

Digital Communication Strategy of Banten Regional Police Public Relations through Instagram @humaspoldabanten in Supporting Public Trust

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Abstract: Social media has transformed police-public communication by enabling faster information dissemination, transparency, interaction, and public engagement. However, police social media communication remains predominantly information-oriented, while integrated evidence on content management, interaction, responsiveness, and their role in supporting public trust at the regional police level remains limited. **Objective:** This study aimed to analyze the digital communication strategy of Banten Regional Police Public Relations through Instagram @humaspoldabanten and examine how information, education, transparency, interaction, and responsiveness support public trust. **Method:** A descriptive qualitative design was employed using purposive sampling involving one public relations officer and two account followers. Data were collected through interviews, observation of Instagram content from January-June 2026, and documentation, and analyzed through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification using the Circular Model of SoMe. **Findings:** The strategy involved audience-oriented information selection, visual optimization, verification, consistent publication, monitoring, and evaluation. Reels generated approximately 1,085 engagements per post, compared with 336 for carousels, while responsiveness was constrained by verification requirements. **Implications:** Police social media management should prioritize accurate, relevant, transparent, and dialogic communication rather than engagement metrics alone. **Originality:** This study integrates the Circular Model of SoMe with five communication dimensions to explain how regional police social media practices support public trust.

Keywords: digital communication; Instagram; police public relations; public trust; social media strategy

INTRODUCTION

Digital transformation has shifted communication between public institutions and society from predominantly one-way communication toward a more open, rapid, interactive, and participatory model. In government contexts, social media no longer functions merely as a publication channel; it also provides a space for information provision, transparency, dialogue, public response, and relationship building between institutions and citizens (Lee, 2018; Arshad & Khurram, 2020; Lai et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2021; Mansoor, 2021; Ernungtyas & Boer, 2023). For police institutions, this shift is important because public trust is related not only to institutional performance and services but also to citizens' experiences, procedural fairness, integrity, openness, and the quality of police-community relations (Berg & Johansson, 2020; Schaap, 2021; Van de Walle & Migchelbrink, 2022; Melkamu & Teshome, 2023). Social media enables police institutions to disseminate official information while building relationships with the public, although its use faces organizational challenges and requires a balance among openness, speed, and information accuracy (Dekker et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2022). In this context, Banten Regional Police Public Relations manages the official Instagram account @humaspoldabanten as one of its digital communication channels. Based on the preliminary observation, the verified account had approximately 109,000 followers and 31,027 posts as of September 4, 2026, providing a substantial audience base for communication between the police institution and the public.

Previous studies indicate that the use of social media by government and police institutions is associated with information dissemination, public engagement, transparency, legitimacy, and public trust. Lee (2018) found that government agencies employ social media in various public relations strategies, although information dissemination remains dominant. Arshad and Khurram (2020) demonstrated links between the quality of government information on social media and transparency, responsiveness, trust, and citizen participation, while Lai et al. (2020) and Chen et al. (2020) emphasized the importance of dialogic

orientation in increasing citizen engagement. In the context of organization-public relationships, Namisango and Kang (2019) and Wang and Yang (2020) showed that symmetrical and dialogic communication through social media can support engagement and the quality of organization-public relationships, although two-way communication does not always constitute substantive dialogue (Lane, 2021). In policing, Intravia et al. (2020) identified an association between exposure to police-related information through the internet and social media and perceptions of police legitimacy, while Dekker et al. (2020) showed that integrating social media into police-public communication is affected by organizational barriers. In Indonesia, Yudananto and Damastuti (2023), Pramudya et al. (2023), Zahro et al. (2024), and Pane et al. (2025) show that Instagram has become an important component of institutional police communication, with varying emphases on public trust, cyber public relations, hoax management, and social media management.

Although research on digital communication by government and police institutions continues to develop, several areas remain insufficiently explained. Previous studies have tended to focus on content analysis of central-level police accounts (Yudananto & Damastuti, 2023), hoax management through Instagram (Zahro et al., 2024), the implementation of cyber public relations (Pramudya et al., 2023; Pane et al., 2025), social media adoption in police organizations (Dekker et al., 2020), or the relationship between digital media exposure and police legitimacy from the audience perspective (Intravia et al., 2020). Research on government social media has also more commonly examined relationships among information quality, transparency, responsiveness, participation, and trust using quantitative approaches (Arshad & Khurram, 2020; Mansoor, 2021). Consequently, limited research has integrated how digital communication strategies are implemented through Instagram at the regional police level, how content and interaction are managed, and how these communication practices are directed toward supporting public trust. The novelty of this study lies in integrating The Circular Model of SoMe—Share, Optimize, Manage, and Engage—with five aspects of digital communication: information, education, transparency, interaction, and responsiveness (Luttrell, 2019; Namisango & Kang, 2019; Wang & Yang, 2020; Lane, 2021), within the context of Banten Regional Police Public Relations.

Based on these problems and research gaps, this study aims to analyze the digital communication strategy of Banten Regional Police Public Relations through the Instagram account @humaspoldabanten and to explain how content management, information and educational delivery, transparency, interaction, and responsiveness are directed toward supporting public trust in the police institution. Specifically, the study analyzes message selection and presentation, the use of Instagram characteristics and features, management of public interaction, and evaluation of communication activities using The Circular Model of SoMe as the primary analytical framework (Luttrell, 2019). This study is not intended to test causal relationships or statistically measure increases in public trust; rather, it provides a qualitative understanding of police digital communication practices and how information credibility, openness, interaction, and responsiveness may support institution-public relationships.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to analyze the digital communication strategy of Banten Regional Police Public Relations through the Instagram account @humaspoldabanten in supporting the formation of public trust. This approach was selected because the study focuses on communication processes, considerations in message selection and presentation, content management, patterns of interaction with the public, and the meanings informants assign to digital communication practices. The research object is the official Instagram account @humaspoldabanten, with observations focused on content published from January to June 2026. The study is not designed to statistically test causal relationships.

Primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with informants selected using purposive sampling. The key informant was Police Second Brigadier Fajar Muharam, a Banten Regional Police Public Relations staff member involved in managing Instagram @humaspoldabanten (IU-01). Supporting informants consisted of two members of the public/account followers coded IP-01 and IP-02. The key informant provided information on communication objectives, content planning and selection, message packaging, publication, comment management, information verification, and social media evaluation. Supporting informants provided audience perspectives on information relevance, message clarity, content formats, interaction experiences, and account responsiveness. Their identities were retained as codes to preserve anonymity.

Data were collected through observation, semi-structured in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observations covered photos, videos, Reels, documented Stories, captions, comments, and observable forms of interaction. The unit of analysis focused on Instagram content and communication activities, particularly message characteristics, presentation formats, information substance, audience engagement, and institutional responses. Documentation included screenshots of posts, engagement data, and relevant publication materials. Account performance data from Colecta AI were used as supporting exploratory data to describe follower counts, engagement rates, average interactions, format performance, publication frequency, captions, and hashtags; these data were not used to measure public trust.

Data analysis was conducted through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing and verification. Interview, observation, and documentation data were selected, focused, simplified, and grouped according to their relevance to the research objectives. The data were then presented in thematic descriptions, informant quotations, and analytical tables. The Circular Model of SoMe (Luttrell, 2019) was used as the primary framework through the Share, Optimize, Manage, and Engage stages, while information, education, transparency, interaction, and responsiveness were used as synthesized analytical categories from a two-way communication perspective. Data credibility was examined through source and technique triangulation by comparing information across informants and across interviews, observations, and documentation.

Table 2. Operationalization of the Research Analytical Framework

Framework/Aspect	Analytical Focus	Observed Indicators
Share	Information dissemination	Information relevance, audience needs, message type and substance
Optimize	Message and media optimization	Content format, visuals, Reels, captions, adaptation to Instagram characteristics
Manage	Communication management	Planning, verification, publication consistency, comment monitoring, evaluation
Engage	Public engagement	Comments, questions, feedback, responses, reciprocal communication
Information-Education	Message quality and function	Accurate, timely, clear, relevant, advisories, services, safety/security
Transparency	Institutional openness	Information on activities, services, cases, and explanations of public issues
Interaction-Responsiveness	Institution-public relationship	Responses, follow-up, channel referral, verification requirements

Table 2 clarifies the relationship between the main theoretical framework and the analytical categories. The four components of The Circular Model of SoMe map the strategic process of social media management, while the five communication aspects deepen the analysis of the substance and quality of institution-public relationships.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Digital Communication Strategy of Banten Regional Police Public Relations through Instagram

The findings show that the management of Instagram @humaspoldabanten is directed not merely toward institutional publication activities but also as part of the digital communication strategy of Banten Regional Police Public Relations. The strategy includes information selection, adaptation of messages to public needs, use of visual formats, content publication, monitoring of audience responses, and communication evaluation.

The key informant (IU-01) explained that Instagram is positioned as a communication channel because the public increasingly obtains information through social media. Not all internal activities automatically become Instagram content; managers consider the relevance of information to public needs, particularly service information, advisories, activities with direct public impact, and issues requiring clarification. This finding indicates a gatekeeping process that considers the utility of messages for audiences.

The perspectives of the supporting informants reinforce this finding. IP-01 expressed a greater need for practical information such as services, advisories, or specific incidents, while IP-02 emphasized language that is easy to understand and not overly formal. Thus, substantive relevance and message clarity are important components of digital communication by public institutions.

Presentation format is also part of the strategy. Managers use videos, infographics, and Reels to align messages with Instagram's visual characteristics. Supporting informants considered short videos and infographics easier to recognize when browsing content. This finding indicates that media optimization is not merely aesthetic but involves adapting message formats to audience information-consumption patterns.

Table 3. Results of the Instagram @humaspoldabanten Content Analysis

Aspect	Main Finding	Meaning/Implication
Followers	±110 thousand followers	Provides a large audience base
Engagement rate	0.7%; ±770 interactions/post	Engagement is relatively moderate, although certain content can generate high interaction
Content format	Reels perform best	Reels are the most effective format for reaching and engaging the public
Reels performance	±1,085 engagements/post	Substantially higher than carousels at ±336 and single images
Posting frequency	4.8 posts/week	Indicates consistency in communication activity
Longest interval	5 days	Consistency remains relatively well maintained
Best-performing content	Reel on criminal case disclosure: 5,877 engagements	Timely, specific, newsworthy content has strong audience appeal
Lowest-performing content	Digital tabloid promotion: ±30 engagements	Static content with generic messages is less attractive to the public
Captions	All posts contain captions	Communication discipline is adequate, but captions are considered too long/formal
Hashtags	±3.8 hashtags/post	Further optimization of discoverability remains possible
Content focus	Crime reporting, case announcements, and institutional activities	The account has strong positioning as a police information channel
Main recommendation	Strengthen Reels; shorten captions; optimize hashtags	Increase attractiveness, reach, and public engagement

Table 3 shows that the account has approximately 110,000 followers, an engagement rate of 0.7%, and around 770 interactions per post. Reels generated approximately 1,085 engagements per post, higher than carousels at approximately 336. The highest-performing content was a Reel on the disclosure of a criminal case, with 5,877 engagements, while a digital tabloid promotion generated only about 30 engagements. These data indicate that audience engagement is influenced by a combination of format and substantive relevance. However, engagement cannot be directly interpreted as an indicator of public trust because likes, comments, shares, and views primarily reflect responses to content.

Content Management as an Effort to Support Public Trust

The findings indicate that efforts to support public trust through Instagram are related to the quality of information management. Five elements consistently emerged: accuracy, relevance, clarity, consistency, and responsiveness. Information concerning cases, figures, identities, or sensitive issues requires checking and coordination before publication. This indicates that communication speed must be balanced with information validity.

Relevance also determines communication value. Information that addresses public needs or explains emerging issues is considered more useful than routine activity publications. Caption clarity is necessary so that audiences understand who is involved, the context of an activity, and the actions required when a post concerns services or advisories.

Consistency concerns not only posting frequency but also the consistency of accuracy, relevance, and communication quality. Exploratory data indicate a frequency of approximately 4.8 posts per week, with the longest interval being five days. Interaction and responsiveness are also part of the public experience. However, administrators cannot always provide immediate answers because certain questions require verification. This finding demonstrates a trade-off between speed and accuracy in institutional communication.

In the context of criticism and negative comments, managers distinguish criticism that can serve as constructive input from allegations or unverified information. Therefore, comment management is not merely a technical administrative task but part of public communication management and the safeguarding of institutional credibility.

Analysis Based on The Circular Model of SoMe

Table 4. Analysis of the @humaspoldabanten Instagram Communication Strategy Based on The Circular Model of SoMe

Stage	Finding Indication	Interpretation
Share	Content largely focuses on police activities, case disclosures, and institutional activities.	Instagram is used primarily to disseminate information to the public.
Optimize	Reels show higher engagement than several other formats.	Audiovisual content has the potential to increase message appeal and reach.
Manage	Publication activity is relatively consistent.	Content management is conducted continuously, but public-response management requires further analysis.
Engage	Engagement levels differ according to content format and substance. Content relevant to public issues tends to receive greater attention.	Engagement is influenced by message relevance, but engagement does not automatically indicate dialogic communication.

Table 4 shows that Share is the most prominent stage because most content is oriented toward disseminating information on police activities, case disclosures, and institutional activities. Optimize is evident in the use of audiovisual formats, particularly Reels, which generate higher engagement. At the Manage stage, verification, coordination, comment monitoring, and evaluation processes are present. Meanwhile, Engage still requires strengthening because audience responses are not equivalent to dialogic communication. High engagement only indicates involvement with content and does not yet demonstrate substantive communication exchange.

Information, Education, Transparency, Interaction, and Responsiveness

Table 5. Content Analysis Based on Communication Strategy Dimensions

Dimension	Finding Indication	Strategic Implication
Information	Content frequently covers police activities, crime, and institutional activities.	Information dissemination is the primary orientation of digital communication.
Education	Not yet a primary focus in the exploratory assessment.	Further content coding is needed to determine the proportion of educational messages.
Transparency	Publication of activities and case disclosures provides public access to information.	Instagram has the potential to support institutional openness.
Interaction	Audience engagement with content is present.	Audience response should be distinguished from reciprocal communication.
Responsiveness	Cannot yet be adequately measured using content-performance data.	Requires observation of institutional replies and responses to the public.

Table 5 shows that information is the most dominant dimension. Education appears through service information and advisories, but the exploratory data are insufficient to conclude that education is a dominant category without coding the entire sample of posts. Transparency is reflected in the publication of activities and case disclosures, but openness cannot be equated solely with the volume of information published. Interaction is reflected in comments, likes, shares, and other forms of engagement, whereas responsiveness requires observation of how questions are answered, followed up, or directed to relevant service channels.

Digital Communication Strategy and Public Trust

The findings show that the relationship between digital communication strategy and public trust operates through the communication experiences received by the public. Accurate, relevant, understandable, consistent, open, and responsive information can support perceptions of institutional credibility. This

finding is consistent with Mansoor (2021) and Arshad and Khurram (2020), who identify information quality, transparency, and responsiveness as important elements of government communication on social media.

However, social media activity cannot be directly equated with public trust. An active account with high engagement does not automatically achieve a high level of trust because trust in the police is also influenced by service experiences, institutional performance, integrity, procedural fairness, and police-community relations (Schaap, 2021; Melkamu & Teshome, 2023). Therefore, the contribution of digital communication is more appropriately understood as a factor supporting trust formation rather than as its sole cause.

Synthesis of Findings

Overall, the study identified three main dynamics. First, there is tension between information dissemination and dialogic communication: the account functions strongly as an information channel, but dialogic communication still requires strengthening. Second, there is a balance between speed and accuracy because rapid responses remain subject to information verification. Third, engagement metrics differ from meaningful public interaction; content performance can indicate audience attention but is insufficient to demonstrate dialogue or trust.

Therefore, the effectiveness of digital communication strategies should not be assessed solely on the basis of the number of posts, followers, views, likes, or comments. Evaluation should integrate quantitative indicators with qualitative indicators such as information relevance, public understanding, conversation quality, response accuracy, and the institution's ability to address public information needs.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

This study shows that the digital communication strategy of Banten Regional Police Public Relations through Instagram @humaspoldabanten is implemented through information selection based on public relevance, adaptation of messages to audience characteristics, use of visual formats, content publication, response monitoring, and communication evaluation. Based on The Circular Model of SoMe, these practices reflect Share, Optimize, Manage, and Engage, although information dissemination remains more dominant than dialogic communication. Optimization is particularly evident in the use of audiovisual formats such as Reels, while Manage and Engage still require strengthening in conversation management, reciprocal interaction, and responses to public information needs.

Communication management presents two important dynamics: the need to balance response speed with information accuracy, and the distinction between digital engagement, dialogic communication, and public trust. Performance data show that timely content and Reels can generate higher engagement, but views, likes, comments, or interactions are insufficient to demonstrate the formation of trust. Communication success should therefore also be assessed in terms of relevance, understanding, interaction quality, and response accuracy.

Accordingly, the contribution of Instagram @humaspoldabanten to public trust is more appropriately understood as an effort to support the formation and strengthening of trust through informative, accurate, open, consistent, and responsive communication experiences, rather than as evidence that Instagram use directly increases public trust. Digital communication strategy should continue to shift from a pattern dominated by information dissemination toward more dialogic communication by strengthening educational content, responding to questions and criticism, utilizing public feedback, and conducting evaluations that are not solely oriented toward engagement metrics.

Suggestions

In practical terms, Banten Regional Police Public Relations should maintain information verification and publication consistency while strengthening dialogic communication. Reels can be prioritized for information requiring rapid reach and attention, while captions should be shortened and written in clear public-facing language. Account evaluation should combine performance data with analysis of comment quality, recurring questions, information needs, and response follow-up. Theoretically, the findings show that The Circular Model of SoMe can be enriched by examining information, education, transparency, interaction, and responsiveness to understand digital communication practices in public institutions.

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