



PUBLIC RELATIONS AND NEW MEDIA AT FAITH-BASED HEALTH INSTITUTION

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Abstract

This study aims to elaborate on the use of new media in the public relations of faith-based health institutions during the pandemic. Besides, this research is aimed at exploring the audience engagement from it. This research was conducted considering that theoretically, enrichment is needed to map how public relations in faith-based health institutions interact through new media to bridge the relationship between institutions and stakeholders, preach the faith mission, and develop a positive reputation for the institution. In practical terms, the study in the field is crucial to becoming lessons learned for policymakers at related institutions. This research took a case study at the PKU Muhammadiyah Hospital of Yogyakarta City. The institution was chosen because it represents a health institution under the official auspices of one of the most prominent faith-based organizations in the world, Muhammadiyah, and uses new media intensively to communicate with stakeholders during the pandemic. This type of research is mixed-method research with a qualitative approach using percentage statistical data. Data collection techniques used are documentation through the Instagram contents of PKU Muhammadiyah of Yogyakarta City. The findings show that the use of Instagram by PKU Muhammadiyah Hospital in Yogyakarta City has reflected a weighting that is in accordance with the character of the organization as a faith-based health institution. Audience effect conversions are dominated by product branding content. The discourse raised in the communication process through new media in this study is how to combine religious messages with product and corporate branding.

Keywords: *New Media, Public Relations, Faith-Based Health Institution, Audience Engagement*

INTRODUCTION

The oldest, the biggest, and the most progressive organization. Notably, those are the three main images related to Muhammadiyah which was founded in 1912 (Arifin & Nurhakim, 2022; Kastolani, 2020). With the age of 109 years in 2021, Muhammadiyah is the oldest surviving faith-based organization in Indonesia incorporated in Lembaga Persahabatan Ormas Keagamaan (Religious Organizations Friendship Institute). Therefrom, Muhammadiyah has now broadened its faith-based social service, not only in the area of education, but also health, law, and environment.

At the sector of business charity, Muhammadiyah is the biggest faith-based organization in Indonesia. Economics and Entrepreneurship Assembly of Central Board Muhammadiyah release that at education aspect, Muhammadiyah has 3.370 kindergarten, 5670 primary and secondary schools, and 167 higher education institution. It also has 346 charity businesses in the field of health including hospitals, polyclinics, and maternity clinics. This organization also owned 1 syariah bank, 26 rural bank (conventional and syariah), 275 Baitul Maal wa



Tamwil /Bait at-Tamwil Muhammadiyah, 1 main union of Bait at-Tamwil Muhammadiyah, 81 syariah union, 22 minimart, and 5 coastal shop. Besides, it also possess 318 orphanages, 54 nursing home, and 82 dissability rehabilitation institutions (pwmu.co).

With that long experience and great assets, Muhammadiyah also known as the progressive faith-based organization. This organization well-known for its reformist orientation since founded. Therefore, it has a positive reputation as the biggest modern Islamic movement globally. At the health sector, for example, Pembina Kesejahteraan Umat (PKU) hospital of Muhammadiyah, formerly named as Penolong Kesengsaraan Oemoem (PKO), established at 1923, become a symbol of civil society movement (Yuristiadi, 2015). Other than being the first Islamic organization to institutionally provide health services in Yogyakarta, the establishment of the PKO became a symbol of an indigenous people organization with a bargaining position that was taken into account by the Dutch colonial government.

Certainly, Muhammadiyah's success, including its health business charity, needs to be maintained by establishing good relations with stakeholders. Regarding this, many articles elaborated on public relations in faith-based organization (Bortree & Waters, 2010; Jeavons, 2004; Lane, 2003; Park & Rhee, 2010; Taliaferro & Ruggiano, 2010; Smith et al, 2021; Fauziah, 2021; Rivera, 2018). Some studies show the significance of the role of faith-based organizations in community empowerment and public health (Chowdhury, Wahab, & Islam, 2018). Nevertheless, the elaboration of public relations (PR) practices at health institutions that are based on faith-based organizations has become a critical study to accomplish.

Throughout the Covid-19 crisis, health institutions, especially hospitals, are in a dilemmatic state of PR. On the one hand, the institution appointed as a referral hospital for Covid-19 patients is proof that it has adequate quality and health facilities. However, this appointment also has implications for the decrease in the number of non-Covid-19 patients due to the growing negative perspective that the referral hospital is one of the most likely places for someone to be infected with Covid-19.

This is a challenge for PR practitioners working in these institutions. These challenges are increasingly multiplied for faith-based hospitals such as PKU Muhammadiyah Hospital, Yogyakarta City. This is due to other than protecting the safety of workers from Covid-19 and struggling to express the image of the hospital as a safe place, PR practitioners must also ensure that da'wah (preach) messages are still contained in the communication products they launch.

The dilemmatic condition as mentioned above is a significant trigger for the intense migration of communication patterns through old media to new media. Interestingly, in the digital era, new media also influence the interaction process between the communicating parties. Instead of being a channel solely that refers to the message distribution process, the use of new media also affects the production process, operationalization, and message storage (McQuail, 2010).

It is very crucial to review the PR application through the new media carried out by faith-based institution in pandemic era to gain new proficiencies for scholars and those who work on the area. The factors work on it also necessary to be elaborated to complete understanding in related fields. This study attempted to



catch the challenge by presenting a critical interpretation of PR and new media in this kind of organization. It is expected to present the theoretical contribution in PR and new media application of the field that has been less cruised. This study also headed to suggest the PR and New Media model in the related area. From the point of practical contribution, the PR practitioners and the faith preachers will obtain more apprehension in constructing PR and faith preaching through new media.

Based on the elaboration above, the objectives of this study will be directed by the questions below:

RQ 1: How does Public Relations practitioner of Faith-Based Health institution use Instagram as a part of new media?

RQ 2: How is audience engagement formed through it?

New Media

McQuail (2010: 145) and Thurlow, et al (2009: 14) simply term this new media with CMC (Computer-mediated communication). John December in Thurlow, et al (2009:15) mentions the meaning of CMC as, "...a process of human communication via computer, involving people, being in a certain context, involved in the process of forming media for various purposes". As for Rice and Gattiker (2000) termed CISs or computer-mediated communication and information systems.

Furthermore, as a communication medium that uses digital infrastructure both in distribution and how to access it, according to Rice and Gattiker (2000: 145), CIS combines four components, namely computing, telecommunications networks, information and communication sources and content digitization. Computing refers to the statement of content and structuration in communication. Telecommunications networks refer to access and connectivity to many other communication agents and to a variety of information across time and space. Sources of information and communication lead to a database of potential communities involved. Meanwhile, content digitization is the integration and exchange of various forms of communication through different media and distribution networks, such as graphics, text, video and others.

New Media Category

These new media or CIS can be classified into five categories as follows (McQuail, 2010):

- a. Interpersonal communication media. Included in this group are telephone and e-mail, which have a more personal character even though they are used within the scope of work. Generally, the content of the message is private and relational which leads to personal relationships so that it seems stronger and not just a mere formality. The relationship between the communication actors themselves may be more important than the flow of information contained.
- b. Interactive play media. Usually, this media presents virtual reality and does not show direct interaction in the virtual reality that is served. Therefore, computer-based video games that allow two or more actors to communicate directly throughout the game, even from different places, fall into this category.
- c. Information seeking media. The Internet with its search engine is an example of this category. This is because with its characters, the internet has developed into a



digital library that contains a variety of information, although on some sites the validity of the information is debated, not even rejected. However, this phenomenon does not reduce the interest of communication agents to enter information and download it via the internet.

d. The collective media of the participants. This category contains characteristics that enable users to share and exchange information and develop personal relationships mediated by computers and information systems. Social media such as Instagram, Twitter and Facebook are examples for this media group.

e. Substitution broadcast media. This category refers to the use of the Internet in the use of radio and television and other public broadcasting activities.

The new media category in which the concept is operationalized in this study is participatory collective media which is familiarly known as social media. In particular, this research will elaborate on the format of uploaded messages, both visual, audio, and audio-visual messages with various variants on Instagram at PKU Muhammadiyah Hospital, Yogyakarta City.

Audience Engagement

Meanwhile, the term "engagement" or "engagement" which is usually translated as involvement or attachment refers to the meaning of co-creation, development of decisions, and interactions (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). Various forms of the use of "engagement" such as civic engagement to consumer engagement show the existence of an attachment concept that is not exactly the same, interrelated and depends on the concept proposed.

The definition of public engagement through social media leads to two main factors of user experience, namely social interaction, and experience with available technical features (Di Gangi & Wasko, 2016). This social interaction encourages personal involvement while opening access to information for users. Meanwhile, the experience of features depicts the ability of social media account owners to present features that are easy to use as well as the ability of users to elaborate on these features.

User attachment through social media involves several activities ranging from user consumption of leading content, participation in discussions, and interactions with fellow users, to deciding to take concrete actions such as buying something offered (Trunfio & Rossi, 2021). It appears that the series of engagement activities is a multidimensional activity that involves cognitive, affective, to behavioral aspects.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a mixed methods research with a qualitative approach using percentage statistical data. The data collection technique used was documentation through PKU Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta Instagram content. The data analysis technique used in this study is based on theoretical propositions. In this case, the researcher enters the collected data into certain categories according to the similarity of the data patterns with the theory being referred to for interpretation and conclusions. The processing stages of the data analysis consist of editing, coding, tabulation, data interpretation, and drawing conclusions.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research looks at the use of Instagram social media at the PKU Muhammadiyah Hospital at Yogyakarta City for 4 months from March to June 2020 and the audience engagement through it. At that time, the pandemic was generally still high so this range represented the transitional period of organizational communication with the public through social media. First, these uploads are classified into three categories, i.e. da'wah, product branding, and corporate branding. The da'wah category represents the identity of the hospital as a charity for Muhammadiyah as a faith-based organization. Product branding represents the marketing aspect of an organization in offering health services. Corporate branding represents an organization's efforts to maintain a positive reputation. Meanwhile, uploads that are difficult to categorize in one of the three above, are included in the "other" category.

The first Instagram content of PKU Muhammadiyah Hospital of Yogyakarta City was documented on June 3, 2016. There were 75 contents on the Instagram of PKU Muhmaadiyah Hospital, Yogyakarta City, from March to June 2022. This means, every day, there is 0-1 content uploaded via social media. The findings show that the category of corporate branding messages dominates with 36 uploads. This was followed by the product branding message category with 12 content, the da'wah category with 13 content, and the other category with 8 content. The percentages are as follows.

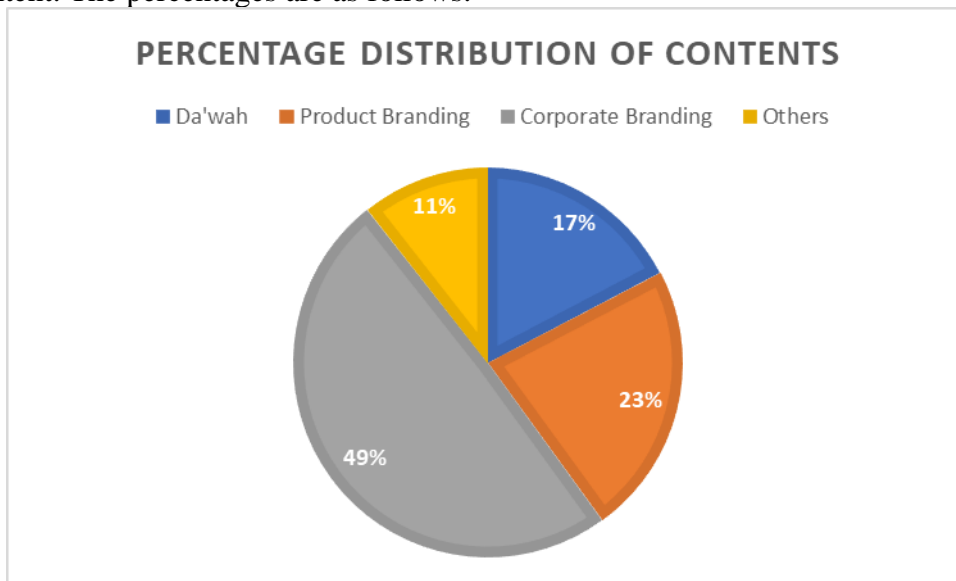


Fig. 1. Percentage Distribution of IG PKU Muhammadiyah Contents in Yogyakarta City

This shows that the awareness of the organization to maintain its reputation was significant. This is followed by efforts to show the best qualities of health product services owned by the hospital to the public.

As for the response of netizens who showed the engagement that was created through binoculars from the side of likes and comments. In this case, the number of likes shows positive responses from the audience. The comments show that the level of engagement that has been built is one step further where the audience has stepped into becoming active participants in the communication that is being built. Interestingly, the dominance of the number of positivity or likes on PKU

Muhammadiyah Hospital of Yogyakarta City Instagram content is in line with the amount of uploaded content, which is corporate branding.

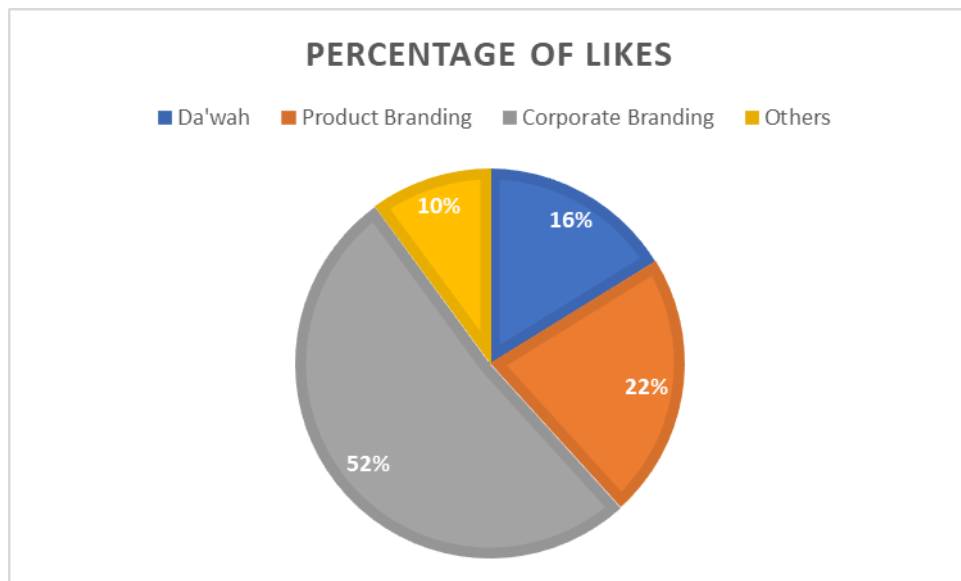


Fig 2. Percentage of Likes

Even so, the number of conversions or comments that show audience conversions from passive to active is actually in product branding content as seen in the following diagram.

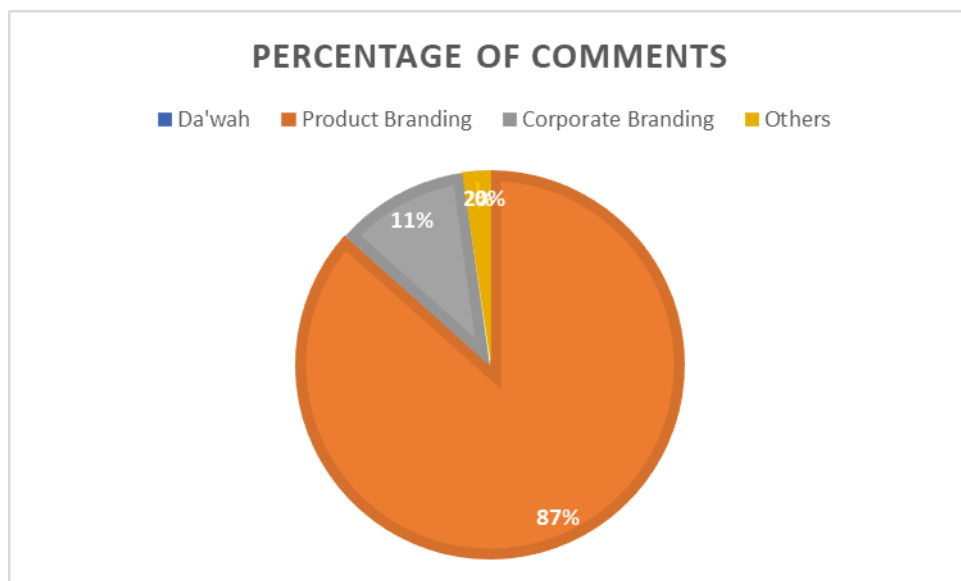


Fig 3. Percentage of Comments

The content that triggers the audience's conversion rate contains information about the rapid test. During a pandemic, information about this matter is indeed much sought-after information. As a health service institution, the hospital is an institution that is considered credible to provide this information. This is thought to be the reason behind the high conversion rate in product branding content that contains information about rapid tests.



CONCLUSION

Based on the findings above, it can be identified that the use of Instagram by PKU Muhammadiyah Hospital of Yogyakarta City still needs to be improved. The lesson learned is that there has been a message management that represents the character of the organization as part of a faith-based organization and health service provider institutions in communicating with the public. This is investigated from the characteristics of messages that reflect da'wah, product branding, and corporate branding.

In the audience engagement aspect, it can be seen that audience positivity lies in corporate branding content. Even so, messages that trigger conversions from passive audiences to active audiences are dominated by content that is included in the product branding category. What needs to be highlighted is the need for managing da'wah content that is more capable of triggering audience conversions because the da'wah content that has been uploaded and tracked in this study has not been able to cause this conversion effect.

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