

Strategic Cyber Public Relations: A Case Study of PT PLN Nusantara Power's Engagement on Instagram

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ABSTRACT

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In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, digital communication channels, mainly social media platforms, have become pivotal for organizations worldwide. This study analyzes PT PLN Nusantara Power's (PT PLN NP) strategic Cyber Public Relations (PR) activities on Instagram. PT PLN NP, a leading energy company in Indonesia, adeptly navigated the digital landscape, earning recognition as the "Most Popular BUMN Subsidiary in Digital Media." Through a comprehensive exploration of PT PLN NP's cyber PR strategies, encompassing planning, implementation, and evaluation stages, this research provides valuable insights into effective online engagement. The study delves into the contextualization of content, emphasizing its alignment with both internal company dynamics and public interests. It highlights the importance of communication strategies, focusing on creating valuable, engaging content tailored to audience needs. Collaborative initiatives involving partnerships with external entities are examined as essential components fostering brand affinity. Additionally, the study underscores the significance of real-time interaction and connection with the audience, ensuring the company's responsiveness and fostering a sense of community. This research offers a robust framework for organizations aiming to enhance their cyber PR efforts, emphasizing the importance of Instagram as a strategic communication tool.

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INTRODUCTION

The emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic significantly transformed global communication patterns (Salim et al., 2023), compelling societies worldwide to adopt digital communication methods during extensive lockdowns (Mangla, 2021). In the post-pandemic era, digital communication became an indispensable part of everyday life, prompting organizations, particularly Public Relations (PR) departments, to transition from conventional to cyber PR approaches (Islam & Luqman, 2022). Cyber Public Relations, conducted through internet media, including social media platforms, has proven instrumental in cultivating essential organizational facets such as Relations, Reputation, and Relevance (Basit & Rahmawati, 2018).

Social media, with its attributes of accessibility, affordability, and interactivity, emerged as a powerful tool for companies to navigate the challenges posed by the pandemic (Huang et al., 2021). Unlike traditional media, social media platforms offer swift, cost-effective, and interactive means of disseminating information, fostering

engagement between companies and their audiences (Widianingsih & Cahyani, 2020). Managing social media, a pivotal component of cyber PR, demands strategic creativity to capture audience interest effectively (Susilo & Sari, 2020).

Government entities, too, recognized the importance of cyber PR through social media, yet some struggled due to rigid communication strategies and asymmetrical information dissemination (Achmed et al., 2019). Lack of attention to vital social media features, including interactivity and dialogic communication principles, hindered effective PR initiatives in governmental bodies (Azhary & Kriyantono, 2018).

This research contributes significantly to exploring cyber Public Relations (PR) strategies employed by government-affiliated organizations through social media platforms. A noteworthy case study in this context is PT PLN Nusantara Power (PT PLN NP) in Indonesia, formerly known as PT Pembangkitan Jawa Bali, established in 1995. PT PLN NP, a subsidiary of the state-owned company PT PLN (Persero), is engaged in the provision, construction, installation, maintenance, and operation of power plants (Chrysantin, 2013). Instagram has emerged as a powerful medium, experiencing exponential growth in recent years, boasting over 300 million users (Goodwin, 2016). This study focuses on how PT PLN NP successfully utilized Instagram for its cyber PR activities, demonstrating a nuanced understanding of the platform's capabilities and leveraging its features effectively (Miles, 2019; Kusuma, 2018; Mutiah et al., 2021).

Instagram's unique attributes, particularly its emphasis on visual content, have made it a preferred choice for PR activities (Mayangsari & Salim, 2021). The platform allows users to upload photos swiftly and efficiently, making it an ideal tool for conveying information rapidly (Miles, 2019). Additionally, Instagram offers a range of features beneficial for PR strategies, including the Camera feature for capturing images, the Editor feature for enhancing photos, and the ability to add tags, hashtags, and descriptions to images and videos. Instagram's integration with other social networks, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr, and Flickr, further amplifies its reach, allowing shared content to proliferate across multiple platforms (Kusuma, 2018).

PT PLN NP's adept management of Instagram is noteworthy. The company utilizes Instagram not only as a channel to convey information but also as a platform to represent its brand, engage directly with consumers, and address public grievances effectively. PT PLN NP's successful cyber PR initiatives on Instagram earned them prestigious recognition, notably the "Most Popular BUMN Subsidiary in Digital Media" award from Anugerah Humas Indonesia (AHI), a division of PR Indonesia Group. This recognition underscores the effectiveness of PT PLN NP's approach and highlights the potential of Instagram as a strategic tool in cyber PR. This study aims to comprehensively analyze PT PLN NP's cyber PR strategies on Instagram. By exploring their successful practices, this research offers valuable insights to similar organizations, enhancing the ongoing discourse on cyber PR in the rapidly evolving landscape of information and communication technology.

METHOD

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach to investigate and provide a profound comprehension of the phenomenon under examination, diverging from a surface-level description of a broad population sample (Sugiyono, 2019). Specifically, the chosen research method is a case study designed to offer a comprehensive and intricate portrayal of the subject matter (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). The case study method treats the subject of study as a contemporary phenomenon transpiring within a genuine, real-life environment (Fitrah & Luthfiah, 2018).

Data was acquired through interview techniques and document analysis. Interviews, characterized as goal-driven conversations involving two parties, facilitated the collection of the majority of the data (Moleong, 2018). Structured interviews, aligned with pre-established guidelines, constituted the primary method employed in this research (Herdiansyah, 2013). Simultaneously, document study, involving the scrutiny and analysis of documents produced by the subject, such as internal official documents and external media, supplemented the data collection process (Herdiansyah, 2014).

The data collection procedure commenced with interviews, with the study's informants comprising social media specialists responsible for managing PT PLN NP's Instagram account and two active followers. Interviews commenced with Instagram managers and proceeded to followers. Subsequently, a document study process was implemented to augment the dataset, encompassing both internal company documents and external information sources from newspapers, magazines, or other media.

Data analysis followed a descriptive approach involving the systematic organization, categorization, and reduction of data obtained from interviews and documentation. This process aims to uncover overarching themes and patterns, filter essential information, and draw meaningful conclusions for the research and its stakeholders (Sugiyono, 2019). The data analysis procedure comprises four key stages. The initial phase is data collection, including preliminary verification to affirm the existence of the studied phenomenon. Data reduction follows,

streamlining the various data forms into a unified written format for analysis. Subsequently, data presentation involves transforming semi-processed data into a structured matrix organized around predetermined themes subdivided into sub-themes. The final stage, concluding, responds to the research questions, elucidating the “what” and “how” of the findings.

Using source triangulation ensures the integrity and credibility of the research findings as a validation technique. Source triangulation entails the data by utilizing diverse data sources, such as documents, archives, interview outcomes, observations, or multiple-subject interviews, to ascertain the accuracy and consistency of the information under investigation (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Triangulation enhances the reliability of the data and provides a multifaceted perspective on the subject matter.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Enhancing Corporate Credibility and Engagement through Collaborative Initiatives on Instagram

The history of PT PLN NP traces back to the restructuring of PLN (State Electricity Company) in 1982, leading to the creation of distinct units such as the Distribution Unit, Generation Unit, and Circulation Unit. Amidst the growing national electricity demand, PLN established a subsidiary, PT Pembangkitan Jawa Bali (PT PJB), in October 1995. PT PJB aimed to be a trusted leader in sustainable energy in Southeast Asia, adhering to high standards of corporate governance (PT PLN Nusantara Power, 2022). Celebrating its 27th Anniversary on October 3, 2022, PT PJB transformed into PT PLN Nusantara Power (PLN NP) under the decision of the Minister of State-Owned Enterprises. This change positioned PLN NP as Generation Company 1 under PLN Nusantara Power, consolidating PLN’s scattered generation assets and making it the largest power generation company in Southeast Asia with a total managed capacity of 23.5 GW (Infonews.id, 2022).

Functioning as a sub-holding company of a state-owned enterprise, PT PLN NP actively engages in public relations (PR) activities to maintain its reputation and establish meaningful relationships with the public. PR plays a crucial role in serving four main functions: as a communicator, building positive relationships, providing management support, and creating a favorable corporate image (Basit & Rahmawati, 2018). In line with the evolving landscape of communication, PT PLN NP focuses on cyber PR through Instagram, recognizing the platform’s extensive reach and influence (Dewi & Yusriyah, 2021).

PT PLN NP’s Instagram account (@plnnusantarapower) is a hub for its cyber PR initiatives. Verified and active since January 25, 2023, the account boasts more than 60 thousand followers, showcasing a vibrant blend of content tailored for engagement and informational value.

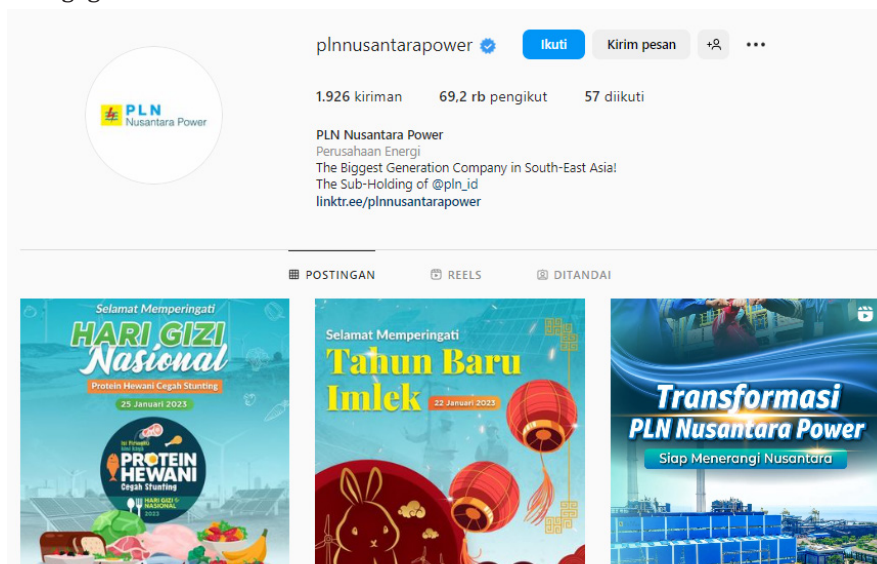


Fig 1. Instagram Account of PT PLN Nusantara Power (PT PLN Nusantara Power, 2023)

Verified accounts on Instagram, denoted by a blue tick, signify authenticity and enhance the credibility of the information disseminated (Boerman, 2020). PT PLN NP meticulously manages its Instagram content through three core stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation (see Figure: Cyber PR Activities at IG @plnnusantarapower).

The management of Cyber Public Relations (PR) through IG stands as a multifaceted process comprising three essential stages: planning, implementation, and evaluation. Within the context of PT PLN NP, these stages are meticulously structured to ensure effective communication with followers. Alonzo, the corporate communications

officer at PT PLN NP, outlined the systematic approach employed in managing the @plnnusantarapower Instagram account.

The planning process begins with creating a draft, followed by formulating a comprehensive content plan. These steps are integral to shaping the content into a coherent whole. Subsequently, the proposed content undergoes a rigorous approval procedure involving heads of departments and managers. The content is submitted to the company secretary for further scrutiny and correction after these reviews. The ultimate approval authority rests with the directors of PT PLN NP.

During the evaluation stage, the communications officer diligently collects reactions from the uploaded content, including metrics such as likes, comments, and reach. Similar to the planning stage, these results undergo an intricate review process, passing through various organizational layers before reaching the directors. This comprehensive evaluation is as a valuable feedback mechanism, informing future planning and implementation strategies.

The management of the @plnnusantarapower Instagram account hinges on four fundamental elements. The first element, context, emphasizes the effective conveyance of messages to the public, utilizing multimedia formats for optimal impact. Communication, the second element, entails sharing messages to elicit responses and engage with the audience. Collaboration, the third element, underscores joint efforts between communicators and the audience, enhancing the efficiency of message exchange. The final element, connection, highlights the establishment of meaningful relationships between communicators and their audience, fostering a sense of trust and engagement (Solis & Kutcher, 2011).

The context management on the @plnnusantarapower Instagram account operates dynamically, responding to the evolving conditions and achievements of PT PLN NP. To ensure focused and optimal message conveyance, officers meticulously schedule content creation. The content curated for the account encompasses various topics essential for public awareness, ranging from the inauguration of power plants and environmental maintenance to the celebration of company achievements. Moreover, the content strategy includes general informative materials encompassing holidays, lifestyle tips, and entertainment. What distinguishes the @plnnusantarapower account is its intentional departure from monotonous, corporate-centric content. Instead, the account strategically integrates a variety of general interest topics, enhancing its appeal and informativeness to followers. This approach is aimed at sustaining the audience's interest and engagement, acknowledging the multifaceted interests of the Instagram community.



Fig 2. Management Of Context Elements On IG @plnnusantarapower (PT PLN Nusantara Power, 2023)

The visual presentation of content holds paramount importance. The IG management officer at PT PLN NP meticulously curates content, ensuring a harmonious blend of visuals dominated by the corporate colors of yellow and blue, aligning with the company's logo. This deliberate choice reinforces brand identity and creates a visually appealing and comfortable viewing experience for followers. Additionally, the officer adheres to strict guidelines, ensuring that all photos and text displayed are clear, avoiding issues such as blurriness, cropping, or overlap, thus maintaining content integrity. Various features on Instagram are adeptly utilized to captivate the audience,

including feeds, reels, stories, comments, messages, tags, and bios. These features are seamlessly integrated into the content strategy, aligning with pre-established plans. Moreover, PT PLN NP remains committed to the timely dissemination of information, ensuring that updates are promptly shared with followers. For instance, when commemorating the opening of the 2023 National Occupational Health and Safety Month on January 16, the news was efficiently conveyed through reels the following day. This strategic approach guarantees that Instagram users receive the latest detailed information directly from reliable sources, enhancing user engagement and fostering a sense of trust and reliability.

Effective communication is at the heart of managing the IG account @pln Nusantarapower. This pivotal element focuses on conveying messages that are both good and highly useful, fostering growth in followership while ensuring audience comfort. IG management officers conduct meticulous research to discern community needs and emerging trends to achieve this. Based on this understanding, content crafting carefully aligns with these needs and PT PLN NP's unique conditions. The public perceives tangible benefits from the content shared by tailoring messages to these specific requirements and prevalent trends. The content strategy encompasses diverse topics, including updates on the recruitment of state-owned enterprise (BUMN) employees, insightful tips, thought-provoking quotes, engaging quizzes, and exciting giveaways. Additionally, the IG account highlights PT PLN NP activities that serve the public interest. These efforts are meticulously planned and executed to create a meaningful impact and foster a positive relationship between the company and its audience.



Fig 3. Management Of Communication Elements On IG @pln Nusantarapower (PT PLN Nusantara Power, 2023)

One of the pivotal aspects of managing cyber PR through IG for PT PLN NP is strategically disseminating valuable information to engage with its audience effectively. A key area of focus is the timely communication of job vacancies, a topic of significant interest for IG users. Whenever there are openings for recruitment within the company, this information is promptly shared on the IG account, catering to the needs of job seekers. Moreover, content related to the construction of power plants generates curiosity among followers, often leading to inquiries about job opportunities. Another effective engagement strategy involves quizzes and giveaways, which capture the public's attention by offering enticing gifts. These initiatives are meticulously designed, ensuring that the prizes, such as electric stoves and electricity token vouchers, are not just random offerings but directly related to PT PLN NP's core industry. Such giveaways serve as a creative channel to convey the company's business initiatives to the public in an enjoyable manner. Additionally, PT PLN NP leverages its Instagram platform to promote social causes, such as supporting "Lentera Kisik" Literacy Tourism in Rembang. This approach ensures that the content showcases the company's achievements and provides tangible benefits to IG users, enhancing the overall impact of PT PLN NP's cyber PR efforts.

Furthermore, PT PLN NP actively collaborates with various stakeholders, including colleagues and IG followers, to enrich its content and engage the audience meaningfully. While the company's management officers do not specifically collaborate to create content, substantial collaborative material is generated from partnerships with external entities. Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities play a central role in these collaborations, with initiatives such as supporting Simekar Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises in Purwakarta, Conservation of Critical Land, Protection of Water Springs, and Greening in seven villages in Probolinggo and Situbondo. Moreover, operational collaborations are also emphasized, such as sharing sessions with Start Up Data Science, waste management partnerships with PD Pasar Surya Surabaya, and legal collaborations with the East Java High Court. These collaborations showcase PT PLN NP's diverse activities and emphasize its commitment to innovation, environmental sustainability, and legal compliance.



Fig 4. Content from Company Collaboration On IG @plnnusantarapower (PT PLN Nusantara Power, 2023)

The dissemination of collaborative content to the public is imperative to inform them about the diverse activities undertaken by the company. This transparency not only enhances public awareness but also bolsters the credibility and reputation of PT PLN NP. The substantial volume of collaborations is a testament to the company's commitment to various initiatives, further solidifying its standing in the industry. In addition to partnerships with external entities, PT PLN NP actively engages with its followers on Instagram. Through interactive activities like giveaways, followers actively participate in spreading the reach of the @plnnusantarapower account.



Fig 5. Giveaway program on IG @plnnusantarapower (PT PLN Nusantara Power, 2023)

Giveaways via Instagram are carried out utilizing online promotions by followers so that followers' friends know and are interested in the account giving the giveaway. This case is included in the push strategy, which aims to encourage an increase in the number of followers by utilizing the interactivity of the internet itself (Lestari, 2015). In the giveaway program, IG management officers invite followers to interact by tagging friends, giving likes and comments, and reuploading to stories. This has made the IG account @plnnusantarapower better known and

followed by many IG users. Followers love collaborative content like this because they can get involved and prizes. Each giveaway content like this can reach thousands of IG users, thereby increasing the performance of the IG account.

The last element managed by IG management officers is connection. The manifestation of this element is ensuring that the content created is up-to-date, appropriate, and corresponding. Designs are beautifully crafted, captions are always clear and match the visuals displayed, and uploads are done before the moment gets stale. This case is necessary because maintaining a good IG appearance will make connecting more accessible for people. They know this account is managed and not idle, so they can get trusted and latest information from this IG account. In addition, IG management officers also maximize the interaction features available on IG accounts. Users can leave comments and messages, either in the form of support, questions, or criticism, as follows:



Fig 6. Comments on IG @plnnusantarapower (PT PLN Nusantara Power, 2023)

IG management officers will continuously monitor and compile all incoming comments and messages. This will be the basis for creating a content plan. As for replies to messages and comments, they are only sometimes answered directly. Some are answered through the following content, and some are answered directly. This is done so that spam messages do not occur on the IG account. In addition, it is hoped that users will pay more attention to the information provided in uploaded content.

B. Strategic Adoption of Instagram in Cyber Public Relations

In contemporary corporate communication strategies, social media platforms have become pivotal, enabling organizations to engage with their audience effectively. PT PLN NP, a leading entity in the energy sector, strategically employs Instagram, a popular social media platform, for its cyber public relations initiatives. Instagram's multifaceted features are a compelling attraction for internet users, providing an ideal environment for online interaction—a fundamental aspect of global internet usage (Bozkurt & Tu, 2016). The platform facilitates the creation of virtual social identities, fostering emotional and social presence within a digital ecosystem. Several advantageous features informed Instagram's selection as the primary social media outlet for PT PLN NP. Firstly, Instagram seamlessly integrates with mobile devices, catering to an increasing number of mobile users. As mobile phone usage continues to rise, PT PLN NP utilizes Instagram as a dynamic forum for exchanging information, ensuring accessibility and convenience for its audience. Secondly, Instagram's user-friendly interface and visually engaging content make it an accessible and enjoyable platform for content creators and consumers. Its lightweight nature enhances ease of access, enabling PT PLN NP to convey information effortlessly.

Furthermore, Instagram offers a prolonged shelf life for uploaded content compared to other social media platforms like Facebook. This extended visibility ensures that the information disseminated by PT PLN NP reaches a broader audience over an extended period. Through interviews with PT PLN NP representatives, these advantages of Instagram were substantiated, affirming the platform's suitability for the organization's communication objectives (Daud et al., 2021).

As the pioneer platform exclusively designed for image sharing, Instagram stands as a prominent leader within the social media industry. Its dominance is marked by a substantial user base, reinforced by a robust parent company, and augmented by a diverse array of features tailored to enhance and personalize images (Green et al., 2018). Notably, Instagram distinguishes itself through various distinctive features. The Bio feature serves as an introductory gateway, providing a succinct overview of the account and welcoming users. PT PLN NP has adeptly utilized this feature, furnishing a clear account description, website link, and general information to enhance user experience. Equally crucial is the Profile Picture, which serves as a visual identifier of the Instagram account. PT PLN NP employs its company logo as the Profile Picture, unequivocally signifying the account's official status. Additionally, selecting an apt Account Name can significantly influence discoverability on search engines. PT PLN NP has chosen the account name @plnnusantarapower, aligning seamlessly with the company's nomenclature.

Instagram's content components encompass Videos, Photos, Stories, and Reels, each serving as a potent medium for communication. PT PLN NP adeptly utilizes these components to disseminate information effectively. The organization strategically employs photos and videos through meticulous planning, showcasing diverse facets of its initiatives, including events, accolades, and giveaways. Stories, another pivotal component, are leveraged to engage users through interactive games, fostering entertainment while imparting essential information about appreciation and ongoing programs.

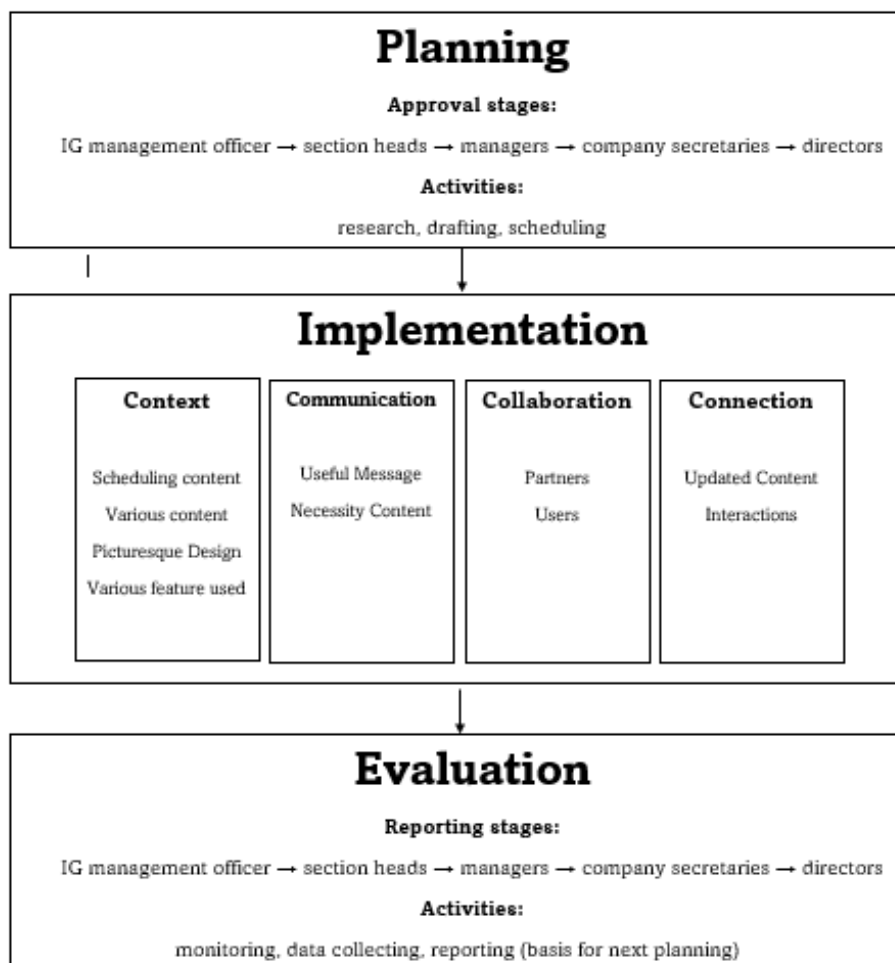


Fig 7. Cyber PR Activities at IG @plnnusantarapower (processed by researchers, 2023)

The planning and evaluation stages encompass a multilayered process of approval and reporting involving key stakeholders such as IG management officers, section heads, managers, company secretaries, and directors. This rigorous approach is imperative due to the evolving dynamics of social media, where users increasingly scrutinize a company's digital presence in conjunction with its real-world performance (Sutrisno et al., 2019). Consequently, the Cyber PR officer is pivotal in optimizing social media management and aligning it with the company's strategic goals.

The planning stage constitutes a foundational phase encompassing in-depth research, content drafting, and the formulation of a meticulous broadcast schedule for each piece of content. Subsequently, during the

implementation stage, a holistic approach unfolds, anchored in four essential elements designed to impact Instagram positively. In the context element, IG managers meticulously curate content schedules, ensuring diverse and engaging posts coupled with impeccable design aesthetics. Additionally, the strategic utilization of various features available on Instagram amplifies user engagement. In the communication element, IG managers focus on creating content that is not only captivating but also inherently valuable, addressing the target audience's specific needs. Collaborative efforts, a pivotal facet, involve partnerships with external entities, yielding content that resonates with the audience and fosters brand affinity. User engagement is further enhanced through interactive activities like giveaways and promoting shared account experiences.

The final element, connection, emphasizes real-time interaction and content relevance. IG managers diligently maintain the content currency, promptly responding to comments and messages. This proactive engagement fosters a sense of community, nurturing a robust connection between the company and its audience. Concurrently, a meticulous process unfolds at the evaluation stage, encompassing ongoing monitoring, data collection, and comprehensive report generation. These activities provide valuable insights as the bedrock for future strategic planning, ensuring the company's digital endeavors align with its organizational objectives. This comprehensive and dynamic approach underscores the critical role of strategic Instagram management in shaping corporate communication and bolstering a company's standing in the public sphere.

CONCLUSION

This study delves into the intricacies of cyber PR activities conducted by PT PLN NP, a subholding of a state-owned enterprise, through Instagram. The significance of this research stems from PT PLN NP's notable success in cyber PR management, culminating in the prestigious "Most Popular BUMN Subsidiary in Digital Media" award bestowed by "Anugerah Humas Indonesia" (AHI), an accolade under the PR Indonesia Group umbrella. The study explores these activities as a valuable reference for other companies aiming to enhance their cyber PR endeavors. Social media platforms are critical arenas where people confirm a company's real-world performance in the contemporary digital landscape. Understanding the intricacies of effective cyber PR strategies is paramount for companies seeking to maintain their credibility and reputation in the eyes of the public. PT PLN NP's cyber PR activities are comprehensively examined through the planning, implementation, and evaluation stages. The multilayered approval and reporting system that extends up to the board of directors is noteworthy in the planning and evaluation phases. This meticulous process ensures that the cyber PR initiatives align with the company's strategic objectives and uphold its credibility. The planning stage involves rigorous activities such as in-depth research, content drafting, and meticulous content upload scheduling, laying the foundation for a robust cyber PR strategy.

In the implementation phase, PT PLN NP focuses on four core elements: context, communication, collaboration, and connection. Contextualization is pivotal, with the company tailoring its content according to its internal conditions while aligning with the public's needs and trends. This adaptive approach ensures that PT PLN NP's Instagram account (@plnnusantarapower) resonates effectively with its diverse audience. The communication element emphasizes creating valuable content that addresses user needs, fostering engagement and interaction. Collaboration initiatives are also central, with PT PLN NP partnering with external entities to create meaningful content and enhance brand affinity. Lastly, the connection element underscores the importance of real-time interaction, where timely responses to comments and messages foster a sense of community and connection with the public. The evaluation stage is characterized by vigilant monitoring, data collection, and meticulous reporting. These activities yield valuable insights that form the basis for future planning, ensuring the company's ongoing resonance with its audience. It is anticipated that the outcomes of this research will serve as a valuable resource for companies and organizations, especially those with core businesses akin to PT PLN NP, guiding them in developing their cyber PR strategies.

Furthermore, this research contributes to the evolving discourse on cyber PR, particularly within social media. Future studies are encouraged to explore additional cyber PR tools such as websites, diverse social media platforms, and online publicity, providing a holistic understanding of cyber PR practices, especially concerning non-profit or non-government organizations.

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