

Communication Strategy of the Ministry of Communication and Information Technology in Preventing the Spread of Hoax on Social Media

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Abstract

Social media offers various interesting features with their respective advantages, such as a medium for communicating, making transactions, building communities, learning, and running a business. These features can be accessed anywhere and anytime, with only an electronic device and an internet connection. However, with these various advantages and conveniences, not a few people abuse social media by spreading fake news or hoaxes. One of the government institutions in Indonesia that has duties and functions in stopping, monitoring, and preventing the spread of hoaxes is the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kemkominfo). This study aims to analyze the communication strategy of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics to prevent the spread of hoaxes on social media. This research uses a qualitative descriptive method and data is collected through interviews with two internal parties of the Directorate General of Information and Public Communication at the Ministry of Communication and Informatics; and communication specialists. The results showed that the communication strategy implemented by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics to prevent the spread of hoaxes on social media was to use digital literacy. There are four (4) pillars that are the main points in the digital literacy program, namely digital security, digital ethics, digital culture, and digital skills.

Keywords: Digital Literacy; Hoax; Social Media; Communication Strategy, Kemkominfo

Introduction

In this digital era, humans can communicate without having to meet face-to-face. Communication can be done using internet technologies, one of which is social media. According to Van Dijk (2013) in (Nasrullah, 2015), "Social media is a media platform that focuses on the existence of users that facilitates them in their activities and collaboration. Therefore, social media can be seen as an online medium (facilitator) that

strengthens relationships among users as well as a social bond" (Nasrullah, 2015). Meanwhile, according to (Kotler & Keller, 2012), social media is defined as a means for consumers to share text, image, video, and audio information with each other and with companies and vice versa.

In addition to communication, the use of social media certainly provides many benefits and positive impacts for its users. Various activities such as learning, marketing, building

communities, online business forums, communicating with other countries, and disseminating information and news can be carried out through social media. This is also supported by the ease of accessing social media anytime and anywhere, with only electronic devices and internet connections. Indonesia's internet penetration rate at the end of March 2021 was 76.8 percent of its total population. According to Internet world stats data, the number of internet users in the country, with an estimated total population of 276.3 million, reached 212.35 million" (Kusnandar, 2021).

However, in practice, the use of social media is often misused by irresponsible persons. The spread of fake news or hoaxes is one of the problems that are quite often encountered when discussing the misuse of social media. According to the Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia (KBBI), a hoax is defined as fake news or unsourced news. Meanwhile, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, a hoax is defined as a lie that is made with malicious intent.

Based on data reported on the official website of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia, there are around 800,000 sites in Indonesia that are believed to spread false information (Yuliani, 2017). Furthermore, the research conducted by (Juditha, 2018), found that social media is the most common channel used to spread false news or hoaxes. This phenomenon allows the emergence of doubts among the public in receiving information and the impact can confuse the public.

Research conducted by (Mastel, 2017) found that the channel which is mostly used for spreading hoax news is social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and Path), accounting for 92.40%, followed by chat applications (Whatsapp, Line, and Telegram) with 62.80%, with text being the most frequently accepted form of hoaxes with 62.10%, followed by images with 37.50%, and videos with 0.40%. In addition, the results show that 17.20% receive more than one hoax news in a day.

A study conducted by (Mastel, 2019) on the same subject shows that social media remains the most widely used channel for spreading hoax news, reaching 87.50%. However, the study also suggests that at the same time social media functions as a channel for clarifying or correcting hoax news. The

spread of hoax news does not revolve around certain issues. It can be found in many fields or themes including economic, social, cultural, health, and religious issues. However, the spread of hoax news is fluctuating, depending on the society as the consumers of information (Nurlatifah, 2019).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, we are encountered not only with the transmission of the Covid-19 virus but also the proliferation of Covid-19 hoax news. This gives rise to a sense of confusion, anxiety, and panic in the community. Based on data from the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Yusuf, 2020), the spread of Covid-19 hoax news has increased since March 2020, reaching 265 cases. Indonesia announced the first confirmed Covid-19 cases in March 2020. As of August 8, 2020, there were 1,028 cases of Covid-19 hoax news and the number increased in subsequent periods. In the new media era, hoaxes develop in all their forms in all areas of life, including economics, politics, culture, health, defense and security (Fardiah et al., 2021).

Of course, the spread of fake news or hoaxes through social media is one of the issues that Government and related institutions in Indonesia need to take into account. In Indonesia, one of the government agencies in charge of handling the issue is the Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kemkominfo). This study aims to describe the communication strategy of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics in preventing the spread of hoax news on social media, in the period of January – September 2021.

Theoretical Framework

Good communication helps an institution or organization to convey the right message to its target audience, with the aim of achieving certain goals, such as improving people's digital literacy skills to prevent the spread of fake news in digital media.

Referring to a research conducted by (Nugraha & Abdurrahman, 2019), one of the strategies or methods used by the government in dealing with hoaxes is the *aduankonten.id* page. However, it is still necessary to disseminate information about the site to the public so that they will know it. Achieving this goal requires the right communication strategy, starting from determining the target audience, the medium used, the message, and the

communicator. According to the research conducted by (Sariani, 2019), messages, both verbal and non-verbal communication, become one of the focuses in formulating communication strategies.

Nurhadi, et.al also state the same thing that it is necessary to choose the right medium according to the intended audience, to convey information to achieve the desired goal (Nurhadi et al., 2021).

Communication Strategy

According to Middleton in (Cangara, 2014), communication strategy is a combination of all communication elements such as communicators, messages, channels, communicants, and effects; designed to achieve optimal communication goals. In addition, according to Rogers (1982) in (Cangara, 2014), the notion of communication strategy is a design that is made on a large scale to change human behavior through the transfer of new ideas.

Based on the understanding of the communication strategy expressed by the experts above, it can be concluded that the communication strategy is the result of the implementation of all plans that are carried out in a structured and mature manner, and focus on various aspects of the communication process so that the desired goals can be achieved effectively and efficiently.

In formulating a communication strategy, it is necessary to have a plan that focuses on the elements of communication, as has been stated by Harold D. Lasswell in (Cangara, 2014); so that the strategy implemented in communication planning must use the following steps: first, select and determine communicator; in the implementation of communication activities, the communicator or the messenger becomes the main actor and plays an important role. Thus, in the process of implementing the communication strategy, the communicator can be considered as the 'spearhead'. There are three main requirements to become a communicator: credibility, attractiveness, and strength.

Second, setting targets and analyzing the needs of the audience; analyzing and determining the right audience is one of the keys to the success of a communication strategy, because if the intended audience is not appropriate, then any program that is communicated cannot be received effectively.

Three ways can be done to map the characteristics of the audience, namely sociodemographic aspects which include age, gender, occupation, education, occupation, religion, and ideology. The second aspect is the psychological profile which includes attitudes such as temperament, calm, patience, and so on. And the third aspect is the characteristics of people's behavior, including habits that are usually followed such as liking to save, and so on (Cangara, 2014).

Third, the technique of compiling messages. Messages are things that are exchanged in the communication process. Messages are symbols, both verbal and non-verbal, and contain meaning in them. Several things need to be considered in the technique of compiling messages: mastering the message to be conveyed, being able to put forward logical arguments, having the ability to perform intonation of language and body movements, and having the ability to attract the attention of the audience and reduce boredom by providing a 'spice' of humor in it. Fourth, choose the media or communication channel (Cangara, 2014).

The choice of media or communication channel depends on the content of the message to be conveyed, communication resources, media ownership, and whether or not the message to be conveyed is affordable are things that need to be considered when choosing media or communication channels.

Hoax

In early 2017, the term hoax developed in the community and was listed in the 5th edition of the *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (KBBI), which defines hoax as fake news or unsourced news. 'Hoaks' is a phrase used in the KBBI, with the suffix 'ks' which is absorption from a foreign language, that is a hoax (Fakta, 2017).

Dahlan defines a hoax as false news that has been planned by the spreader and aims to provide a false confession or understanding (Indriani, 2017). Meanwhile, according to the Chairman of the Anti-Defamation Indonesian Community, Septiaji Eko Nugroho, a hoax is information that is engineered to cover up actual information or can also be interpreted as an attempt to distort facts by using information that is convincing but cannot be verified (Oedi et al., 2020).

Besides that, the definition of a hoax according to Silverman (2015) in (Sari, 2019) is a series of information that is deliberately misled but is 'sold' as truth. And according to Werme (2016), hoaxes are fake news that is not only misleading but also has no factual basis, and contains information that intentionally misleads people and has a certain political agenda (Sari, 2019).

Associated with the topic of this research, it is explained what strategy is implemented by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics in preventing the spread of hoaxes or news that cannot be justified.

Material and Methodology

This research uses a descriptive research method. The data collection technique used in this study was through interviews with NG as the Director of Media Management at the Directorate General of Information and Public Communication of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics; DN is the Coordinator of Audiovisual and Social Media, Directorate of Media Management of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics; and RR is an expert in communication science. The analytical technique used in this study is the Miles and Huberman interactive model, which consists of data reduction, data presentation, and verification (Hardani, Auliya et al., 2020).

Result and Discussion

Referring to the communication strategy proposed by (Cangara, 2014), which is selecting and assigning communicators, setting targets and analyzing audience needs, determining techniques for compiling messages, and selecting media or communication channels, the first step is slightly different from that carried out by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics.

Based on the results of interviews with NG as the Director of Media Management at the Directorate General of Information and Public Communication of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, it was said that in formulating a communication strategy, the first thing that needs to be done is mapping the audience, then compiling the message, determining the media or communication channel, and finally determining the communicator.

Analyzing the audience is the first step and one of the important points in formulating a communication strategy. This is because if the intended targets are not appropriate, then any campaign or program that is implemented cannot run effectively. After determining the audience, it is also necessary to determine its characteristics, including sociodemography, psychological profiles, and community behavioral characteristics (Cangara, 2014). This is consistent with NG's statement as follows: "In our place, we usually inverse. So, the first thing we set up is the mapping of the audience first, so we go back first. So it's different, it's not the source we're looking for or what message we want to convey. But the first thing we arrange first is the audience."

NG as Director of Media Management at the Directorate General of Information and Public Communication of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics also added that audience mapping is the first step to formulate a communication strategy for the Ministry of Communication and Informatics because communication is said to be effective and efficient if the communication is successful in targeting people who really need the news or information. The audience mapping referred to herein is to determine the specific target audience, which has been determined based on its sociographic, demographic and psychographic characteristics.

NG reiterates that the specific target audience that has been mapped is what later needs to be studied to see its characteristics or behavior. The behavior referred to herein is how the attitude or behavior of the community in accessing, receiving and utilizing information, and whether there is a capability in disseminating information. One of the important points to be highlighted in determining the characteristics of the audience is language.

The language chosen needs to be adjusted to the demographics of the intended audience, for example, the use of Javanese in Java areas such as Yogyakarta and Solo. In addition, the language chosen also needs to be adjusted to the age category of the audience. This is consistent with NG's statement as follows: "yes and of course, the most important thing for us is maybe the language, yes, the type of language used. We can't campaign in the countryside in the Ujung Kulon area, for example, using Javanese, no way, it must be

Sundanese. On the other hand, if we live in Rawamangu, Solo, and so on, of course, we use Javanese."

The second step to formulate a communication strategy is making preparations for the message. This is consistent with NG's statement that after determining the target audience, the next thing to do is to compile messages that include key points, the substance to be conveyed, and so on.

After determining the target audience and compiling the message, the next step is to determine what media or communication channel will be used. Determination of the media used is, of course, also based on the target audience and the need to see and combine the use of media to get maximum results. As stated by NG as follows:

"Remember, there is no such thing as the one and only media, nothing in this world. There is no single media that is sure to be effective in reaching the entire audience, it's impossible. Therefore, we map out how they access information, and what media they use, even if, for example, in an area where there are no mass media, then we use traditional media, media that are known locally that they know."

The research was conducted by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics using social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube. Social media was chosen because it can be accessed easily by the public, only with electronic devices and internet connections. The number of social media users in Indonesia in 2022 are estimated to reach more than 191 million. The data states that there will be an increase of around more than 12.35% compared to 2021 (Mahdi, 2022). Furthermore, when viewed from the number of followers in mid of 2022; Kemkominfo's Facebook has 335,000 followers, Kemkominfo's Instagram has 1.8 million followers, Kemkominfo's TikTok has 113,700 followers, and Kemkominfo's YouTube has 73,300 subscribers.

The final step to formulate the communication strategy of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics mentioned by NG is to determine the communicator. In this case, the communicator is selected based on the results of the analysis of the audience, the content of the message, and the determination of the media. Communicators or messengers

can be Key Opinion Leaders (KOL), Influencers (Nano/Micro/Macro), and so on.

This is consistent with NG's statement as follows:

"In some places, for example, in Aceh, when we previously disseminated information about vaccination, the most effective way was through community leaders. You can't use Instagram there, for example. Yes, in the city, yes, in the urban area. They continue to use them to believe in key opinion leaders."

The use of social media as a communication strategy carried out by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics in preventing the spread of hoaxes on social media is done by adopting the "Three Levels" communication strategy. As stated by NG:

"So, therefore, the strategy used by Kominformasi has 3 levels, right? 3 levels, so we have the so-called upstream, midstream, and downstream strategy. Upstream is prevention, yes. If it's in-between, it's the middle, it's participation in reporting, for advocacy and so on. And the last one is a legal action, yes, legal action whose term is applied to the perpetrators of hoaxes."

This statement is in line with what was conveyed by the Minister of Communication and Informatics, Johnny G. Plate in a Web Seminar entitled 'Building cyber resilience through innovation, partnerships, and long-term planning, on Wednesday, September 9, 2020. In the Web Seminar, He mentioned that the "Three Levels" Communication Strategy is divided into Upstream, Midstream, and Downstream (Yusuf, 2020).

Upstream Level or upstream preventive strategies are carried out using digital literacy. According to NG's statement:

"The most important strategy is that we are upstream first. And upstream, what strategy should we take, that is public education in the public sphere. Yes, it means that we have to improve our digital literacy first."

This statement was also supported by DN as the Audiovisual and Social Media Coordinator of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics. DN stated that the digital literacy program in question was divided into four (4) pillars; namely digital security, digital ethics, digital culture, and digital skills. In the

Pillar of Digital Security, the public will be given a wide range of knowledge and information about digital security, ranging from how to create an account and change email passwords, two-step verification, and so on.

The second is Digital Ethics, where the public will be given information about how to have good ethics in cyberspace, including ethics in using social media. Next is Digital Culture, where the public will be given information on how the culture is adopted in using social media in Indonesia. The last is Digital Skills, where people will be given various skills or abilities in using social media, including how to turn on the computer, send emails correctly and formally, how to make designs, conduct trade on social media using the various available features, and so on.

DN also added that programs aimed at promoting digital literacy have been carried out by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics in the last two years. The programs can be in the form of training, certification, online and offline seminars, curriculum, and so on.

To support the presentation of various sources on digital literacy that have been written previously, the author receives some supporting data, the first is an example of digital literacy organized by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics on its official YouTube, Kemkominfo TV, there is a weekly program entitled "Miss Lambe Hoaks VS Fact Boy".

This program is packaged attractively in the form of continuous episodes, which aim to provide education, insight, and understanding to the Indonesian people to prevent and combat the spread of fake news or hoaxes together. In addition, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics also organizes a Webinar that discusses how to prevent, fight, and counter false news or hoaxes, including the 'Anti Hoax Millennial Webinar in the Era of Public Information Openness', on Tuesday, March 9, 2021.

In addition, what Kemkominfo does is how to carry out digital literacy, and educate the public so that they can avoid and not participate in spreading hoaxes. As such, they can be free or not part of criminal acts as set forth in Information and Electronic Transactions Law (UU ITE) Number 11 of 2008, and its revision in Law Number 19 of 2016.

The Ministry of Communication and Informatics also holds a collaborative program with the National Digital Literacy Movement (GLDN) or often referred to as Siberkreasi. In this collaboration, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics together with Siberkreasi and other government institutions have a program called the "*Indonesia Makin Cakap Digital*" (Agustini, 2021).

The various programs carried out are, of course, to further improve the digital literacy skills of the Indonesian people. Based on the measurement of the Digital Literacy Index conducted by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics together with Siberkreasi and Katadata Insight Center (KIC); the digital culture pillar got a score of 3.90, the digital ethics pillar scored 3.53, the digital skills pillar scored 3.44, and the digital security pillar scored 3.10. It is stated that the digital literacy index in 2021 has increased compared to 2020, from 3.46 – 3.49 (Sudoyo, 2022).

Based on some of the presentations of facts and data that have been written above, the author can conclude that digital literacy is the first stage or step in preventing the spread of hoaxes on social media, which are continuously voiced by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics; either the Ministry of Communication and Informatics itself or in collaboration with organizations or other government institutions.

The upstream level continues to midstream level; which is also known as the mediation level. According to NG, the mediation referred to herein is an effort to encourage public participation to report and set up a team that together filters out content on digital media, which has spread and contains hoaxes. This statement was supported by ND as the Audiovisual and Social Media Coordinator of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics, who said that the mediation levels referred to herein were related to the industry or social media platforms in Indonesia. Here's his statement:

"Then what else, what else to do? What they do, when they talk about hoaxes, this means that there is a platform. We talk to the platform. Where do hoaxes usually spread? One, maybe on social media, maybe on WhatsApp or private chat, then there's online media, and there are various platforms. That's why you have to talk to the

platform. If this is in terms of the community (which is digital literacy), now it's from the industry. In terms of industry, what? "Wey, you're responsible too, right?"

ND also added that things such as reporting mechanisms and community guidelines, which are usually found in social media, are examples of the platform's responsibility for preventing the spread of hoaxes. Regarding the reporting mechanism, Indonesian people can also actively participate in helping the Ministry of Communication and Informatics to monitor and report hoaxes or negative content; such as taking screenshots or screen captures related to things that are considered hoaxes; including URL links; and sending it to the email address aduankonten@mail.kominfo.go.id (Yunita, 2017).

This is also strengthened by the results of an interview with NG who stated: "Don't think that Kominfo just takes down, NO. we have 3 levels earlier, so we start with educating the public and doing digital literacy, then in the middle, we also have active reporting from the community, some people work together to filter, and of course, if it is too much then legal action will be taken."

From the description above, it can be said that this stage is a process in which the Ministry of Communication and Informatics will monitor, screen, and determine whether the case of spreading hoaxes needs to be brought to the takedown process, legal action process, or nothing.

The last strategy stage which is the downstream level comes after the upstream level and the midstream level. At this stage, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics has the right to determine whether the case of spreading hoaxes needs to be taken down, or even proceed to legal action. The legal umbrella in this regard is Law Number 11 of 2008 concerning Information and Electronic Transactions (UU ITE), which states that "Everyone intentionally and without rights spreads false and misleading news that results in consumer losses in Electronic Transactions." In addition, if someone violates this provision, they may be subject to a maximum imprisonment of 6 years and/or a maximum fine of 1 billion rupiahs (Taqiyya, 2021).

One of the cases of hoaxes that cannot be tolerated is related to Covid-19, where NG also said this:

"But there is also a consideration that if it threatens sovereignty, if it endangers the public at large, then it must be taken down. Like yesterday, as the direction of the Minister for vaccine hoaxes was no mercy if there was a vaccine hoax, it would immediately take it down, immediately. There's nothing left at all."

The Acting Director of Information Empowerment at the Ministry of Communication and Informatics stated that the government's role in addition to taking action on the downstream side is also blocking website access to stop the spread of these hoaxes. The blocking was executed by the Cyber Drone 9 Team, Directorate of Control of the Directorate General of Informatics Applications (Lestari, 2019).

Apart from takedowns, blocking, and legal actions, the Ministry of Communication and Informatics through its official website also has a "Hoax Issue Report" feature in the "Publication" category. This feature contains various contents that have been confirmed as fake news or hoaxes so that all Indonesian people can access them. In this feature, you can also see the date of publication, as well as how many people have seen it.

Conclusions

The communication strategy used by the Ministry of Communication and Informatics to prevent the spread of hoaxes on social media is to implement a digital literacy program aimed at the wider community and take Siberkreasi as a partner. The program is said to be successful based on data from the Digital Literacy Index in 2021, which has increased from 3.46 – 3.49 if compared to 2020.

This digital literacy program certainly aims to provide information and educate the public about how to use social media properly and correctly, including preventing the spread of hoaxes. There are four pillars that are the main points in the digital literacy program, namely Digital Security, Digital Ethics, Digital Culture, and Digital Skills.

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