



# Cyber Public Relations Communication Strategy In Maintaining The Image Of Malang City Government Post-Kanjuruhan Tragedy

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## Abstract

The development of technology and the internet has transformed the communication landscape, including within the realm of government. Social media platforms like Instagram have become important tools for government agencies to interact with the public, disseminate information, and manage their image. The Public Relations Office of Malang City Government utilizes the Instagram account @humaskotamalang as a Cyber Public Relations platform to manage communication in the aftermath of the Kanjuruhan tragedy, which significantly impacted the local government's image. The research object is the Public Relations Office of Malang City Government through the Instagram account @humaskotamalang, specifically in handling news coverage and responses to the Kanjuruhan tragedy. The research method employs a qualitative approach with a case study method. Data was collected through observation of content on the @humaskotamalang Instagram account, in-depth interviews with two key informants (Head of Leadership Communication Sub-Division and Instagram Account Manager), and documentation. Data analysis was conducted using data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing techniques, utilizing the 7CS-PR communication strategy theoretical framework. The results indicate that the Public Relations Office of Malang City Government has effectively implemented a Cyber Public Relations communication strategy through Instagram by applying the 7CS-PR approach. The uploaded content related to the Kanjuruhan tragedy reflects the government's efforts to demonstrate concern, transparency, and commitment to resolving the case. In conclusion, the implementation of the 7CS-PR strategy proves effective in building credibility, relevant context, useful content, message clarity, communication consistency, appropriate channel selection, and adaptation to audience capability.

**Keyword:** Cyber Public Relations, 7Cs-PR Communication Strategy, Instagram, Microblogging, Government Image, Kanjuruhan Tragedy, Crisis Communication.

## 1. Introduction

The digital era has transformed the field of communication, including in the realm of governance. The presence of social media is no longer viewed merely as an entertainment tool, but rather as a strategic channel for interacting with the public. In Indonesia, internet and social media penetration continues to increase significantly. HootSuite (We Are Social) 2022 data shows that internet users in Indonesia reached 205 million, with social media being the dominant platform for accessing information. This phenomenon encourages the government, including local governments, to adopt social media as part of modern communication strategies. E-government has evolved into social government, where two-way interaction, transparency, and speed of information delivery become core values. In this context, Instagram, as a visual and interactive microblogging platform, has become a popular choice for government institutions. The Malang City Government, through the Instagram account @humaskotamalang, actively utilizes this platform to disseminate information, build engagement, and manage its image.

However, the effectiveness of social media in government communication is truly tested when a crisis emerges that threatens public image. The Kanjuruhan Tragedy (October 2022), which claimed the lives of hundreds of football supporters, is a multidimensional crisis that not only touched on legal and security aspects but also threatened the image of the local government in the eyes of the public, particularly the Aremania (supporters of Arema FC) who are closely associated with Malang City. Although administratively the tragedy occurred in Malang Regency, the Malang City Government was still socially and politically impacted, as evidenced by demonstrations and demands for justice within its jurisdiction.

The theoretical foundation of this research is the concept of Cyber Public Relations (Cyber PR). Cyber PR is an evolution of conventional Public Relations practices that utilize internet technology as the primary medium for building relationships with the public (Onggo, 2004). Its functions include rapid information dissemination, reputation management, and the creation of interactive dialogue. Communication strategies in Cyber PR can be measured using the 7Cs-PR framework (Cutlip, Center, & Broom, 2000), which consists of Credibility, Context, Content, Clarity, Continuity and Consistency, Channels, and Capability of the Audience. This framework serves as an analytical tool to assess the effectiveness of an institution's digital communication strategy. This is also related to efforts to cultivate, maintain, or even enhance the image, particularly by the Malang City Public Relations office through delivering various information via its Instagram account during the Kanjuruhan tragedy.

The urgency of this research lies in the need to understand how government institutions at the regional level can strategically utilize social media, not just as a one-way information broadcast tool, but as a strategic communication instrument for crisis management and maintaining public trust in an increasingly critical and digitally connected society. This study is important to

fill the knowledge gap regarding the implementation of local government crisis communication in Indonesia through microblogging platforms.

The research gap is indicated through a review of previous literature. Research by Halimatus Zahro Yananingtyas & Irwansyah (year not specified) discussed Cyber PR of the DKI Jakarta Provincial Government but used Twitter as the object. Research by Syaifudin (year not specified) and Khairina Nur Afifah (year not specified) did address microblogging, but focused on personal branding and self-development, not on government crisis communication strategy. Thus, this research offers novelty by specializing the analysis on the utilization of Instagram as a microblogging medium by local government public relations in the context of post-social disaster crisis management (Kanjuruhan Tragedy). This is where Instagram serves as an information and publication medium due to features that allow direct (real-time) user interaction, such as Direct Messenger, photo tagging, blogs, and status updates, which are considered more current compared to other social media platforms. The research further analyzes the communication strategy of Malang City Public Relations using the 7Cs- PR theory to understand the cyber public relations communication strategy in maintaining the image of the Malang City Government during the Kanjuruhan tragedy.

## 2. The Art of Research

1. Cyber Public Relations (Cyber PR): This concept is defined as all Public Relations activities that utilize the internet as their primary medium (Onggo, 2004; Edy Sutrisno et al., 2019). In the context of government, Cyber PR functions to enhance transparency, accountability, and public participation (Furqon, 2018). Cyber PR enables faster, more direct, and interactive communication compared to conventional media. Through Cyber PR practices, the government can disseminate information as widely and swiftly as possible to the public regarding its steps in handling the aftermath of the Kanjuruhan tragedy.
2. Crisis Communication and Image Management: Image is the public perception formed based on information and experience (Jefkins, 2004). In a crisis situation, an organization's image is highly vulnerable. The task of PR and Cyber PR is to conduct crisis communication to minimize reputational damage and restore trust (Soemirat & Ardianto, 2010). Social media serves as both the arena and the tool in this image-building battle, which can be observed from the information disseminated by the Malang City government's public relations to the public after the Kanjuruhan tragedy.
3. Microblogging via Instagram: Instagram is a social media platform that facilitates the sharing of short-form visual content. As a microblogging tool, it is effective for delivering quick, emotionally resonant, and easily digestible messages (Nasrullah, 2016). Features such as Feed, Stories, Reels, and Captions allow for layered narratives and high engagement, making it suitable for solidarity campaigns and the dissemination of emergency information, particularly regarding the actions of the Malang City government in the aftermath of the Kanjuruhan tragedy.
4. 7Cs-PR Communication Strategy: This framework emphasizes that effective communication must possess credibility, be contextual, contain relevant content, maintain clarity, demonstrate consistency, utilize appropriate channels, and consider audience capability (Ruslan, 2008). In the context of Cyber PR, this framework can be used to evaluate the quality of content and communication strategies employed by the Malang City government's public relations on social media in order to safeguard the government's image

## 3. Method

This study employs a qualitative approach with descriptive research design. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research aims to achieve a deep understanding of the phenomenon of Cyber PR communication strategies in the post-Kanjuruhan Tragedy context. Qualitative research is suitable for exploring the meanings, perceptions, and experiences of the actors (account managers), as well as analyzing social media content rich with symbolic and contextual meaning (Creswell). The descriptive design is used to systematically and factually describe or present the strategies, activities, and outcomes of Cyber PR implementation. The rationale for using this method is that qualitative methodology allows the researcher to explore the processes, motivations, and considerations behind each post and communication policy. The required data includes post content (images, videos, narratives), interviews with account managers, and the socio-political context of the Kanjuruhan Tragedy. These data are interrelated and require in-depth interpretation, which is a strength of qualitative analysis. Additionally, in-depth interviews with the Head of the Leadership Communication Subdivision and the Manager of the Instagram account @humaskotamalang provide an emic (insider) perspective on objectives, strategies, and challenges faced, which cannot be obtained through content analysis alone. Qualitative research allows the researcher to develop questions and research directions based on field findings, which is useful in uncovering unexpected aspects.

Data collection techniques are carried out through:

- Observation: Directly observing activities on the Instagram account @humaskotamalang, specifically posts related to the Kanjuruhan Tragedy (October 2022 – July 2023).



- Documentation: Collecting and analyzing digital archives in the form of screenshots of photos, videos, reels, and captions from posts related to the tragedy.
- In-depth Interviews: Conducted with two key informants: Rony Kurniawan Dwi S. (Junior Public Relations Officer, Leadership Communication Substance Subdivision) and Safira Agmarina Putri I. (First-Level Public Relations Officer / Account Manager). The interviews aim to explore information regarding strategies, objectives, evaluations, and challenges).

#### 4. Result

The research analysis units consist of 3 post objects on the Instagram account @humaskotamalang, namely: (1) Joint Prayer Activity, (2) President's Visit to Saiful Anwar Hospital in Malang, (3) Mayor's Visit to Victims' Families.

The three analysis units are elaborated as follows:

- Post: Joint Prayer Activity :



Image 1: Post about the joint prayer activity on Instagram @humaskotamalang

- a. Activity: Publication of photos from a joint prayer activity at City Hall attended by the Mayor, government officials, Arema FC management, and Aremania fans.
- b. 7Cs-PR Analysis:
  - Credibility: The presence of the Mayor, government officials, and Arema FC management at the joint prayer creates an atmosphere of mutual trust and shows authentic solidarity.
  - Context: The message is delivered within the context of Malang City's collective mourning. The activity held

- at the city hall square, a symbol of the government center, shows state participation in grieving.
  - Content: The message content about peace ("Malang dan Aremania Cinta Damai" / Malang and Aremania Love Peace) is relevant to the public interest in preventing further violence and healing wounds.
  - Clarity: The caption clearly explains the chronology of the activity, supported by 10 photo slides showing the solemnity of the event.
  - Continuity & Consistency: The joint prayer is the beginning of a series of ongoing activities, showing a non-incident commitment.
  - Channels: Instagram was chosen as the primary channel due to its broad reach and visual format suitable for capturing emotional moments.
  - Capability of Audience: The message is conveyed in easily understandable and emotionally touching language, appropriate for the emotional state of Aremania fans and the general public.
- Post: Indonesian President's Visit to RSSA (Saiful Anwar Hospital)



Image 2: Post about the Indonesian President's visit on Instagram @humaskotamalang

- Activity: Publication of a video of President Joko Widodo's visit, accompanied by the Mayor of Malang, to victims at Saiful Anwar General Hospital.
- 7Cs-PR Analysis:
  - Credibility: The presence of President Joko Widodo along with the highest national and regional leaders provides the highest credibility and shows serious attention from the central government.
  - Context: The context is a national-level crisis handling. The Reels video post makes this visit transparent and directly visible to the public.
  - Content: The core message about the formation of the Independent Joint Fact-Finding Team



- (TGIPF) and the commitment to "thoroughly investigate" is information highly anticipated by the public.
  - Clarity: The President's address is delivered directly and edited into a clear, short video conveying the key points.
  - Continuity & Consistency: This post reinforces the narrative that the government (central and local) remains active in handling the case, continuing the momentum from the joint prayer.
  - Channels: The dynamic and easily shareable Reels format is suitable for disseminating important messages from the head of state.
  - Capability of Audience: The public, especially victims and their families, receive direct assurance from the highest authority.
- Post: Mayor's Visit to Victims' Families



Image 3: Post about the Mayor of Malang's visit to victims' families of the Kanjuruhan Tragedy on Instagram @humaskotamalang

- Activity: Publication of photos from the Mayor's visit to the homes of victims' families to convey condolences, provide assistance, and ensure trauma healing support.
- 7Cs-PR Analysis:
  - Credibility: Mayor Sutiaji's direct visit to the homes of 10 victims demonstrates genuine seriousness and empathy, not merely symbolic.
  - Context: The context is post-crisis support, addressing trauma and psychological needs.
  - Content: The message focuses on concrete actions: ensuring trauma healing support and providing assistance. This shows the government is not just rhetoric.
  - Clarity: Documentary photos from the visit and a caption explaining the purpose of the visit provide clarity about the government's actions.
  - Continuity & Consistency: This activity is part of ongoing monitoring by the City Government's crisis center, showing consistency of attention.
  - Channels: Photos on the Instagram feed serve as strong and credible visual proof of the government's presence in the field.
  - Capability of Audience: This information provides solace and acknowledgment to the victims' families that they are not forgotten.

## 5. Discussion

Based on the analysis results of the Instagram account @humaskotamalang posts, which served as the research analysis units as detailed above, it can be concluded that:

- The joint prayer activity for the victims of the Kanjuruhan tragedy, held as a solidarity action, served as a form of care and solidarity with Aremania (the fans). Following the prayer, the solidarity action continued with a candlelight vigil to express deep condolences for the tragedy. The candles symbolized prayers, representing a surge of sportsmanship and peace. This surge for peace and upholding the spirit of loving peace became an entity embodied by Malang City. The efforts of the Malang City Government to maintain a positive image after the Kanjuruhan tragedy through Instagram, utilizing the 7-Cs PR strategy, are evident in this activity.
- The visit by the President of Indonesia and regional government officials to visit, provide aid, and offer condolences demonstrates the government's concern for the tragedy. The government was present alongside Aremania and the entire community affected by the incident. The government supports the "usut tuntas" (investigate thoroughly) movement to expedite the mediation process with the Kanjuruhan tragedy victims and to deliver justice.
- The Mayor of Malang's visit, along with officials and his team, to the homes of the Kanjuruhan tragedy victims aimed to visit the victims and ensure that the psychological support provided by the trauma healing and health teams was proceeding well. This support is provided continuously for the victims and their families. The Malang City Government also strives to provide relief and assistance to ease their burden. This serves as a form of empathy, showing that the government is present with the community.

The research findings indicate that the Public Relations Office (Humas) of Malang City Government has executed proactive and strategic Cyber PR functions. Instead of being defensive, the strategy employed was one of approach and demonstrating care (mortification and bolstering). This is evident from several aspects:

- One-Way to Two-Way Communication: Interviews revealed that although the comment section was open, for sensitive issues like Kanjuruhan, the Public Relations office directed communication to a centralized channel (information post) to avoid miscommunication. This shows an understanding of the need to manage information flow during a crisis, while still upholding the spirit of two-way communication.
- Utilization of Instagram's Characteristics: The use of visual content (prayer photos, president's video, visit documentation) was highly effective in building narratives of empathy, solidarity, and concrete action. The captions used complemented the visuals with brief explanations and guided the emotional response.
- Achievement of 7Cs-PR: Overall, the three activities fulfilled the elements of the 7Cs-PR framework. Credibility was built through the presence of authoritative figures (President, Mayor). Content was relevant to the public's need for information and empathy. Consistency was visible in the interconnected series of activities. The chosen channel (Instagram) was appropriate for the target demographic of productive age (25-35 years old) who are active on social media.
- Image Constructed: The image successfully constructed was that of a Present, Empathetic Malang City Government, Supporting the Justice Process, and Part of the "Aremania" Social Solidarity. This aimed to transform a potential negative narrative (government being silent/slow) into a positive one (government being caring and actively supportive).

## 6. Conclusion

Based on the results of the research analysis, it can be concluded that in using Instagram as a channel for cyber public relations communication by the Malang City Public Relations Office in the aftermath of the Kanjuruhan tragedy, the Malang City government's PR employed a structured communication strategy. The Malang City government did not merely post information after the tragedy but executed a series of communication activities for the public in the form of joint prayers, documentation of the President's visit, and visits to the victims. These activities were designed to build a narrative of care, solidarity, and commitment to justice. This strategy comprehensively adopted the principles of 7Cs-PR.

The optimal use of Instagram features, such as emotive visual content (photos & videos) and supporting caption narratives, successfully created engagement and delivered messages of empathy more powerfully than text alone. The function of Cyber PR as a Crisis Image Guardian is evident, where it acted as the frontliner in image restoration. By demonstrating concrete actions (even if partly symbolic) and information transparency through documentation, the government successfully mitigated potential image damage and fostered a perception of being a responsive institution that stands with the community.



## Acknowledgments

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