

ELECTRONIC PUBLIC RELATIONS IN THE DIGITAL AGE: A STRATEGIC SHIFT IN COMMUNICATION

Raja Widya Novchi¹, Khusnul Hanafi², Saidul Amin³
Universitas Muhammadiyah Riau^{1&2}, Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau³
rajawidya@umri.ac.id

Abstract

The rapid advancement of communication technology has significantly influenced how messages are disseminated, with the internet emerging as a dominant medium. Unlike traditional mass communication channels such as newspapers, television, and radio, the internet offers decentralized, high-capacity, interactive, and flexible communication, accommodating both personal and impersonal exchanges. Initially limited to scientific and military use, the internet has evolved into a platform integral to various aspects of modern life, including business, education, marketing, and public relations. In the field of public relations, the internet serves as a powerful tool for message distribution, media relations, audience engagement, and image building. The rise of concepts such as Electronic Public Relations (E-PR) and Public Relations Online (PR Online) highlights the strategic integration of internet technologies into communication practices. Public relations professionals utilize the internet to access global information, foster discussions, manage public opinion, reduce communication costs, enhance marketing efforts, and deliver timely updates. This transformation supports the establishment of consumer-oriented, high-tech corporate identities, while also improving organizational responsiveness in an increasingly digital and competitive global environment.

Keywords: Internet Communication, Public Relations (PR), Electronic Public Relations (E-PR), Online Public Relations (PR Online), Digital Media

Introduction

The development of communication technology has enabled the use of various media to convey messages. One new medium currently gaining widespread use is the internet. The internet is a loose network of thousands of computer networks that reaches millions of people worldwide. The internet is a global network of interconnected computers, allowing individuals connected to a network to communicate with any of thousands of other computers, provided the network is also connected to various networks. The internet is a highly beneficial medium, so it is no exaggeration to call it the new communication cyberspace of the global community. Various groups, from businesspeople and academics to mass media practitioners, marketers, public relations professionals, housewives, students, and even children, can benefit from the internet. The internet is inextricably linked to various aspects of life. Initially, the internet was only known to scientists, and its use was primarily for scientific and military research. Over time, internet use has expanded to encompass various aspects of life.

Previously, the internet was a medium for knowledge and science, but now this communication technology has various nicknames: entertainment, knowledge, science, networking, promotion and marketing, and so on. Even negative labels have emerged, including those used as a medium for moral corruption. Whatever the impact of the internet, it must be acknowledged that this medium plays a significant role in the world of business communication. Many efforts to market products and build corporate image use the internet as a medium for disseminating messages. New concepts such as e-commerce (electronic commerce) have emerged in this world, where all transactions are conducted online, including online ordering and payment. This development of e-commerce has given rise to the concept of webvertising, which is advertising that utilizes the internet. The presence of the internet is an inevitability resulting from societal progress. In his book, "Indonesia in the Cyber Era," A. Muis writes about the proliferation of media types as a result of the extraordinary advancement of communication and information technology, and the increasing quality of media globalization. The global internet network has created a vast, seemingly endless information superhighway. This phenomenon of human communication culture was actually predicted by Marshall McLuhan with his famous concept, "The Global Village." Since the 1990s, the role of internet communication has tended to become a new type of mass media, because internet users have become mass in number.

1. Characteristics of the Internet

The internet is a new communication medium. Previously, there were newspapers, films, television, and radio. I prefer to consider the internet not a mass communication medium. It's true that some mass media outlets currently have online versions, such as KOMPAS.com, detik.com, and liputan6.com. However, the internet can also be accessed in a more personal way (for example, for chatting). Therefore, I classify it as a new type of media, namely computer-mediated communication (CMC). Compared to traditional media, the internet has the following advantages:

A. Decentralization

This means that the information center is no longer the communications provider. Every individual, group, or institution can become a communications provider. Individuals and business institutions can create their own blogs or websites.

B. High capacity.

This means there are no communication barriers caused by signal transmitters because it travels via satellite and cable. It can provide diverse information quickly.

C. Reciprocity, meaning there is direct interaction between the source and the receiver.

D. Flexibility in content, form, or use.

E. Providing equally good facilities for impersonal and personal communication. Nowadays, users can not only send e-mails, but can interact more personally through chat facilities that also include online video.

INTERNET APPLICATIONS IN PUBLIC RELATIONS

From this description, it can be said that the use of the internet in public relations practice is inevitable. Public relations would be left behind if it did not utilize this medium, especially in the midst of global competition such as this. Utilizing the internet network (e.g., websites) means increasing the variety of public information media. Media variation allows for varied message packaging. This is crucial to prevent monotony in information dissemination patterns. Furthermore, public relations pays attention to public behavior and needs in consuming information. This relates to changes in information consumption that require speedy information sources. When a company applies internet technology in its operations, for example by having a website, it will establish a certain image as a company that.

- Is more consumer-oriented and responsive. - Is more informative.
- More sophisticated and high-tech
- Closer to the intellectual market and youth.

The use of the internet to support public relations activities has given rise to the concept of Public Relations on the Net, or Electronic Public Relations (E-PR), or Public Relations Online (PR Online). Through the internet, it is possible to build good relationships and maintain public support.

1. Benefits of Internet Applications

Below are various benefits gained from internet applications in public relations practice.

- Low-cost and fast communication to the public.

The internet, in addition to providing information, can also be used as a means of communication. Using IRC, internet users can communicate via keyboard, and even if a PC is equipped with a sound card, speakers, video card, camera, and other supporting equipment, they can conduct teleconferencing. The internet can even be used as a substitute for a fax machine, and wherever you send it is only charged as local phone credit. Sending messages via email is cheaper than sending by post or special express delivery. For example, at an internet cafe, you only pay Rp 1,500 for each hour of internet use. A single hour can be used to send hundreds of messages via email.

- Advice on obtaining information on global progress.

The internet provides a variety of information on the latest developments in technology, medicine, military affairs, and more. It includes information on new products, business, management, finance, and more. This information is crucial as input for public relations, for example, in planning programs or making important decisions.

- Maintaining relationships with the media.

Letters typically sent by post are often referred to as snail mail. This is not the case with the internet, allowing for rapid communication with business partners, the media, family, and even certain agencies.

- Forming discussion or business groups and shaping public opinion.

Public relations can exchange information with the public and establish relationships with the media. As in society, certain professional groups often exchange information. This also occurs among internet users, resulting in the formation of various discussion or business groups, which anyone can join. This supports the public relations task of monitoring the environment through online monitoring. Public relations can quickly monitor public opinion. A growing public image.

- A means of promotion and corporate image building.

Businesses can advertise and provide information about their products online. This opportunity is often used by government and private organizations to promote tourist attractions online. PR can create annual reports, company profiles, or online

commercials through the company's website. Furthermore, they can conduct one-to-one marketing with other parties.

- Saves time.

Information can be updated at any time and quickly disseminated to the public. This is due in part to its portability. We can send and receive messages anywhere we can connect a computer to a telephone. Today, users can access the internet via mobile phones. The public needs information quickly. Through the internet, public relations can structure information to respond quickly to emerging market issues and changes. This time-saving benefit also relates to recordkeeping. Public relations can easily store all documents obtained through public relations.

- Supports marketing programs.

The company's website can also be filled with marketing messages, for example through webvertising. Benefits include increasing revenue from new customers. internet based, cutting marketing costs by only using online catalogs, retaining loyal customers

WEBSITE EFFECTIVENESS

Public relations must periodically monitor the results obtained from the use of online media as a means of communication with the public. Some things public relations can do to evaluate website effectiveness are:

1. Counting the number of people who visit and provide detailed information about themselves on the website provided by public relations.
2. Measuring audience behavior. Measurements can be made on how many people provide feedback through available channels and how many use the company's services, and so on.
3. Monitoring media coverage. How much information available on the website is used as a news source by the media. In this regard, public relations should record how many journalists provide their email addresses to receive releases or other information, the number of journalists who subscribe to public relations emails, the number of journalists who have used the website and public relations sites, the completeness of the website information written by journalists, whether journalists find the website information clear and complete, and so on.
4. Monitoring database additions. The "one-to-one" nature of the internet allows public relations to obtain detailed information about target audiences that cannot be obtained from conventional media. This information about the audience is then entered into a marketing database. The growth of this database is a measure of public relations effectiveness.

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