakarta in 2015-2017 version of BAN PT, which is one of the benchmarks of the quality of a university in Indonesia. The five universities are also included in the top 30 webometric ratings from 487 universities, where webometric is currently used as a benchmark for the number of web users access from universities. Researchers choose private universities because at this time the number of private universities in Indonesia is more numerous than the state universities, so that the more number leads to tighter competition between the private universities to admit more students. To analyze the data, the researcher interviewed the PR division. The researcher also searched documents online, be it websites, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube.

3.0   Findings and Discussion

As previously mentioned, cyber public relations is a public relations strategy that promotes the use of online media in its publications and for public relations with a company. The public of a college is closely related to society, students, parents, government, and other stake holders. Students are one of the assets for universities for the sustainability of their institutions, especially private universities. The implementation of regional autonomy enables the development of private universities, especially in urban areas in each province. Thus, public relations in universities are entitled to not only bridge the relationship between institutions and students, related institutions, government, but also form a positive image to get the attention of the community.

In line with technological developments, it will be too restricted for public relations communication to rely solely on traditional mass media. The public interest of digital activity can be quite high, especially in accessing information. This is evidenced from a survey conducted by Onggo [4], that 95% of participants prefer accessing articles or news from the internet. Although the main focus of cyber public relations activities is on the online market, it will be more optimum when combined with public relations activities offline.

All public relations divisions at these five colleges interpret cyber homework as the use of online media such as websites and other social media as the most effective medium for dissemination of information that can reach many people quickly and can generate feedback. The online media used by the five colleges are the website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube. The various online media is utilized to implement cyber PR in the form of communication facilities of internal and external agencies, media relations, promotion, and management of public information.

According to Dowling [9], there are three major roles of public relations that can be used to enhance the organization's reputation. It is possible to run the three roles through online media, namely:

a. Direct external communication designed to raise awareness and understanding and appreciation from the mainstream public. The external communications activities of the public relations division are consistently conducted through online media which is useful for updating information to the public. The information is related to college achievements and related efforts to enhance the reputation of a world-class research university.
b. Maintain or explain the company's actions. In performing this role, the public relations division uses social media. To maintain and explain the action, the public relations division interacts with the community to find the point of the problem and then explains the intent of the action to create a common perception of the action.
c. Internal communication about the company so that employees will feel the inclusion as part of the company. Public Relations division continues to inform people about the current

situation through internal Facebook groups or through publications in online media as part of internal communications. In fact, the role run by the public relations division is external and internal communication. The role of maintaining or explaining corporate action through interaction takes place more on topics than related to a world-class research university. Some of the most frequently discussed topics are admission of new students, research, cooperation, and achievement.

Based on the results of cyber PR performance analysis at the five universities, researchers found a dominant feature that appears on the five online media. First, it is the nature of two-way communication. Facebook is a new medium characterized by two-way communication because it allows the occurrence of two-way communication between universities with the public through the comments column. There are many conversations about frequently asked questions in Facebook comments. It is different with Instagram which does not allow two-way communication since the college uses excellent visual communication. While Youtube is an audiovisual medium which requires time consuming content editing, so there is no two-way communication through this medium. Second, it is institutionalized and individualized communication. The public of website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube is immense, and there is no limit of direction for delivered message. Third, information received by the public is not simultaneously but it is conveyed as needed. The information on the website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube is not delievered simultaneously but it is done according to public needs. Fourth, the public is heterogeneous and homogeneous. With a very broad public target it is very possible for the website, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Youtube to reach out to a diverse public, both homogeneous and heterogeneous public. These five online media do not have the characteristics of new media that is the personal message content. This is because the five social media belongs to a college that is addressed to the broad public, unlike a personal account that can be used to communicate interpersonally.

In its implementation, cyber PR involves the interaction and dissemination of messages. Cutlip [10] offers 7C as the aspects to be used for interaction and dissemination of the message to go well.

a. Credibility
   In every message delivered to the public, the Public Relation Division always includes some figures with exceptional educational background, such as master's degree, doctorate to professor. Thus the public will be more confident in the content of the news.

b. Context
   With the background as an educational institution, most of the information provided through press releases, video news and interactions has to do with scholarship and research.

c. Content
   This factor can be seen from the content of messages in press releases and interactions in social media. The contents of the message distributed by the Public Relation Division also answer the needs of the community.

d. Clarity
   To create meaning equations then the language used in every form of cyber PR implementation by the Public Relation Division is a simple Indonesian language for ease of understanding of the community.

e. Continuity and consistency
   The Public Relations Division consistently produces press releases, video news in accordance with the latest information obtained.

f. Channel
   To spread the message and interact with the community, the Public Relation Division uses a lot of media accessible by the public that is official website and social media like Twitter, Facebook and Youtube.

g. Capability of the audience

Considering the time allowed, every press release and video news is made as not too long for ease of reading or watching

Based on the findings, not only 7C was encountered in the implementation of cyber PR in Yogyakarta universities. There is one aspect that can be added due to the advantages offered by online media, which is connectivity. Connectivity built by the five public relations division of these colleges is connecting the comment column of the press release with facebook. Thus the reader can easily comment while connected with Facebook. Connectivity can also be seen from automatic press release dissemination on Facebook and Twitter along with the time in which the press release is posted on the website.

4.0   Conclusions

Cyber PR optimization is not limited to the above activities, but there are more options to use to help build the image of private college institutions. However, again it depends on the character of the related private and public colleges. So, before determining the right cyber strategy to use, the most fundamental thing to do is to conduct market research first. In a PR cyber activity, a PR needs to consider how to design experience that gives good feelings, shares emotions, and builds feelings that are aligned with the development and adjustment of PR activities. Communication is the key activity that plays a role in creating a good reality. It is possible to manage the reality of private universities via the internet as appropriate to create a positive image.

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