Proceeding Paper

Optimization of Podcasts as Public Communication Channels and Digital Broadcasting Media at Government Institutions [†]

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Abstract: Public communication channels and digital broadcasting media are increasingly diverse, one of which is podcasts. In addition to being relatively new, podcast content is increasingly in demand, especially since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. Public relations departments at government institutions began to use podcasts as a new medium for disseminating information and public communication then. This study explores the trend of using podcasts. Meanwhile, research on podcasts, especially on their use in government institutions, is still very limited. This research, using a descriptive method, seeks to contribute to the development and optimization of podcasts in government institutions. The results show that podcasts play an important role as a public communication channel and digital broadcasting medium. This research is expected to be helpful for government public relations and researchers in the podcast sector interested in optimizing their use in government sectors.

Keywords: podcast; government institutions; government public relations; digital broadcasting; public communication channel

1. Introduction

The development of technology and information encourages the birth of new media. The wave of new media opens up opportunities for conventional media to survive and become alternatives for broadcasting information through the use of multiple platforms. Various sectors, including government institutions, are facing rapid changes amid the rapid flow of information and technological developments. In particular, government public relations departments play an important role in the management of public communications. Public communication channels and digital broadcasting media are increasingly diverse, one of which is podcasts.

In recent years, podcasts have become a communication channel that is quite widely accessed by the public. Apart from being relatively new, podcast content has been increasingly in demand since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, and that growth has continued until now. One of the reasons why podcasts are becoming increasingly popular is their flexibility. According to Riddell [1], podcasts are very easy to use, attractive, create wide exposure, and offer a variety of personalized content.

In addition, the emergence of the trend of disseminating audio on-demand content through podcasts could create several benefits for users in Indonesia—namely, podcasts can be a medium that provides information to open up new insights and thoughts, can provide more personal content than other media, can be used as alternative media to disseminate information, have great opportunities for monetization, can be complementary to conventional radio and video-based platforms, and have the opportunity to be accessed safely and comfortably due to relatively small bandwidth requirements [2].

In managing public communications, government public relations departments play a role in increasing public participation, building dialogue and collaboration with the public,

and assisting the running of a transparent government. The challenge is how government public relations departments are to provide information that is right on target, interesting, easy to understand, and accountable. In addition, they should use various forms of technology and be involved in the rapid flow of communication and the development of communication technology.

The trend shows that public interest in podcasting is starting to grow, both in audio and video formats. Likewise, government public relations sectors in various institutions and departments have begun to use the podcast platform as an alternative public communication channel. However, the use of podcasts in government institutions is still relatively new, and not many government institutions have optimized an audio and video podcast as part of their public communication strategy.

In government institutions, public relations has an important role as a communication facilitator. According to [3], the role of a communication facilitator in public relations is the reception and dissemination of various information from and for the community. All element of government institutions at the central and regional levels need to change their mindset and behavior from consumption patterns to production patterns, especially in the public communication channels they manage. The aim of public communications is to create "a well-informed society" to fulfill the public's right to information. Therefore, it is necessary for government institutions to take three strategic steps, namely, build a communication system arrangement, develop communication infrastructure, and communicate.

Through a literature review, the author found that there are still very few studies that examined podcasts in government institutions, especially in Indonesia. Based on the description above, this study seeks to explore the trend of using podcasts in government institutions and strategies that can be carried out by government institutions to optimize podcasts as public communication channels and digital broadcasting media.
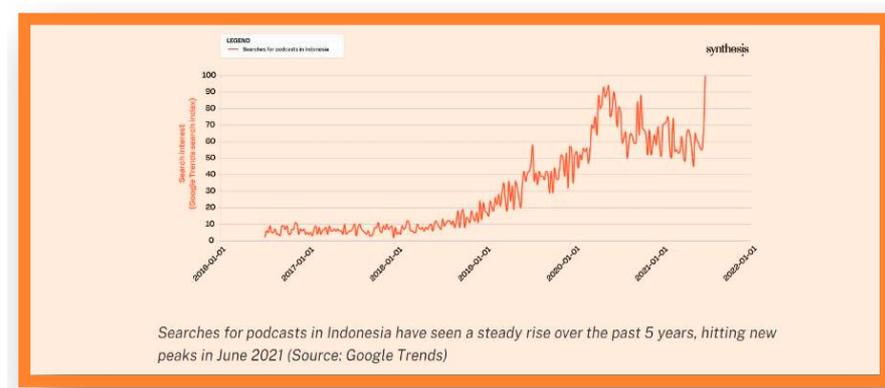
2. Materials and Methods

This study uses a descriptive methodology to explain the trends and challenges of using podcasts and strategies to optimize podcasts as a public communication channel. Descriptive research does not test hypotheses but describes systematically, looking for factual and careful relationships [4]. In addition, the data collection process in this study was carried out by the author with a series of steps: reading, selecting, and analyzing journal articles, reference books, previous research reports and also news related to podcasts in government institutions.

3. Results and Discussion

A. Trend of using podcasts as a public communication channel by government institutions.

The existence of podcasts, which are now developing as digital broadcasting media in the new media era, is one of the answers to people's information needs. In the uses and gratifications theory, it is explained that audiences are seen as active and purposeful individuals. They are responsible for selecting the media they will use to meet their needs. The uses and gratifications theory looks at how much the media can meet the needs of the audience. According to [5] the flow pattern of information and communication distribution in society is dominated by online media and through social media.

Podcasts are one of the media products enjoyed by Indonesians. According to Global Web Index (GWI) data, the percentage of Indonesian podcast listeners is the second largest in the world, as of the third quarter of 2021. Podcast listeners in Indonesia constitute 35.6% of the total Internet users aged 16–64 y [6]. Podcast searches in Indonesia are also growing and increasing. The following Figure 1 is the search data for "podcast" in Indonesia, via Google trends, which shows a steady increase over the last 5 y that reached its peak in June 2021.

Searches for podcasts in Indonesia have seen a steady rise over the past 5 years, hitting new peaks in June 2021 (Source: Google Trends)

Figure 1. Searches for Podcast in Indonesia. Source: *Google Trends* (2022).

The presence of podcasts in the digital era is inseparable from their flexible accessibility. In addition, a number of studies also show the tendency that listening to podcasts has a significant impact on society, both regarding mere entertainment and the content listened to [7]. In line with [8], in his research on "The Effectiveness of the Modern Broadcast Media Industry 'Podcast' in The New Media Era", he explained that podcasts are a communication channel that replaces mainstream media. In fact, most mainstream media also have podcast channels that are used as broadcast media. A variety of content can be presented through podcasts, including content related to public communications from the government to the community.

Several previous studies have addressed a lot about government communication in the digital era through social media. One of them is [9] research, which analyzes the tendency of government institutions' social media accounts to carry out two-way communication with the public. Research related to the government's public communication strategy using social media has been explored by a number of researchers. However, there are still very few studies that raise the government's public communication strategy through podcast platforms.

Trends show that podcast channels run by government publicists have started to emerge. The author notes that the trend of government institutions using podcasts began to develop in 2020, for ministries, institutions, and local governments. The way the government communicates with the public has changed very rapidly. The challenge is how government public relations departments are able to manage these public communication channels and optimize them.

In this digital era, public communication from government public relations departments is no longer just done by distributing press releases. It requires dialogue and collaboration with the public. In the old model, public relations departments tended to communicate in one way, which did not allow for feedback from the public to the institution/organization. However, in the new model, the presence of technology has enabled two- way communication [10]. Websites, social media, blogs, and podcasts open up communication spaces between the public and institutions/organizations and the media.

In this day and age, content and communication channels are becoming increasingly important. Storytelling is key. Government public relations departments play a role in building and enhancing the reputation of their associated institutions. For this reason, the skills to analyze institutions/organizations, find positive messages, and "translate" them into positive stories and news are very important for government public relations departments to be able to optimize the use of podcasts.

Now, more and more government institutions are building and developing podcast channels as public communication channels. Table 1 shows some of the many podcasts of government institutions that are increasingly emerging, which are the results of the author's search.

Table 1. Some of the Many Podcasts of Government Institutions that are Increasingly Emerging.

Institution Name	Podcast Name	Time Formed
Badan Penelitian dan Pengembangan Kementerian Dalam Negeri (BPP Kemendagri)	Podcast Badan Litbang Kemendagri	April 2020
Kantor Pelayanan Pajak (KPP) Pratama Mojokerto	Mojok Podcast	June 2020
Kementerian Keuangan Direktorat Jenderal Perbendaharaan (KPPN Jakarta 3)	POS JAGA (Podcast Jakarta Tiga)	March 2021
Kementerian ATR BPN	ATR/BPN Podcast	July 2021
KPU Provinsi Sumatera Barat	Podcast Pintar Pemilu	July 2021
UKPBJ Provinsi Kalimantan Selatan	Bagimu Podcast	July 2021
Kejaksaan Negeri Kaur	NGOBRIS "Ngobrol Sampai Habis"	September 2021
KPU Provinsi Kalimantan Tengah	Balanga Podcast	December 2021
Kementerian Hukum dan HAM Sumatera Utara	PODCAST KUSUMA	January 2022
Sekretariat Kabinet RI	PODKABS	February 2022
Ditjen PPKL	Podcast Keliling Podcast	February 2022
BPSDMD Provinsi Jawa Tengah	Podcast Pemimpin Perubahan	June 2022

Source: author's search from various sources.

Based on Table 1, the content presented by government institutions on podcasts can be categorized into four types—namely: (a) educational content, (b) inspiring content, (c) entertaining informative content, and (d) enlightening content. Then, in the practice of managing podcasts as public communication channels, government public relations departments must also prioritize the principles of public communication, as described by [11] regarding the principles of public communication—namely:

(1) Openness,
(2) Direct communication with the public
(3) Engagement with the community as part of policy formation,
(4) Positive presentation of government policies and achievements,
(5) Use of all communication channels deemed relevant, not only limited to the national mass media,
(6) Conduct of coordinated cross-departmental communication on an issue, not creating conflict or duplicate messages,
(7) Encouragement of neutrality on the political position of the government apparatus

In line with [12], which explains that government institutions, both at the central and regional levels, and ministries, need to work together in communicating core competencies from the government, by constantly communicating to the public about all aspects of excellence and feasibility in government management, resources owned, and policies or programs that will be and are being implemented. With the presence of communication technology, which is growing rapidly, there is no longer any reason for government agencies not to communicate with the public.

Public communication is an effort to provide the public with public information related to government policies and activities that have been, are being, and will be carried out [13]. According to [12], assumptions, emotions, and trust will be more easily made favorable through interactions on online media and social media because of the opportunity to provide direct comments and provide opinions on an issue, especially those related to the government.

B. Podcast optimization strategy in government institutions as a public communication channel and digital broadcasting media.

In an effort to optimize podcasts as public communication channels and digital broadcasting media, government agencies need to have a strategy for building and managing

institutional podcast channels. Based on the author's analysis, here are some strategies for developing a podcast as a public communication channel that can be optimized by the relevant government institution, including:

(1) Content is king, but context is the key. Government public relations and podcast managers in government institutions need to provide more material than is needed, but must ensure that the material that is then presented has high value to the public. The content submitted must also consider one important aspect, namely, context, in order to connect with the public as listeners/viewers of the podcast channel.

(2) The podcast host: Voice of influence and authority. Determining the host is very important, because the persona of a host on a podcast greatly affects the public who listen or watch. Host credibility is an important consideration. The relationship between the public and the podcast host needs to be intimate because the public is in direct contact with the authority. In other words, the public "forms" a relationship with the host because they feel they are being spoken to directly.

(3) Brand narratives. Through podcasts, brands from institutions/organizations are encouraged to tell in-depth stories that cannot be conveyed through other social media platforms. Podcasts are tools that have the power to control brand narratives. For this reason, podcasts can be optimized to achieve brand awareness and deepen relationships with the public.

(4) Storytelling. The podcast platform provides an opportunity to tell stories about individuals, institutions, policies, and issues; and give out relevant information on notable concerns or for greater understanding about a particular topic.

In addition, in an effort to optimize podcasts as a public communication channel, government public relations departments need to have good planning in the pre-production, production, and post-production stages of their podcasts. Four important aspects in optimizing podcast pre-production are:

(a) Topic. Choosing interesting topics and titles is very crucial. Topic research must be carried out so that they are not only of interest to the public but also relevant.

(b) Schedule. In term of schedule, podcast broadcasting frequency must be consistent.

(c) Content Structure. The aspect of content structure will be very helpful in scripting or preparing podcast scripts. The structure of the content on a podcast can simply be divided into the initial segment/prologue, the main discussion, and the closing segment/epilogue.

(d) Scripting. In the scripting aspect, the narration can be in the form of a complete narration, or it can be in the form of key-points that can be improvised when recording is done.

Furthermore, the podcast production stage also needs to be optimized, during material preparation, material delivery, and the podcast recording process. Then, the post-production stage also really determines how podcast channels and content are distributed to the public. For this reason, at the post- production stage, it is very important for government public relations departments to review the recording and editing of their podcasts, and then prepare the design of publication materials for social media to invite the public to listen and watch podcast episodes. Regular promotion on social media and linking them with other websites and multiple platforms is a strategy that must be used. Government public relations departments need to build public engagement and evaluate the content that has been released.

4. Conclusions

The purposes of public communication are to provide information to the target audience, to raise awareness, and to influence the attitudes or behavior of the target audience. Public communication strategies through podcasts, both in audio and video formats, are very useful for increasing public trust and participation in government institutions. Based on the author's analysis of podcast channels of government institutions, the presence of

a podcast is able to promote the authenticity of the individuals/figures/resources interviewed, especially for podcast channels that use an interview approach a lot.

Another advantage is the building of intimacy through the experience of listening to or watching podcast episodes. This research article has shortcomings, so further research is needed to explore more deeply about the effectiveness podcasts have as public communication channels in government institutions.

Government public relations departments, as the managers of public communication channels, are required to be adaptive and able to utilize technology optimally. Podcast channels in government institutions must be seen as a means to establish communication and achieve good relations with the public. This descriptive research method showed the potential for podcasts' growth as public communication channels of government institutions. In addition, this study provided recommendations in an effort to optimize podcasts as public communication channels and digital broadcasting media. It is hoped that this research can provide valuable inputs for government public relations and researchers in the podcast field about optimizing podcasts in the government sector.

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