

Visual Infrastructure Narrative as a Strategy for Building a Positive Institutional Image: A Study of the Public Relations Instagram Account of the Bengkulu City Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency (DPUPR)

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Received [24-02-2026]

Revised [15-08-2026]

Accepted [20-08-2026]

Abstract. This study examines visual infrastructure narratives as a public relations strategy for building a positive institutional image through the Instagram account managed by the Public Relations division of the Bengkulu City Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency (DPUPR). The research focuses on how Instagram is utilized as a digital communication platform to deliver transparent information about infrastructure development and strengthen public trust. A qualitative descriptive approach was employed, with data collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation involving public relations personnel responsible for managing social media communication. The findings reveal that visual narratives are implemented through development progress documentation, field activity photographs, and before-and-after videos of road, bridge, and drainage projects, which function as evidence-based communication of institutional performance. Public Relations activities reflect four main professional roles: expert prescriber, communication facilitator, problem-solving facilitator, and communication technician. Instagram serves as a communication bridge that translates technical infrastructure information into visual messages easily understood by the public. In addition, responsive information delivery, including public service announcements such as temporary road closures, supports transparent and interactive communication. The study concludes that consistent visual storytelling emphasizing real development outcomes and community benefits effectively contributes to strengthening a positive institutional image and fostering closer relationships between government institutions and the public.

Keywords: *Public Relations Strategy, Visual Narrative, Infrastructure, Positive Image, Instagram.*

INTRODUCTION

Public relations play an essential role in supporting organizational management by building mutual understanding, cooperation, and trust between institutions and the public. In government institutions, public relations functions not only as a disseminator of information but also as a strategic mediator responsible for maintaining transparency, accountability, and credibility in public services. Effective communication management enables institutions to explain policies, respond to public concerns, and strengthen institutional reputation through consistent interaction with society. According to Frank Jefkins, public relations encompass planned communication activities aimed at creating mutual understanding between organizations and their publics (Jefkins, 2022). The development of digital communication technology has significantly transformed the practice of public relations, particularly in the public sector. Social media platforms allow institutions to communicate information rapidly,

interactively, and without geographical limitations. Among various platforms, Instagram has become one of the most widely used social media channels because of its visual-based communication features such as photos, videos, stories, and live streaming. These features enable institutions to present information in a more engaging and persuasive manner compared to conventional communication methods. Social media also facilitates two-way communication, allowing institutions to receive immediate feedback from the public and improve service responsiveness (Thackeray, 2020). Visual communication has increasingly become an effective strategy for delivering complex information to the public. Infrastructure development programs often involve technical processes that are difficult for general audiences to understand through textual explanations alone. Therefore, visual narratives such as progress documentation, before-and-after comparisons, and field activity coverage can function as evidence-based communication that demonstrates institutional performance and transparency. Ruslan explains that public relations practitioners must act as mediators who manage relationships between organizations and the public through strategic communication roles, including expert advisor, communication facilitator, problem-solving facilitator, and communication technician (Ruslan, 2020).

The Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency (DPUPR) of Bengkulu City is responsible for infrastructure development, including road maintenance, drainage construction, bridge rehabilitation, and urban spatial planning. As a public service institution, DPUPR must maintain public trust through transparent communication regarding development activities. Public responses toward infrastructure projects often vary, ranging from appreciation to criticism related to project quality or temporary disruptions. These differences in perception emphasize the importance of effective public relations strategies in shaping a positive institutional image. Based on these conditions, this study analyzes how visual infrastructure narratives are utilized through Instagram as a public relations strategy to build a positive institutional image. This research aims to understand the role of visual communication in strengthening transparency, improving public engagement, and fostering sustainable relationships between government institutions and the community in the digital communication era.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Relations Concept and Roles

Public relations are an important management function that focuses on building mutual understanding and maintaining relationships between organizations and their publics. In government institutions, public relations serve as a strategic communication bridge responsible for delivering policies, programs, and public services transparently. Effective public relations activities support institutional credibility and strengthen public trust. According to Frank Jefkins, public relations consist of planned and continuous communication efforts conducted internally and externally to create mutual understanding and achieve organizational objectives (Jefkins, 2022).

The professional roles of public relations practitioners are closely related to organizational communication management. Ruslan explains that public relations practitioners act as mediators between institutions and society through four main roles (Ruslan, 2020). First, the expert prescriber, where practitioners provide strategic communication advice to organizational leaders. Second, the communication facilitator, which focuses on establishing two-way communication between institutions and the public. Third, the problem-solving facilitator, where public relations participate in resolving communication challenges within organizational decision-making processes. Fourth, the communication technician, which includes technical responsibilities such as producing communication content and managing media platforms.

Institutional Image and Positive Image Formation

Institutional image refers to the perceptions, impressions, and beliefs held by the public toward an organization. A positive institutional image is an important asset because it influences public trust, cooperation, and organizational reputation. Ardianto states that image is a deliberately formed perception created through communication strategies and institutional performance (Ardianto, 2018). Therefore, communication messages must align with actual organizational actions to maintain credibility.

Dowling explains that organizational image develops from accumulated public experiences and communication interactions over time (Dowling, 2021). Transparency, responsiveness, and consistency in communication play significant roles in shaping public perception. In the context of public institutions, clear communication regarding development programs and services helps prevent misinformation while strengthening public confidence.

Social Media and Visual Narrative in Public Relations Communication

The advancement of digital communication technology has transformed public relations practices through the use of social media. Social media platforms enable institutions to disseminate information quickly, interactively, and without geographical limitations. According to Thackeray, social media functions as an online communication environment where organizations and individuals create and exchange information through digital networks (Thackeray, 2020). This interactive nature allows institutions to receive direct feedback and maintain closer engagement with the public.

Instagram, as a visual-based social media platform, supports communication strategies through features such as photos, videos, stories, and live streaming. Visual narratives are particularly effective in infrastructure communication because technical information can be simplified through visual documentation. Content such as development progress updates, before-and-after comparisons, and field activity coverage serves as evidence-based communication that demonstrates institutional performance and transparency. Through consistent visual storytelling, public relations practitioners can strengthen public understanding and contribute to building a positive institutional image.

METHODS

This study employed a qualitative descriptive research approach to analyze visual infrastructure narratives as a public relations strategy for building a positive institutional image through Instagram. The qualitative method was selected to explore communication processes, strategies, and meanings implemented by public relations practitioners in managing institutional digital communication. The research was conducted at the Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency (DPUPR) of Bengkulu City, focusing on the Public Relations division responsible for managing social media communication. Informants were selected using purposive sampling techniques based on their involvement in content planning, production, and information dissemination activities. Primary data sources consisted of public relations personnel and supporting staff who understood institutional communication practices.

Data collection techniques included observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Observation focused on analyzing Instagram content related to infrastructure development activities, including visual documentation of road, bridge, and drainage projects. Interviews were conducted to obtain detailed information regarding communication strategies and public engagement management. Documentation involved collecting photographs, videos, and institutional archives. Data analysis followed stages of data reduction, data presentation, and

conclusion drawing. To ensure data validity, source and technique triangulation were applied by comparing information obtained from different informants and data collection methods.

RESULTS

The findings of this study show that visual infrastructure narratives implemented through Instagram play an important role in supporting the public relations strategy of the Bengkulu City Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency (DPUPR) in building a positive institutional image. The Public Relations division utilizes Instagram as an official communication medium to disseminate information related to infrastructure development activities, institutional programs, and public service announcements. The use of visual communication enables technical information to be delivered more clearly and easily understood by the public. Visual narratives are presented through photographs and short videos documenting field activities, development progress, and before-and-after comparisons of infrastructure projects such as road repairs, drainage construction, and bridge maintenance. These visual contents function as evidence-based communication demonstrating institutional performance and transparency. By presenting real field conditions, the institution seeks to minimize misinformation while strengthening public trust in development programs. Consistent uploads showing work stages allow the public to monitor project implementation directly.

In relation to public relations roles, the findings indicate the implementation of four main professional functions. As an expert prescriber, public relations personnel provide communication recommendations to institutional leaders regarding the presentation of infrastructure issues and public complaints through media communication. Strategic decisions include determining message framing, publication timing, and appropriate visual materials to avoid misunderstanding among audiences. As a communication facilitator, Instagram functions as a two-way communication channel connecting the institution and the community. Public Relations personnel actively respond to public comments and direct messages concerning development progress or service disruptions. This interaction strengthens transparency and demonstrates responsiveness toward public concerns.

The role of problem-solving facilitator is reflected in the dissemination of public service announcements such as temporary road closures, traffic diversions, and construction schedules. Providing early visual information helps reduce public inconvenience and encourages community understanding regarding ongoing development activities. Meanwhile, as communication technicians, public relations practitioners manage technical aspects of Instagram administration, including content production, photo and video editing, caption writing, upload scheduling, and engagement monitoring. Content selection prioritizes projects that directly impact community needs and daily activities. The study also shows that visual storytelling emphasizing community benefits contributes to positive image formation. Posts highlighting improved accessibility, flood prevention efforts, and safer transportation infrastructure frequently generate supportive public responses. Positive comments and interactions indicate growing appreciation toward institutional performance. Despite challenges such as limited human resources and occasional negative feedback related to project delays, the Public Relations division maintains communication consistency by providing clarification and development updates through visual narratives.

DISCUSSION

The findings of this study indicate that visual infrastructure narratives function as an effective public relations strategy in strengthening institutional image formation through digital communication media. The utilization of Instagram by the Public Relations division of the Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency of Bengkulu City demonstrates how government institutions adapt to contemporary communication demands that emphasize transparency, accessibility, and public engagement. The shift from conventional information dissemination toward visual-

based storytelling reflects the transformation of public relations practices in the digital era. From the perspective of public relations roles, the implementation of the expert prescriber function shows that communication planning has become an integral part of institutional decision-making. Public relations practitioners are not merely technical executors but contribute strategically by advising leadership on how infrastructure information should be communicated to minimize misunderstanding and public resistance. Infrastructure development often generates public concern due to temporary disruptions such as road closures or traffic congestion. Therefore, careful message framing supported by visual evidence becomes essential in shaping constructive public interpretation.

The communication facilitator role is strongly reflected in the use of Instagram as a two-way communication platform. Interactive features such as comment sections and direct messaging enable direct dialogue between institutions and citizens. This interaction supports participatory communication, where the public is not positioned solely as information recipients but also as active participants who can provide feedback and express concerns. Responsive interaction strengthens perceptions of openness and accountability, which are important components in building public trust toward government institutions. Furthermore, the role of problem-solving facilitator is evident in the dissemination of public service announcements related to construction schedules and infrastructure maintenance activities. Providing early information supported by visual explanations helps reduce uncertainty and prevents misinformation among the community. Visual narratives explaining project objectives and expected benefits encourage public understanding that temporary inconvenience is part of long-term development improvement. This approach aligns communication practices with conflict prevention and issue management strategies in public relations.

The communication technician role also plays a crucial part in ensuring message effectiveness. Technical activities such as photo documentation, video editing, caption writing, and upload scheduling influence how audiences interpret institutional performance. Consistent visual presentation strengthens message credibility because the public can directly observe development progress rather than relying solely on textual claims. Evidence-based visual communication contributes to transparency by allowing audiences to evaluate institutional work outcomes independently.

Visual storytelling emphasizing community benefits further supports positive image formation. Content highlighting improved accessibility, flood prevention efforts, and safer transportation infrastructure encourages emotional connection between development outcomes and citizens' daily lives. Positive audience engagement reflected through supportive comments indicates that visual narratives successfully translate technical infrastructure work into relatable public value.

However, challenges such as limited human resources and negative feedback demonstrate that digital communication management requires continuous adaptation. Critical comments related to project delays or quality issues show that transparency also exposes institutions to public scrutiny. Nevertheless, responsive clarification and consistent updates strengthen institutional credibility because openness signals accountability rather than avoidance. Through sustained visual communication practices, public relations activities contribute not only to information dissemination but also to long-term relationship building between government institutions and the community

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that visual infrastructure narratives implemented through Instagram serve as an effective public relations strategy in supporting the formation of a positive institutional image. The Public Relations division of the Public Works and Spatial Planning

Agency of Bengkulu City utilizes visual communication to present infrastructure development activities in a transparent, accessible, and engaging manner. Photographs, videos, and before-and-after documentation function as evidence-based communication that allows the public to directly observe institutional performance and development progress.

The implementation of public relations roles is reflected through four main functions. As expert prescribers, practitioners contribute strategic communication recommendations related to infrastructure issues and public concerns. As communication facilitators, Instagram becomes an interactive platform that supports two-way communication between the institution and the community. As problem-solving facilitators, public relations personnel provide timely public service announcements to reduce misunderstanding and manage public expectations regarding development activities. Meanwhile, as communication technicians, they manage content production and digital media administration to ensure consistent and effective message delivery.

Visual storytelling that emphasizes community benefits, such as improved accessibility, flood prevention, and safer infrastructure, contributes to strengthening public trust and appreciation toward institutional performance. Although challenges such as limited resources and public criticism remain, responsive communication and consistent information updates support transparency and accountability. The findings highlight that visual-based digital communication plays an important role in strengthening relationships between government institutions and the public while supporting sustainable institutional reputation development.

LIMITATION

This study has several limitations that should be considered in interpreting the research findings. First, the research focuses only on the public relations activities of the Public Works and Spatial Planning Agency of Bengkulu City, which limits the generalization of the results to other government institutions with different organizational structures, communication policies, or social media management practices. Each institution may have unique strategies influenced by leadership style, available resources, and audience characteristics.

Second, the study applies a qualitative descriptive approach that relies heavily on interviews, observations, and documentation. Although this method allows for an in-depth understanding of communication processes and practitioner perspectives, the findings are influenced by the subjectivity of informants and researcher interpretation. Quantitative measurement of audience perception or statistical analysis of engagement outcomes was not conducted, which may limit the ability to measure the broader impact of visual narratives on institutional image.

Third, the research primarily examines Instagram content and communication practices within a specific period of observation. Social media dynamics are highly adaptive and continuously evolving; therefore, communication strategies and audience responses may change over time depending on technological developments or public issues.

Future research is recommended to involve comparative studies across multiple institutions, incorporate audience perception analysis, or combine qualitative and quantitative approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of visual communication strategies in public sector public relations.

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