

Social Media-Based Public Relations Strategies for Strengthening Institutional Image in Educational Institutions

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Keywords:	Educational institutions increasingly utilized digital communication
Public Relations;	platforms to strengthen institutional visibility and public engagement.
Social Media	However, many institutions still experienced difficulties in strategically
Strategy;	managing social media as a public relations tool to support institutional
Institutional	image development and communication effectiveness. Limited
Reputation;	communication strategies often reduced stakeholder interaction and
Digital	weakened institutional reputation in digital environments.
Communication;	
Educational	This study investigated the role of social media-based public relations
Development	strategies in strengthening institutional image in educational institutions.
	The contribution of this research was to provide an educational
	development perspective on how digital communication practices could
	enhance institutional reputation and stakeholder engagement.
	A qualitative descriptive approach was employed. Data were collected
	through interviews, documentation, and observation of institutional
	social media communication practices. The data were analyzed using an
	interactive qualitative analysis model.
	The results showed that social media significantly supported institutional
	communication and public relations activities. Strategic content
	management improved information dissemination and increased
	audience engagement. Social media also enhanced institutional visibility
	and strengthened public trust. In addition, consistent digital
	communication facilitated transparent interaction between institutions
	and stakeholders.
	In conclusion, social media-based public relations strategies played a
	crucial role in strengthening institutional image and improving
	communication effectiveness in educational institutions.

I. Introduction

The rapid development of digital communication technology has transformed the way organizations communicate with their stakeholders, including educational institutions (Mazur-Wierzbicka, 2021; Morales et al., 2023; Taher, 2023). Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter have become important channels for disseminating information, strengthening public engagement, and building institutional reputation in the digital era. In the context of educational organizations, communication strategies increasingly rely on digital media to enhance institutional visibility and maintain relationships with the public and other stakeholders (Al-Hail et al., 2024; Górska, 2024; Jain et al., 2024; Yue et al., 2023). Consequently, the role of public relations has become more strategic in managing institutional communication and shaping a positive institutional image in the digital environment.

Institutional image plays a crucial role in influencing public trust, stakeholder engagement, and organizational sustainability. Educational institutions with a strong and positive image tend to attract greater public attention, increase student enrollment, and strengthen stakeholder support (Manzoor et al., 2021; Seow & Hussain, 2024). However, several studies have highlighted that many institutions still face difficulties in effectively managing digital communication strategies, particularly in utilizing social media as a strategic tool for public relations activities. Ineffective communication management can limit information dissemination, reduce public engagement, and weaken institutional credibility in competitive educational environments (García-Rodríguez & Gutiérrez-Taño, 2024; Pinna et al., 2023). Previous studies have emphasized that communication management and institutional

reputation are closely related to the effectiveness of public relations practices and digital communication strategies.

Recent studies have explored the growing importance of social media in organizational communication and reputation management (Alghamdi et al., 2023; Yan et al., 2022). Research has shown that social media provides opportunities for organizations to interact directly with audiences, disseminate information rapidly, and strengthen relationships with stakeholders. In the context of education, social media can support institutional promotion, communication transparency, and digital engagement between institutions and communities (Odoom, 2025; Schuessler et al., 2026). Nevertheless, many educational institutions still utilize social media primarily for information broadcasting rather than strategic communication management. As a result, the potential of social media to support institutional development and reputation building remains underutilized.

Previous research has also highlighted the role of public relations in strengthening institutional communication and managing organizational reputation (Lim & Young, 2021; Vogler & Eisenegger, 2021). Studies have demonstrated that effective public relations strategies can improve institutional credibility, enhance stakeholder relationships, and strengthen organizational identity. In addition, several studies have emphasized the importance of digital communication competence in public relations management, particularly in the context of social media communication (Lim & Jiang, 2021; Mundy, 2021; Tam et al., 2022). However, most previous studies have focused on corporate communication or business organizations, while the role of social media-based public relations strategies in educational institutions has received relatively limited attention.

Furthermore, existing literature has examined various aspects of social media communication, including digital engagement, online reputation management, and strategic communication practices. Research findings indicate that consistent digital communication, interactive content strategies, and audience engagement can significantly influence public perception and institutional image (Uhodnikova et al., 2024). Nevertheless, the integration of social media communication within educational public relations strategies remains an emerging research area. Many institutions still lack systematic approaches for managing digital communication in ways that effectively strengthen institutional reputation and stakeholder trust.

Based on these considerations, it is important to examine how public relations strategies utilizing social media can contribute to strengthening institutional image within educational institutions. This study therefore aims to analyze the role of social media-based public relations strategies in building institutional image and improving communication effectiveness in educational environments.

The novelty of this research lies in integrating perspectives of public relations communication and educational development in analyzing social media communication strategies within educational institutions. Unlike many previous studies that focus primarily on corporate communication contexts, this research emphasizes the role of digital communication practices in supporting institutional development and reputation management in the educational sector.

The contribution of this research is to provide insights into how social media-based public relations strategies can enhance institutional communication, strengthen institutional image, and improve stakeholder engagement in educational institutions. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of communication strategies and digital media management practices that support institutional sustainability and educational development in the digital era.

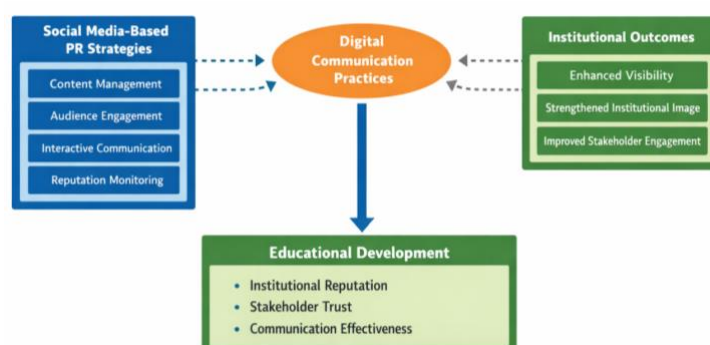


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of Social Media-Based Public Relations in Educational Institutions

II. Method

This study employed a qualitative approach with a descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the study aimed to obtain an in-depth understanding of the role of Public Relations in building institutional image through social media, particularly in terms of communication strategies, content management, and interaction with the public. In qualitative research, social reality is viewed as dynamic and complex; therefore, it requires a comprehensive exploration of the social phenomena being studied. This approach enabled the researchers to analyze how Public Relations activities are implemented in digital communication environments and how these activities contribute to institutional image building (Johnson & Christensen, 2014; Litchman, 2023).

The descriptive method was used to systematically describe the practices of Public Relations in utilizing social media as a medium for institutional image development. Rather than testing hypotheses, this study focused on exploring and interpreting communication practices that occur naturally within the institutional environment.

Research Location and Object

The research was conducted in an institution that actively utilized social media platforms, particularly Instagram, as part of its communication strategy. The institution's social media accounts were managed by the Public Relations unit, which was responsible for disseminating information and maintaining communication with the public.

The object of this study was the role of Public Relations in building institutional image through social media. The analysis focused on several key aspects, including communication strategies implemented by the Public Relations team, the types of content published on social media platforms, patterns of interaction with audiences, and efforts undertaken to maintain a positive institutional image in digital spaces.

Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected through documentation and observation of social media activities conducted by the institution. Documentation included digital content, institutional communication materials, and visual campaign records published on the institution's official social media platforms. Observation was carried out to examine how Public Relations activities were implemented in social media communication, including the form of content presentation, audience engagement patterns, and communication strategies used to convey institutional messages.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using a qualitative descriptive analysis technique. The analysis involved several stages, including data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction was conducted by selecting and organizing relevant information related to Public Relations communication practices. Data display was performed by presenting the findings in a structured form to facilitate interpretation. Finally, conclusions were drawn to identify the role and contribution of Public Relations activities in strengthening institutional image through social media communication.

III. Results and Discussion

Social Media Utilization as a Strategic Public Relations Medium

The findings of this study indicate that social media, particularly Instagram, was strategically utilized by the Public Relations unit as a communication platform to strengthen institutional image. The institution consistently used social media to disseminate information, promote organizational activities, and engage with the public through digital communication. This practice demonstrates that social media functions not only as an information channel but also as a strategic communication tool in managing institutional reputation in the digital era.

Observations of the institution's official social media account showed that the Public Relations team regularly published content related to institutional activities, educational information, and social campaigns (Facchini et al., 2022). The consistent publication of such content indicates that social media served as an official communication medium that supported institutional visibility and strengthened the institution's presence in digital spaces. These findings confirm that digital

platforms have become essential instruments for organizations to manage public perception and institutional reputation.

Public Relations Roles in Social Media Content Management

The results further revealed that Public Relations played an important role in managing communication messages and maintaining institutional image through structured content planning. Rather than publishing content spontaneously, the Public Relations team developed communication materials based on specific communication objectives and institutional priorities. This strategic approach enabled the institution to present consistent and credible messages to the public.

The most dominant content identified in the institution's social media communication consisted of educational information and social awareness campaigns. Educational content allowed the institution to provide informative messages to the public, while social campaigns strengthened the institution's image as a socially responsible organization (Chang & Ke, 2024; Tetreva et al., 2021). These practices demonstrate that Public Relations activities in digital media extend beyond information dissemination and include educational functions that contribute to public awareness and social engagement.

Health Education Campaigns as an Institutional Image-Building Strategy

One of the key findings of this study was the role of Public Relations in implementing health education campaigns through social media platforms. Campaigns such as "Pulmonary Hypertension Awareness" and "Combating Cervical Cancer Hoaxes" were designed to increase public awareness regarding health issues while also addressing misinformation circulating in digital environments.

The campaigns were presented through visually engaging content and educational messages aimed at encouraging public participation and awareness. Through these initiatives, the institution positioned itself as an organization that actively contributed to public health education and social responsibility. The campaigns also reflected the institution's commitment to providing credible information and supporting community well-being.

From a communication perspective, such campaigns strengthened institutional credibility and enhanced public trust. By addressing relevant social issues and providing educational content, Public Relations activities contributed to shaping a positive institutional image in digital environments.

Digital Interaction Patterns between Public Relations and Audiences

The findings also demonstrated that Public Relations implemented two-way communication through social media interaction with audiences. The Public Relations team actively responded to comments, questions, and feedback from social media users, creating a more interactive and participatory communication environment.

Interactive communication practices were observed in comment sections and discussion threads, where audiences were able to engage with institutional messages and share their perspectives. Such interaction indicates that social media communication enabled institutions to build closer relationships with stakeholders and maintain active engagement with their audiences.

Furthermore, interactive content tended to generate higher engagement compared to purely informational content. This finding suggests that communication strategies that encourage audience participation are more effective in strengthening institutional relationships with the public.

Table 1. Summary of Research Findings

Research Aspect	Key Findings	Implications for Institutional Image
Social Media Utilization	Instagram was used as a strategic communication platform by the Public Relations unit.	Strengthened institutional visibility and improved digital communication with the public.
Content Management	The dominant content consisted of educational information and social awareness campaigns.	Built the perception of the institution as informative, responsible, and socially engaged.
Health Education Campaigns	Public Relations conducted digital campaigns addressing health awareness and misinformation.	Reinforced the institution's credibility and commitment to public welfare.

Audience Interaction	Two-way communication was implemented through responses to comments and questions from audiences.	Increased audience engagement and strengthened relationships with stakeholders.
Institutional Image Formation	Social media communication contributed to the perception of the institution as credible, responsive, and socially responsible.	Enhanced public trust and strengthened institutional reputation in digital environments.

Research Limitations and Future Research

Despite providing valuable insights into the role of social media-based public relations in institutional image building, this study has several limitations. First, the research focused on a single institutional case, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other educational institutions. Second, the study relied primarily on qualitative observation and documentation of social media activities, which may not fully capture audience perceptions and responses.

Future research is recommended to expand the scope of analysis by involving multiple educational institutions and incorporating quantitative approaches to measure audience engagement and perception more systematically. In addition, further studies may explore the integration of digital communication strategies with educational development and learning technologies in order to strengthen institutional communication practices in the digital era.

IV. Conclusion

This study investigated the role of Public Relations in building institutional image through the strategic use of social media, particularly Instagram, as a digital communication platform. The findings revealed that social media has become an essential tool for Public Relations in disseminating institutional information, managing communication with stakeholders, and strengthening organizational reputation in the digital era. The results showed that consistent content management, educational campaigns, and interactive communication patterns significantly contributed to shaping a positive institutional image characterized by credibility, social responsibility, and responsiveness to public needs.

The findings extend previous studies on digital public relations and social media communication by demonstrating that social media is not only a promotional medium but also a strategic platform for educational communication and public awareness campaigns. This study highlights the importance of integrating educational content, social campaigns, and interactive engagement as part of institutional communication strategies to enhance public trust and institutional legitimacy. Therefore, the study contributes theoretically to the development of digital public relations and communication strategies in educational institutions within the context of digital transformation.

From a practical perspective, the findings suggest that Public Relations practitioners in educational institutions should prioritize strategic content planning, educational campaign development, and two-way digital communication to strengthen institutional reputation and public engagement. Effective social media management can serve as an important instrument for improving institutional visibility, credibility, and long-term public trust.

However, this study has limitations, particularly in focusing on a specific institutional context and a single social media platform. Future studies are recommended to examine broader digital communication ecosystems, including multi-platform social media strategies, audience engagement analytics, and comparative analysis across different educational institutions. Further research using quantitative or mixed-method approaches would also provide deeper insights into the measurable impact of digital public relations strategies on institutional image, reputation, and stakeholder trust.

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