Analysis of Public Communication Strategy in Teluk Bintuni Regency in the Digital Era

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Abstract

This study explores the digital-based public communication strategies implemented by the Teluk Bintuni Regency Government, with a focus on the challenges and opportunities of utilizing technology to convey information to the public. As a developing region in West Papua, Teluk Bintuni faces unique geographical and infrastructural challenges, alongside a diverse cultural landscape. The study highlights how digital media, including social media platforms, websites, and online applications, is used to disseminate government policies, development programs, and emergency information. However, it also identifies key barriers such as limited internet access in rural areas, low digital literacy, and insufficient technological infrastructure. The study examines how traditional communication methods, such as local language usage and the involvement of community leaders, play a vital role in ensuring effective communication in remote areas. Additionally, the research provides strategic recommendations for overcoming these challenges, such as improving digital infrastructure, enhancing digital literacy, and fostering collaboration with various stakeholders. The findings underscore the need for a hybrid communication approach that integrates both digital and traditional methods to bridge the digital divide and ensure inclusive public communication in Teluk Bintuni.

Keywords: Public Communication, Digital Era, Communication Strategy, Bintuni Bay.

1. Introduction

Public communication is the process of exchanging information between the government and the public that aims to build understanding, involvement, and participation in various aspects of national and state life. In the context of regional autonomy in Indonesia, public communication is an important instrument for local governments to convey policies, garner support, and build public trust (Entradas et al., 2020). In the digital era, public communication is increasingly complex because the government must adapt to the ever-evolving information and communication technology (ICT) (Abhayawansa et al., 2021). Teluk Bintuni Regency, as one of the developing regions in West Papua, faces unique challenges in managing its public communication, especially amidst its vast geographical characteristics, limited infrastructure, and the diversity of its people's cultures and languages. Teluk Bintuni has great potential, especially in the natural resources sector, such as liquefied natural gas (LNG) which is one of the mainstays of the region's economy. However, geographical challenges and low accessibility require local governments to have an effective public communication strategy so that people throughout the region, both in urban and rural areas, can receive information evenly. In this context, the digital era provides new opportunities for the government to reach the public through technology platforms such as social media, online applications, and websites (Klochan et al., 2021). However, digital transformation does not always run smoothly due to limited telecommunications infrastructure, low internet penetration, and varying levels of digital literacy in the community.

In the digital era, the use of technology in public communication provides a number of benefits, such as efficiency in conveying information, wider reach, and opportunities for direct interaction between the government and the community (Schillinger et al., 2020). Social media, for example, has become a tool widely used by local governments in Indonesia, including Teluk Bintuni, to convey the latest information, development programs, and public policies (Quesenberry, 2020). However, the success of using digital technology is highly dependent on the readiness of the infrastructure and the community's ability to access the information (Wiguna, 2023). In several remote districts in Teluk Bintuni, internet access is still limited, so the community tends to rely on traditional media or direct communication through community leaders.

In addition to infrastructure, cultural diversity in Teluk Bintuni is an important factor influencing public communication strategies. This area consists of various ethnic groups with different languages and traditions. A communication approach that is sensitive to local culture is needed to ensure that the message conveyed can be understood and accepted by the community (Dwinarko et al., 2023). The use of local languages, cultural symbols, and the involvement of traditional figures or religious leaders are key elements in building effective communication in Teluk Bintuni. In some cases, local governments have utilized video-based media and local-language infographics to convey information to indigenous communities, although these efforts still need to be expanded (Jumadi et al., 2023).

However, another major challenge is digital literacy. Although technology penetration is increasing in Indonesia, many communities in the interior of Papua, including Teluk Bintuni, do not yet have adequate skills to use technological devices such as smartphones or online applications. Low digital literacy hinders communities from utilizing technology to receive information or provide feedback to the government. For example, public service applications launched by local governments are often not utilized optimally due to a lack of socialization or training for the community (Hyland-Wood et al., 2021).

In addition to the challenges, the digital era also provides new opportunities for local governments to increase transparency and accountability. Technology allows the public to more easily access information about government policies and development programs. This transparency, if managed properly, can increase public trust in the government. On the other hand, the government can also utilize technology to obtain feedback from the community more quickly and efficiently (Zhang and Chen, 2024). Active community participation in providing input, criticism, or suggestions is an important part of creating inclusive and responsive governance.

In the context of Teluk Bintuni Regency, digital-based public communication strategies must be designed by considering local characteristics, such as geographical challenges, infrastructure, and cultural diversity. Local governments need to integrate traditional and modern approaches in conveying information to the public. Traditional approaches, such as direct meetings or delivering messages through community leaders, are still relevant in remote areas that do not yet have access to technology. On the other hand, modern approaches such as the use of social media and online applications are solutions to reach urban communities who are more familiar with technology (Demestichas and Daskalakis, 2020).

This study aims to explore how the Teluk Bintuni Regency Government utilizes digital technology in its public communication strategy, while identifying the challenges and opportunities faced. This study also aims to provide strategic recommendations that can help local governments improve the effectiveness of public communication in the digital era. By combining qualitative approaches through interviews, observations, and document analysis, this study is expected to provide a comprehensive picture of the dynamics of public communication in Teluk Bintuni.

2. Methods

This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with a case study method to explore digital-based public communication strategies in Teluk Bintuni Regency. This approach allows for an in-depth understanding of the implementation of public communication, especially in complex geographic, social, and cultural contexts.

2.1. Research Design

This study is exploratory and descriptive in nature to analyze the implementation of digital-based public communication by the Teluk Bintuni Regency government. Case studies were chosen because they provide flexibility in understanding specific phenomena in detail, including how the government deals with infrastructure challenges and cultural diversity.

2.2. Data Sources

The study utilizes primary and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with government officials, community leaders, and local residents. Secondary data comes from official government documents, annual reports, digital content (social media, websites), and relevant statistics.

2.3. Data Collection Techniques

Data collection was carried out using four main techniques:

Table 1: Data collection techniques

Method	Techniques	Objectives	Expected Outcomes
Interview	Semi-structured interviews with policy makers, community leaders, and local residents.	To explore views on communication strategies, challenges, and effectiveness.	In-depth data on public communication implementation.

Observation	Observation of public communication activities, both online and offline.	To observe direct practice of public communication in the field.	Visual documentation and narrative of public communication activities.
Documentation	Analysis of policy documents, annual reports, and digital content (social media and websites).	To identify government communication patterns and the media used.	Structured information related to public communication policies and activities.

2.4. Research Instruments

The instruments used included interview guides, observation sheets, and documentation checklists. The interview guides contained questions related to the implementation of public communication and its challenges. The observation sheets recorded communication practices in the field, while the documentation checklist ensured that all relevant documents and digital content were analyzed.

2.5. Research Procedures

The research was conducted in three stages:

2.5.1. Data Collection

The research was conducted in three interconnected stages to ensure a comprehensive approach to addressing the research objectives. Each stage was designed to collect, analyze, and interpret data systematically, ultimately leading to meaningful insights and actionable recommendations.

2.5.2. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic methods to identify key themes, such as digital media, community literacy, and cultural diversity.

2.5.3. Conclusion Drawing

The results of the analysis were used to answer the research questions and provide strategic recommendations.

2.6. Data Validation

Data validity was ensured through triangulation of sources and methods. Data from various sources, such as interviews and official documents, were compared to ensure consistency and reliability of the findings.

2.7. Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis methods, which involved data reduction, presentation of data in narrative and tabular form, and drawing conclusions based on relationships between themes. This method ensures that the results of the analysis are relevant and applicable to the context of public communication in the digital era.

3. Results and Discussion

This study produces important findings related to the digital-based public communication strategy implemented by the Teluk Bintuni Regency Government.

3.1. Effectiveness of Digital Media in Public Communication

This study reveals that digital media plays an important role in public communication in Teluk Bintuni Regency, especially in urban areas. Platforms such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and official government websites are the main channels for conveying information to the public. Social media, in particular, is used to convey messages quickly and interactively, such as policy announcements, public service programs, and emergency information. One of the successes of social media is its ability to reach a wider audience at a relatively low cost. However, its effectiveness in rural areas is still limited due to uneven internet access. The undeveloped internet network infrastructure is a significant challenge, making it difficult for people in rural areas to utilize digital media. In addition, the limited digital literacy of rural communities also contributes to the low effectiveness of communication through digital media in this area. This condition reflects the existence of a digital divide that hinders the process of conveying information evenly throughout the region. In the urban context, social media has proven effective because people tend to have

more stable internet access and adequate technological devices. However, in the interior, the government often has to rely on traditional communication methods, such as direct delivery through traditional leaders or village meetings, to ensure that messages are delivered. Thus, the effectiveness of digital media is highly dependent on geographic conditions, infrastructure levels, and the community's ability to access technology. Government efforts to maximize digital media must be balanced with strengthening infrastructure and increasing digital literacy so that all people, both in urban and rural areas, can be actively involved in public communication.

3.2. Challenges of Digital Literacy in The Interior

The level of digital literacy of the people of Teluk Bintuni Regency varies greatly between urban and rural areas. In urban areas, the majority of people are accustomed to using technological devices such as smartphones and computers to access information. They are also more active in using social media as a source of news and information. However, different conditions are seen in the interior, where digital literacy is still very low. Based on interviews and observations, the low digital literacy in the interior is caused by several factors. First, limited internet infrastructure makes it difficult for people to access digital information. In some remote areas, telecommunications signals are not even available, so technological devices cannot be used optimally. Second, limited technological devices are the main obstacle. Many rural communities do not have smartphones or computers because the price of these devices is considered expensive. Third, low awareness and knowledge about the importance of digital technology makes people less motivated to learn to use digital devices. As a result, rural communities rely more on traditional communication methods, such as delivering information through village heads or traditional leaders. This condition creates a significant digital divide between urban and rural areas. In the long term, this gap can affect community participation in the development process, especially in the context of policies that require active community involvement through digital media. Therefore, a digital literacy program is needed that focuses on rural areas to improve people's understanding and ability to use technology. The government also needs to work with various parties, including telecommunications companies and civil society organizations, to provide digital training and expand internet access to remote areas.

3.3. The Role of Culture in Increasing Communication Effectiveness

The integration of local culture in public communication is one of the strategies that has succeeded in increasing the effectiveness of message delivery in Teluk Bintuni Regency. Given that this region has high cultural diversity, a culture-based approach is considered more relevant to reach the community, especially in the interior. Local governments often use local languages to convey important information. For example, educational videos published on social media are often presented in local languages to make them easier for local people to understand. Local languages are also used in community meetings in villages, especially when discussing policies that affect their daily lives. In addition to language, the involvement of traditional leaders in public communication also plays an important role. Traditional leaders have great influence in remote communities, so messages conveyed through them tend to be more trusted and followed. The government often involves traditional leaders in conveying information related to government programs or other important issues, such as the COVID-19 vaccination. This approach not only increases the effectiveness of communication but also strengthens the relationship between the government and the community. In addition, local culture is often represented in digital media used by the government. Digital content such as videos and images often contain elements of local culture, such as traditional clothing, traditional music, and dances. This cultural representation not only helps to increase community engagement but also strengthens local identity in the context of globalization. However, the integration of local culture in public communication also faces challenges, especially in terms of consistency. Several respondents noted that the government has not fully prioritized a culture-based approach in all public communication programs. Therefore, a more targeted policy is needed to ensure that local culture is a key element in public communication strategies, both in digital media and in face-to-face communication. This culture-based approach is in line with the theory of intercultural communication which emphasizes the importance of adapting messages to audiences with different cultural backgrounds. Cultural integration not only increases the effectiveness of communication but also strengthens the sense of community ownership of policies made by the government.

3.4. Barriers to Implementing Digital Strategy

Although digital media has great potential in supporting public communication, the Teluk Bintuni Regency Government still faces various obstacles in implementing a comprehensive digital strategy. The main obstacle faced is the limited technological infrastructure, especially in remote areas. Unstable or even unavailable internet networks in some areas make it difficult for people to access digital information. This challenge is exacerbated by the limited electricity in some remote villages, which hinders the use of digital devices. In addition, the digital literacy gap between urban and rural areas creates inequality in access to information. In urban areas, people tend to be more accustomed to using digital technology, while in rural areas, digital literacy is still very low. The government also faces limited human resources who are skilled in managing digital media effectively. Many local government staff do

not yet have adequate competence in utilizing technology for public communication. Another obstacle is the lack of budget for infrastructure development and digital training. Although the government has made efforts to maximize the use of social media, not all public communication programs can be implemented effectively. To overcome this obstacle, strategic steps are needed, such as investment in digital infrastructure development, provision of digital literacy training for the community and government staff, and allocation of a larger budget to support the development of communication technology. Collaboration with the private sector and civil society organizations can also be a solution to accelerate the digital transformation process in Teluk Bintuni Regency.

4. Conclussion

The digital transformation of public communication in Teluk Bintuni Regency has shown promising results in urban areas, where digital media such as social media and official websites are effectively utilized to convey government messages. However, rural areas face significant challenges due to limited internet access, low digital literacy, and insufficient technological devices. The integration of local culture, through the use of local languages and the involvement of traditional leaders, has proven to enhance the effectiveness of communication. Nevertheless, there are still gaps in ensuring consistent and culturally sensitive communication strategies across the region. The study concludes that to achieve more effective public communication in the digital era, it is essential to improve digital infrastructure, invest in digital literacy programs, and ensure that local culture is a central element in communication efforts. Collaboration with private sector partners and civil society organizations is also necessary to support the region's digital communication goals. By addressing these challenges, Teluk Bintuni can better leverage technology to promote transparency, accountability, and public participation in governance.

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