Digital Public Relations of Partai Keadilan Sejahtera in Attracting Young Voters

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia has just held elections for both the legislative and executive in 2024. In this year's elections, young voters from generation z dominated the number of voters. Therefore, many parties participating in the 2024 election are starting to pay attention to these young voters. Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS) is one of the parties that has succeeded in gaining an increase in votes in the 2024 elections. This cannot be separated from their efforts to carry out digital PR for generation z. Therefore, this research aims to describe the digital PR strategy carried out by PKS in an effort to attract young voters. The type of this research is qualitative descriptive, with case study method. The data collection techniques are done through interviews and document studies. The data analysis used are raw data description, data reduction, data categorization, and construction of relationships between categorizations. The results of this research show that there are four digital PR strategies used, namely Attracting Visitors through Search, Engagement & Dialogue, Building Campaign Buzz, and Defensive/Crisis. This entire strategy is implemented in an integrated, sustainable manner so as to attract young voters.

Keywords: digital public relations, political communication, political party, young voters

ABSTRAK

Indonesia baru saja melangsungkan Pemilihan Umum baik untuk legislatif maupun eksekutif pada tahun 2024. Pada Pemilu tahun ini, pemilih muda dari generasi z mendominasi jumlah pemilih, dibandingkan dengan pemilih-pemilih dari rentang usia lain. Maka dari itu, partai-partai peserta pemilu 2024 banyak yang mulai memperhatikan pemilih muda ini, dengan harapan bisa memperoleh suara dari mereka. PKS merupakan salah satu partai yang berhasil memperoleh peningkatan suara di Pemilu 2024. Hal ini tidak lepas dari upaya mereka untuk melakukan digital PR kepada generasi z. Maka dari itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menjabarkan strategi digital PR yang dilakukan oleh PKS dalam upaya untuk menggaet pemilih muda. Adapun penelitian ini menggunakan jenis penelitian ini adalah kualitatif deskriptif, dengan metode studi kasus. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara dan studi dokumen. Teknik analisis data yang digunakan meliputi deskripsi data mentah, reduksi data, kategorisasi data, dan konstruksi hubungan antar kategorisasi. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan terdapat empat strategi digital PR yang digunakan yaitu Attracting Visitors through Search, Engagement & Dialogue, Building Campaign Buzz, dan Defensive/Crisis. Keseluruhan strategi ini diterapkan secara terintegrasi secara berkelanjutan sehingga mampu menggaet pemilih muda.

Keywords: humas digital, partai politik, pemilih muda

Introduction

Indonesia is a democratic country, where public participation in politics is a main element in national and state life. Therefore, the existence of political parties can be a benchmark for public participation in politics. A political party is a group of people organized in a stable manner with

the aim of seizing or maintaining control over the government for the leadership of their party and based on this control, providing their party members with benefits that are both ideological and material (Nika, 2021).

In Indonesia, political parties have existed since before Indonesia's independence. This indicates that since the colonial period, Indonesian people have studied politics and wanted to be involved in the political system. Therefore, political parties were formed to provide a means of political communication. In other words, political parties have the task of channeling various opinions and aspirations of the community, as well as accommodating and unifying these aspirations so that they become one goal that can resolve conflicts that occur in society by creating policies that are fair for the entire community.

Members of political parties are elected directly by the people through General Elections. Therefore, the people's voice is the most important thing for a political party. These political parties gain the people's votes, one of the ways is by providing assistance or being at the forefront when a disaster or conflict occurs. But not only that, political parties can also build their own image so that public trust can be built.

Indonesia's population based on age in 2024 is dominated by the millennial generation and generation z. This proves that the future of Indonesian politics is in the hands of the millennial generation. The future of the nation is also in the hands of these generations. Young voter participation is an important indicator to understand a country's democratic system (Wempie & Akmaluddin, 2022).

In connection with this phenomenon, many political parties have begun to change the direction of their political communication to young people. One of them is the Partai Keadilan Sejahtera (PKS). In the beginning, PKS was imaged as an exclusive party by carrying out the Tarbiyah Movement. The Tarbiyah Movement is a movement with the concept of Tarbiyah Islamiyah, namely the preparation of pious humans in order to create balance in potential, goals, speech, and actions with the aim of creating conditions conducive for humans to live in a straight, good way with the pleasure and reward of Allah SWT (Nurussa'adah & Sumartias, 2017). Along with the development of political conditions in Indonesia, PKS changed its political direction to become a more inclusive party by carrying the slogan "PKS for all". With this change, PKS opens itself to receive votes not only from Muslims (Suryana, 2021).

This openness brought new opportunities, but also led to factions within

the party. There was even a time when factions within the party were in conflict, resulting in a bad image for PKS and a decrease in PKS's electability (Wahyuni & Ayu, 2022). This problem made PKS launch a new strategy. Apart from improving its image, this strategy is also used to attract young voters who have not been touched much by PKS. One of them is a digital Public Relations strategy that prioritizes the use of digital media. The use of digital media in approaching young voters is important because they can hardly be separated from gadgets and cell phones in their daily lives. This is an opportunity to approach them, as well as provide education to avoid misinformation (Anshori et al., 2023). Some of the digital media used are Instagram, Youtube, Facebook, Twitter, Spotify, and Website. This strategy has proven successful in increasing the electability of PKS, which can be seen from the increase in votes and seats for PKS in the 2024 elections (DPP PKS, 2024).

Based on the above phenomenon, this research will discuss how the digital PR strategy implemented by PKS to attract young voters. While this research aims to describe the best practices that PKS has done in managing its Digital PR, so as to successfully attract votes from young voters. It is hoped that the results of this research can enrich studies in the field of digital public relations and political communication.

Research methods

To answer the problems of the research, the researcher used qualitative methods in this study. The qualitative method was chosen to deepen and understand a central symptom. The symptoms were obtained by interviewing the research informants by asking a number of general and broad questions. Then, the information was collected in the form of words or text which was then analyzed. From the data, the researcher makes an interpretation to find out the true meaning of the informants' answers. The meaning itself is the real data, which is definite data and a value behind the visible data. The final results of qualitative research are outlined in the form of a written report (Rahardjo, 2018).

Furthermore, in this research, a descriptive type was used. The type of descriptive method research referred to in this research is research that is used to describe existing problem solving based on data. According to Sugiyono (2019), research with qualitative descriptive methods is basically a research method based on philosophy and is used to examine natural objects, where the researcher acts as a key instrument. Qualitative descriptive research is intended to describe, explain,

and answer the problems to be studied in more detail and thoroughly by studying each object as much as possible from a group or event. Therefore, descriptive qualitative research is used in this study which aims to obtain detailed information about the communication strategies carried out by the Public Relations of the PKS in creating content on digital media, in order to attract millennial votes. In addition, the descriptive qualitative approach method is expected to provide an overview of the digital public relations communication strategy carried out by the Public Relations of the PKS.

The data collection process was conducted through interviews and document studies. Data analysis was carried out with the stages of raw data description, data reduction, data categorization, and construction of relationships between categorizations. The data results from each stage of data analysis must be proven validity with a credibility test. The credibility test is carried out by triangulation, prolonged observation, data correction, and discussion with the data provider. If the data is considered credible, then conclusions can be determined from the research results.

Research Findings and Discussion

The subject of this research is the Partai Keadilan Sejahter (PKS) faction of the House of Representatives (DPR RI) which is located at the MPR / DPR / DPD-RI Nusantara 1 Building Complex, 3rd floor, Jalan Jenderal Gatot Subroto - Senayan, South Jakarta. The PKS faction is a group of members in the House of Representatives (DPR)/People's Consultative Assembly (MPR) with political views in accordance with the vision and mission of the party. The faction that was established on October 1, 2004 has represented the people for 3 periods. The first period was in 2009-2014, the second period was in 2014-2019, and the third period started in 2019-2024.

In order to maintain its political image, PKS has a Public Relations division that is tasked with establishing relationships with its public. The positive image of a political party is very important. Because having a positive image can change public opinion and is beneficial for the party in obtaining many votes in the general election (Muchtar, 2016). Public opinion can have a significant influence in various fields, such as culture, fashion, literature, art, marketing, public relations, and many more. Therefore, public opinion management also needs to be a concern in political communication, especially to encourage voters to vote (Yusniyawati & Panuju, 2020).

Along with the times, PR can no longer avoid the influence of technology in

its activities. With the existence of digital media, PR practitioners try to use the internet in the form of both hardware and software to continue to carry out one-to-many communications that are planned and run continuously until public trust is established. From digital public relations, PR is facilitated in creating new communication methods that are more effective for the public and the media. In addition, PR also benefits from saving time and money in disseminating information (Nurjanah & Nurnisya, 2016).

There are several things that the PKS Public Relations team does in designing a strategy for public relations activities on digital media, in order to build an image and increase public trust. Starting from creating, organizing, and handling content uploaded on social media channels, to handling issue or crisis management that occurs in the PKS faction. Therefore, in the process of carrying out these activities, PKS PR must ensure that the digital public relations activities carried out are running well so that the messages conveyed can be received and build interaction and trust from the public. Activities carried out, including attracting visitors through search, engagement & dialogue between media owners and audiences, building campaign buzz or creating massive campaigns that influence audiences, and crisis defense.

Attracting Visitors through Search

The main thing that must be considered from digital PR activities is to attract visitors through search sites. Search sites are the main key for digital PR practitioners to attract audiences. Because with information and communication technology, audiences can find everything they need (Hasna, 2020).

PKS Public Relations has attracted and maintained an audience on its website page. Based on the results of an interview with the Head of PKS Public Relations, this is done by activating the website, updating information or news, and increasing intensity. In increasing the activation of the website, PKS Public Relations recommends that each Legislative Member from PKS respond to certain issues every day in accordance with their duties and functions. This activity produces news or releases that can be uploaded through the website, which leads to an increase in organic searches on search engines.

This was confirmed by some young supporters of PKS, Nadia Nesha Gayatri (32), M. Nuraga Lazuardy Ramadhan (28), and Sabina Ezra (18) who became interviewees in this research. The ease of finding information about PKS on search engines, has led to an increase in PKS website engagement. Although there have been many articles that encourage searches, there are still shortcomings in the technique

of writing PKS releases or news. In the style of writing news, PKS PR still uses the old style and does not use keywords that spread to all lines on social media. If the use of these keywords is applied, access to the PKS website will be easier.

In addition, in maintaining its audience on various social media platforms, the Chairman of PKS PR stated that they create content variations that match the characteristics of each social media. The purpose of PKS using this content variation strategy on its social media is so that the content produced can be enjoyed by all people from various groups and generations. This was also emphasized by Ramadhan, that audiences on various PKS social media platforms have different content interests. These interests are what PKS facilitates. Ezra also stated in the interview that this variety is what drives him to search for PKS content. An example is the Ruang Aleg content on Youtube, which documents visits to the homes of legislative members. This provides transparent information about the lives of PKS cadres.

Engagement and Dialogue

Engagement and dialogue activities focus on dialogic interaction between media owners and visitors. By doing these activities, it can build social engagement, which marks the closeness or two-way communication between the audience and the media owner. For example, on social media that has a trending topic feature, this indicates the reciprocity of the audience on a topic that aims to increase brand awareness and assess the characteristics of social media users (Kartikasari, 2018).

In order to increase engagement and dialogue, Head of PKS PR stated that they conduct regular research on audience characteristics. The results of this research are used to understand what the audience needs, then used as a basis for creating content and news. In addition, PKS PR also engages with the mass media as one of its publics. PKS has an interest in the mass media as an extension of its arm to convey information.

PKS PR also creates content that encourages engagement and dialog such as giveaways and interactive content. But unfortunately these contents are still unable to maximize engagement due to shortcomings in management. This was also stated by young PKS supporters Gayatri, Ramadhan, and Ezra, that some of the shortcomings that arise include not implementing the Golden Period hours in uploading content. There is also monologue content, where there is only interaction between faction members, the content should be filled with interactions between PKS faction members and the community, so that interaction and closeness are built between the two. From the above

shortcomings, it can result in decreased audience engagement or interaction with PKS social media accounts.

Building Campaign Buzz

Campaign buzz building activities involve creating massive campaigns that can influence audiences. Some of the activities that can be done include propagating the 'big idea', providing web editorial contacts, having viral agents, seeding viral, creating press releases, and influencing media owners. In order to become a bu, PR needs to create campaigns that have digital storytelling, which provides stories that involve the lives of the audience in order to attract the attention of the audience emotionally. The campaign process is more attractive if the media owner learns the characteristics of the target market. For this reason, PR activities regarding campaigns require a very careful plan and require a long time (Kartikasari, 2018).

In an effort to create a viral campaign, Head of PKS PR explained that their activities include creating content that contains market value, utilizing influencers who have collaborated, and asking public figures from PKS members to repost the information. The re-submission can be in the form of re-tweet, re-post, like, and so on.

Unfortunately, PKS PR has not been able to create a sustainable campaign. This was acknowledged by young supporters of PKS, who were unaware of any campaigns that sustainably told a particular story. According to the Chairman of PKS PR, this happened due to limited costs and resources that create concepts, create content, and become talent. This is still overcome by creating content that, although not continuous, is needed by the community.

Defensive/Crisis

The Defense/Crisis process is carried out to provide a defense and steps taken to deal with the crisis. These activities can be done in several ways, including brand protection, monitoring and response, social media, and influencing media owners. By doing these activities, PR can directly overcome the crisis that occurs in digital media (Kartikasari, 2018).

As a political organization that opposes the government, PKS is often hit by crises regarding the policies taken. However, the cause of the crisis is also not merely due to the opposing policy, but can also be caused by personal or institutional errors. Of course, PKS PR has a strategy in reducing the crisis.

The Head of PKS PR explained that there are several stages in the strategy. First in the input or planning process. In this process, PKS PR sorts out issues that have the potential to become a crisis and is qualified according to its main functions

and duties. So that if a crisis occurs, it can be handled directly by the relevant commission. Furthermore, PKS PR will see whether the crisis affects the faction directly or indirectly. The final stage carried out by PKS PR from the results of monitoring the issue, qualifying the tone of the news into two, namely positive news or negative news, so that the crisis can be responded to early.

Furthermore, regarding the management of PKS social media in dealing with crises, The Head of PKS PR stated that they did several things. First is to be careful in providing answers. The answer must be careful and substantive. So it is not emotional and superficial. Second, when misinformation occurs, PKS as an institution is obliged to clarify the misinformation. Third, the delivery of answers and clarifications must be delivered in accordance with good social media methods and civilization.

This crisis management has also been felt by PKS young supporters. As experienced by Gayatri, when PKS was plagued by controversy regarding permission for cadres to practice polygamy, PKS PR received a lot of input from the public. They are encouraged not to link cadres' personal household problems with party political decisions. This was heard and PKS provided clarification. All of these efforts are also seen in the acquisition of PKS votes and seats in the DPR RI. PKS received 12,781,241 votes and 53 seats in the DPR RI (Sutrisna & Movanita, 2024).

Closing

Through the approach of its various social media platforms, this research was conducted to find out the Digital Public Relations strategy carried out by PKS PR. This Digital PR effort is focused on attracting public trust through content presented on PKS digital media official accounts, including Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Spotify, and Website. In this study, the problem formulation is answered based on data analysis and discussion of data managed and obtained through in-depth interview methods accompanied by documentation of PKS digital media accounts.

The results of this study are the digital public relations strategy carried out by PKS PR using 4 activities, first Attracting Visitors through Search. PKS PR activates the website media, making it easier for audiences to find information about PKS. Second, engagement and dialogue between media owners and audiences. PKS PR seeks to build interactions with audiences through the creation of a variety of content that has market value and can be enjoyed by all groups and generations. Third, Building Campaign Buzz or creating a massive

campaign that affects the audience. PKS PR strategizes so that the message of the information shared can spread to all levels of society in Indonesia. Fourth, Defensive / Crisis, PR PKS DPR RI mitigates issues and is careful in providing answers or clarifications to defend its image.

From the results of this study, it can be suggested to PKS to upload more varied content in the golden period. In addition, a sustainable campaign is also needed and has a story to tell. For further research, quantitative research can be conducted to measure the impact of digital PR strategies that have been carried out. It is hoped that the results of this study can also enrich the study of political communication and digital PR.

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