The Role of Instagram In Building University Reputation and Strengthening Student Communication

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Abstract

University reputation can be obtained through good communication with all stakeholders. One of the communication channels that can be used to convey information and communication is Instagram social media. Instagram is one of the options for universities in supporting good communication to build and strengthen the reputation of the institution. This study aims to analyse student preferences for Instagram communication channels in conveying information and strengthening institutional reputation. The research method used is descriptive quantitative method, which combines surveys through questionnaires and interviews. The results showed that Instagram is an effective communication channel to deliver information, increase student engagement, and provide a space to evaluate campus performance through feedback. The best performing content based on audience feedback is the promotion pillar, followed by the engagement pillar, and the education pillar. The college needs to maintain the quality of content and design, increase visual variety, and ensure the information is more relevant and meets the needs of the audience. The results of this study can serve as a basis for evaluating Instagram management at a university, and serve as a reference for future research.

Keywords: Communication channels, Social Media, Instagram, University Reputation

Abstrak
Reputasi perguruan tinggi dapat diperoleh melalui komunikasi yang baik dengan seluruh pemangku kepentingan. Salah satu saluran komunikasi yang dapat digunakan untuk menyampaikan informasi dan komunikasi adalah media sosial Instagram. Instagram menjadi salah satu pilihan bagi perguruan tinggi dalam mendukung komunikasi yang baik untuk membangun dan memperkuat reputasi institusi. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis preferensi mahasiswa terhadap saluran komunikasi Instagram dalam menyampaikan informasi dan memperkuat reputasi institusi. Metode penelitian yang digunakan adalah metode kuantitatif deskriptif, yang menggabungkan survey melalui kuesioner dan wawancara. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Instagram merupakan saluran komunikasi yang efektif untuk menyampaikan informasi, meningkatkan keterlibatan mahasiswa, dan menyediakan ruang untuk mengevaluasi kinerja kampus melalui umpan balik. Konten dengan kinerja terbaik berdasarkan umpan balik audiensa dalah pilar promosi, diikuti oleh pilar keterlibatan, dan pilar pendidikan. Perguruan tinggi perlu mempertahankan kualitas konten dan desain, meningkatkan variasi visual, serta memastikan informasi lebih relevan dan sesuai kebutuhan audiens. Hasil penelitian ini dapat menjadi dasar untuk mengevaluasi pengelolaan Instagram di sebuah universitas, dan menjadi referensi untuk penelitian selanjutnya.

Kata kunci: SaluranKomunikasi, Media Sosial, Instagram, Reputasi Universitas

INTRODUCTION

One of the advantages of internet technology-based communication channels is the ability to reach the target public precisely, and to deliver messages according to needs and expectations. Online communication can be presented very quickly and at low cost. Yenicikti (2016) says that in modern society, social media plays an important role for individuals and organisations in maintaining their targets, which can be a basic tool as a personal lifestyle and activity delivery tool for organisations, because people's communication styles have evolved and changed rapidly from internet-based communication technology, smart phones, and so on.

Social media can be defined as computer-based technologies that facilitate the sharing of ideas, thoughts, and information through virtual networks and communities (Dollarhide, 2024). Social media platforms feature user-generated content, which leads to interaction through likes, shares, comments and discussions. These platforms are recognised for their role in fostering connection and community among users, but are also criticised for being facilitators of disinformation and an easy place to spread hate speech (Dollarhide, 2024). However, social media can be a great tool for companies to build their brand image due to the use of different social media platforms globally. With social media, organisations can find opportunities to reach several different target groups and can save time and money.

One of the social media, Instagram, started to appear in 2010, has been widely used by organisations as a marketing tool that can showcase products and provide impressive visual communication and explanation. Instagram, is a photo and video content-based social media that allows users to take photos, take videos, apply digital filters and share them to various social networking services. Instagram is one of the most favourite social media that is widely used by the internet generation in Indonesia (Hootsuite.com, 2024).

Instagram is very popular among young people, namely students, because of its information sharing features that include images and videos, and facilitates two-way communication that can strengthen relationships. Based on the data released by Hootsuite.com and looking at the distribution of social media platform user numbers, Instagram users in Indonesia are very large. It ranks second at 85.3% of the population (276.4 million), which is around 235.8 million. Looking at this number and the distribution of social media usage in Indonesia, it shows that Instagram is a favourite communication channel. Therefore, it is necessary to manage information and communication through the Instagram social media communication channel, in order to have a positive impact on the institution.

Paula et al (2024), examined the communication channel favoured by stakeholders from higher education institutions (students, lecturers, employees, alumni, school teachers, high school students, journalists and industry), namely Instagram, because it provides interactive communication facilities. For businesses in promoting their products and services to the public, the main choice is through Instagram because this platform makes the delivery of information and communication easier, by providing messages, chat, and other supporting features (Kurniawan, 2017).

The power of visual content Instagram offers a highly visual nature to its users and allows brands to tell their stories through photos and videos (Kujur and Sing, 2020). Today, people tend to be more engaged when information is presented visually rather than in a textual format. For marketers, this is important to consider when planning posts on Instagram. They are better off summarising the core message of the campaign in a few sentences and presenting it visually rather than writing a monologue as a caption below the post. Visuals also tend to leave a long-lasting impression on viewers (Kujur and Sing, 2020), which is an advantage for brands that use visual content for marketing purposes. Their marketing efforts will be remembered when consumers recognise the need for a product or service.

A research conducted by Apriliani and Nurjanah (2023) figured out the benefits of the use of Instagram social media to a company, particularly to a state-owned company, Pertamina. They found that the company is successful to convey message particularly to the followers of Pertamina official instagram about Pertamina's social program due to Cianjur earthquake disaster. The company Instagram enables the company to communicate quickly, directly, and interactively. In addition, based on the results of Instagram engagement which shows numbers of likes, comments, and video views, Pertamina is able to build positive reputation (Apriliani and Nurjanah, 2023). The research focusses on the viewers' responses towards the content posted in the company Instagram. Based on the findings, positive responses had been given by

followers. This indicates the closeness interaction between company and its followers, and give good reputation (Apriliani and Nurjanah, 2023).

Since the research focuses on specific event, i.e. the company social program, the posted contents are all about activities related to the event. Also, the research did not mention yet the followers' perceptions towards the posted contents whether they already meet the followers needs or not although positive responses are given. Finding these gaps, a further research is needed to get more insight about the followers' perceptions towards the Instagram contents in general.

Therefore, based on the identified gaps, a further research is conducted to know how Instagram as one of the communication channels used in campus. As it is known that almost all universities develop their official social media including Instagram. The main focus of this research is to prove that the use of Instagram has an important role for higher education institutions in establishing two-way communication with students so that it has a positive impact on reputation. Also, this research aims to identify effective Instagram management strategies for universities to build effective and efficient communication, so as to improve and maintain the university's reputation amidst competition for public trust.

Instagram Performance Measurement Metrics

In social media management, especially Instagram, there are three main metrics used to evaluate the performance of published content, namely reached, impression, and engagement. These metrics are crucial to understanding the effectiveness of a content strategy on Instagram (Drivas, 2022; Shahbaznezhad, 2021).

Reached is a metric that measures the total number of unique users who view the content, both from direct followers and from audiences who do not follow the account. This metric is important to know how wide the reach of the content is to the audience and how effective the content is in reaching users outside the followers of the account. The goal of increasing reach is to broaden an account's exposure and create wider awareness of an institution.

Impression measures the total number of views of content, both from the same and different users. One user may view content multiple times, so impression reflects the frequency of audience exposure to posted content. This metric aims to measure the visibility of content and how often users interact with the content in their feed. An increase in impression indicates that the content is viewed multiple times by the audience, signalling a high level of content attractiveness or relevance.

Engagement measures the level of active audience interaction with the content, such as likes, comments, shares, and saves. This metric reflects the audience's direct involvement with the published content. The goal of increasing engagement is to build deeper connections with the audience and encourage more personalised interactions. Content that achieves high engagement is usually able to trigger a stronger response or relevance for the audience.

Three Main Pillars of Campus Instagram

The management of Instagram account is based on three main pillars, namely engagement, promotion, and education. These three pillars are adopted as guidelines to design varied, interesting, and appropriate content for instagram's target audience. Each pillar has specific objectives that help achieve the various communication goals expected from this Instagram account. Referring campus as the context of this research, these are the descriptions how the three main pillars are guiding in instagram content designs.

Engagement, focuses on content designed to entertain and create more personalised interactions between campus and its audience. Engagement content often follows trends that are popular on social media, such as memes, trivia, or challenges that capture the audience's attention. With an interactive approach, content in this pillar encourages active participation through likes, comments and shares. This not only makes the institution feel closer and more informal, but also creates a dynamic online environment. Audiences will feel involved in institution life. This pillar is important because it is able to maintain an emotional connection with the audience, which in turn strengthens their loyalty to institution.

Promotion is focused on enhancing the reputation and branding of the institution. Promotional content showcases the institution's achievements, such as employees achievements, student achievements, national and international collaborations, and flagship events. The content in this pillar tends to be more

formal and structured. With consistency and professionalism shown through promotional content, institution official instagram continues to strengthen its position among other institutions, creating a strong appeal to prospective stakeholders.

Education, aims to provide useful and relevant information for students and prospective students about the world of lectures and campus life. This content usually includes study tips, lecture guides, and materials that can help students in self-development. Not only does it serve as an educational tool, this pillar also adds value to the audience by providing inspirational and practical content. By utilising the education pillar, campus Instagram provides information that not only enriches students' knowledge, but also prepares them for success in their academic and professional journey.

These three pillars support each other in creating a balance between personal interaction, university promotion, and useful education. The engagement pillar maintains informal relationships and active audience participation, promotion enhances the university's image and appeal, while education provides practical benefits to the audience. With a diverse yet integrated approach, Instagram succeeds in creating an engaging, relevant and effective communication strategy for different types of audiences.

Research Methods

This research was conducted by collecting data using a questionnaire. The respondents of this study is Tarumanagara University Instagram users. The questionnaire was delivered to 400 Tarumanagara University students, from various faculties at Tarumanagara University, with the distribution as shown in Figure 1. The communication channels surveyed were Instagram, whatsapp, word of mouth (WOM), tiktok, and website. In the first stage, the researcher wanted to get information about the order of communication channels most favoured by students in obtaining various information from the university. In the second stage, researchers want to get specific information on how Instagram can be an option for students to communicate, by looking at the effectiveness of content strategies on Instagram, namely reach, impression, and engagement. As a reference in looking at the effectiveness of Instagram, it is based on three main pillars, namely engagement, promotion, and education. These three pillars are adopted as guidelines for designing content that is varied, interesting, and appropriate for the target audience.

Figure 1. Percentage of Respondents by Faculty
(source: research data by the research team)
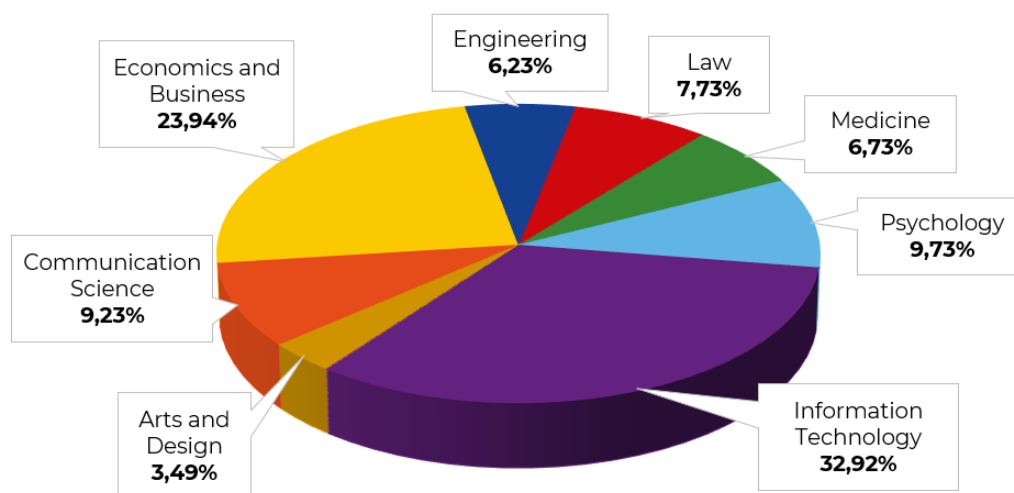
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Instagram as a Communication Medium

Based on Figure 2, it can be seen that the communication channel widely used by university stakeholders in obtaining information and communicating is Instagram social media (ranked first), followed by the use of whatsapp, word of mouth (WOM), tiktok, and websites. Currently, technology-based communication tools that allow interactive communication facilities are becoming popular.

Figure 2. Communication Channels Used by University Stakeholders
(source: research data by the research team)
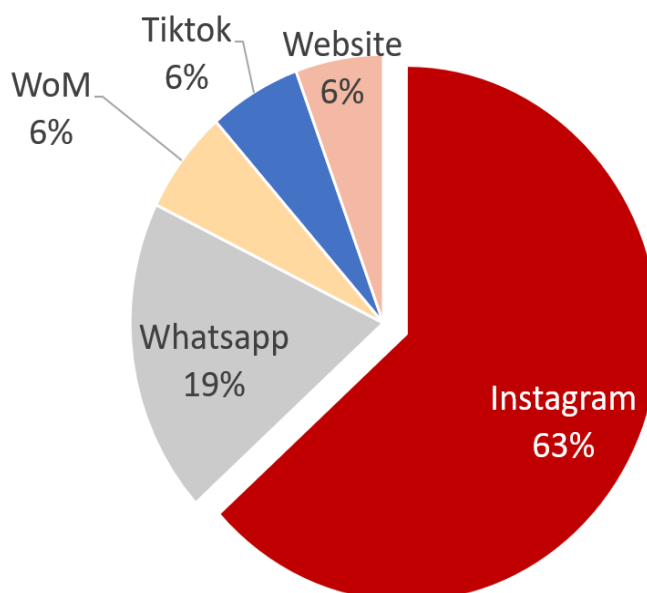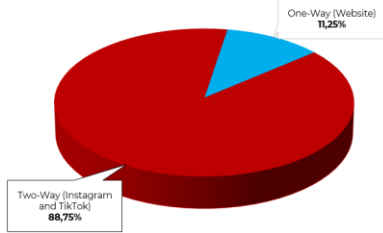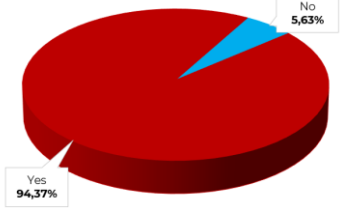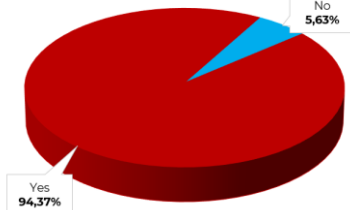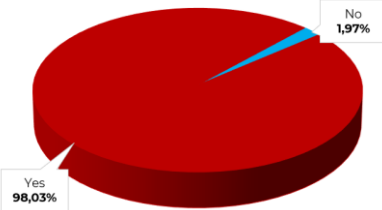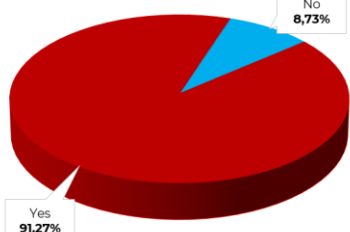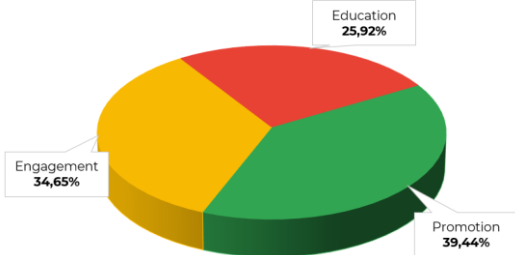
Based on the results shown in figure 2 above, it can be seen that currently the communication channels used by university stakeholders to obtain information and communicate are very diverse, in line with the development of information and communication technology.With the growing trend of communication channels, universities must be adaptive by recognising and implementing these new trends to get closer to the target audience. If an emotional connection is created between the university and its stakeholders, it is expected to positively impact the organisation in the competition.

This diversity of communication channels has led to a division of the population with respect to the choice of social media, making it necessary to pay attention to which segments to contact and with which communication channels to reach the desired audience. Practitioners tend to group media channels and use them according to their needs and objectives. The process of selecting strategic communication channels is referred to as media planning (Hallahan, 2001). It is necessary to selectively choose communication channels in communicating with the public, so that they are effective and targeted. So effective communication has the potential to be key in achieving good relationships and further contributing to reputation (Pure, 2010).

According to Sommerfeldt et al (2019) that the use of various communication channels today cannot be interpreted as a mere exchange of new media replacing old media but as a combination or integration of traditional media and new media. Another important implication is that effective communication is potentially the key to gaining good relationships and contributing to reputation (Czarnecka and Ni, 2011).

Table 1. Communication Channel Questionnaire Results

| No.	Content	Result
1	In disseminating information about campus, I prefer communication channels	One-Way (Website) 11,25% / Two-Way (Instagram and TikTok) 88,75%
2	Do you think Instagram's social media communication channels are effective?	No 5,63% / Yes 94,37%
3	Do you think the content and visuals of @UntarJakarta Instagram content are interesting?	No 5,63% / Yes 94,37%
4	Do you think Instagram social media content has an effect on university reputation?	No 1,97% / Yes 98,03%
5	Does the content of @UntarJakarta Instagram content meet your needs?	No 8,73% / Yes 91,27%
6	What type of Instagram content you like the most?	Education 25,92% / Engagement 34,65% / Promotion 39,44%

Source: Survey results using the research questionnaire

Instagram Performance

Figure 3 displays the performance of reached, impression, and engagement recorded every month. It can be seen that reached, impression, and engagement, experienced a significant spike in month 8, which coincided with the implementation of the New Student Admission activities and in month 10 when a series of Anniversary events were held. This trend shows that big events significantly increase the reach of content to audiences. However, outside of these two months, reach, impression, and engagement tend to decrease again, which indicates that outside of major events, content reach is still less than optimal. One of the reasons for this is the dominance of formal and informative content, such as academic promotions, which appeal more to a limited audience. This suggests that content strategies need to be more varied and tailored to the needs of audiences throughout the year, especially to remain engaging in periods with quieter academic calendars.

Figure 3. Performance of reached, impression, and engagement
(source: research data by the research team)
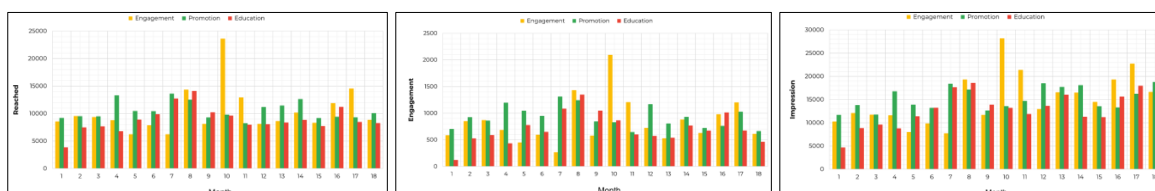
This analysis suggests that @UntarJakarta's Instagram content strategy should pay more attention to the academic cycle and find ways to maintain audience interest during the months outside of major event periods. One way is to increase trend-based content and more personalised interactions to keep engagement high throughout the year.

Discussion of Research Results

Content. The majority of respondents considered @UntarJakarta Instagram content to be interesting, educative, informative, and useful. Respondents appreciated the diversity of information that included student achievements, learning tips, and events on and off campus. However, some suggestions include more information about scholarships, events, competitions, or campus activities; need content that is more in line with trends and attracts students; reduce content that is considered less relevant to some audiences.

Visuals. The social media design was considered attractive, consistent, and in line with Untar's branding, with a red base colour that reflects the university's identity. Many respondents praised the simplicity and tidiness of the design. Feedback related to visuals includes avoiding designs that are too monotonous or overused templates; use more diverse and creative backgrounds, add more interactive and eye-catching visual elements.

Effectiveness. Respondents stated that @UntarJakarta Instagram social media is effective in delivering important information and promoting the campus. The account is considered active and able to attract the attention of the audience, both students and prospective students. However, there is a note that information sharing sometimes makes the audience confused because there are too many elements in one post.

Reputation. Most respondents felt that Instagram @UntarJakarta has successfully strengthened Untar's reputation. The account is considered a good platform to showcase campus achievements, build student pride, and increase Untar's attractiveness to prospective students.

Two-way Communication. Some respondents appreciated the interactivity of the account through games, stories, and collaboration with students and lecturers. However, there are still suggestions for the account to be more responsive in comments and DMs to increase engagement and create more personalised communication with the audience.

Overall, respondents rated @UntarJakarta Instagram as good in terms of content, visuals, effectiveness, reputation, and two-way communication. The main recommendations are to maintain the quality of content and design, increase visual variety, and ensure information is more relevant and suits the needs of the audience.

CONCLUSION

Providing two ways communication, Instagram becomes favourite social media among people. In particular, campus Instagram becomes a mean of communication which considered effective both in delivering information to internal and external stakeholders and building campus reputation. The campus Instagram @UntarJakarta has revealed that it has important role in maintaining communication between campus management, students, and other stakeholders. The instagram @UntarJakarta has provided a space to evaluate campus performance through feedback. The @UntarJakarta builds reputation since it often shows campus achievements. These roles bring a consequence to the quality of the posted contents. They must be oriented towards the high quality of the content information, visual, effectiveness, and good reputation. Also, @UntarJakarta should have content strategy which pay more attention to the trend-based content, and how to maintain followers' interest particularly during the month outside major events to reach high engagement. The results of this study can serve as a basis for evaluating Instagram management at a university and become a reference for future research.

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