

A Comparative Study Using Four PR Models – The Press Agency, Public Information, Two-Way Asymmetrical and Two Symmetrical on Malaysia Government

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ABSTRACT

Objective: This study investigates the dynamics of Facebook engagement by a Malaysian ministry, emphasizing its communication objectives, strategies, and outcomes. In light of the increasing role of social media in public administration, the research seeks to uncover how Facebook is utilized for public communication and information dissemination. **Method:** A quantitative content analysis was conducted on all Facebook posts published between January and June 2023. The analysis examined post characteristics and audience engagement metrics, including likes, shares, and comments. **Results:** The findings reveal that posts featuring public service announcements and interactive content generated the highest levels of engagement. The study also identifies that strategic content planning and audience-targeted messaging are critical in enhancing public interaction. **Novelty:** This research contributes to the limited literature on social media engagement strategies within governmental institutions in Malaysia, offering empirical insights into optimizing Facebook as a tool for fostering public participation and transparency.

INTRODUCTION

In the age of digital interconnection, social media platforms have become powerful tools for public communication and engagement. Governments throughout have promptly acknowledged the potential of these platforms, with organisations such as Malaysia's Ministry aggressively utilising Facebook to make connections with citizens, provide information, and foster meaningful debate.

This research conducts a thorough examination of the Ministry Facebook interaction, revealing the tactics used by the Ministry to communicate with Malaysian individuals and shape of the communication and digital discussions. This research provides significant insights on the Ministry's communication tactics, its intended audience, and the general effectiveness of its social media presence.

This study is highly relevant as it specifically examines a crucial communication and digital entity in a rapidly advancing country. An analysis of the Ministry of Home Affairs' social media communication reveals the complex connection between economic policy and public engagement in Malaysian content. Additionally, it provides valuable insights that can assist other government agencies in improving their social media strategies and enhancing communication with citizens.

The main objective of this research is to enhance our understanding of how the Ministry activity using Facebook to influence the communication and digital discourse

in Malaysia. This research seeks to uncover the tactics used by the Ministry to engage with citizens, promote economic projects, and traverse the ever-changing digital world by carefully analysing their social media communication.

1.1 Statement problem

This study investigates the extent to which the Ministry uses Facebook to engage with citizens, analyzing the content and interaction patterns of their posts.

1.2 Research question

The researcher will analyse the posts on the Ministry official Facebook page within six months to get the answers to the following questions.

1. What are the primary goals and objectives of the Ministry Facebook page?
2. What types of content on the Ministry of Communication and Digital's Facebook pages generate the most audience engagement (likes, shares, comments)?

1.3 Research objective

The main objectives of this research as following:

1. To investigate the use of Facebook in the Ministry
2. To investigate the engagement between the Ministry and the audience.

1.4 Significance of research

This research holds significant value due to its diverse nature. Examining the study questions about the main aims and objectives of the Ministry page yields valuable insights into the strategic communication goals of a government agency. Comprehending these objectives is essential for assessing the Ministry's priorities, public relations tactics, and its overarching mission in the digital age. Furthermore, it is crucial to investigate the types of content that elicit the highest level of audience participation on the Ministry of Communication and Digital Facebook page in order to enhance communication tactics. Analysing the content that elicits a strong response from the audience, as quantified by the number of likes, shares, and comments, allows the Ministry to enhance its messaging, guaranteeing that it corresponds to the public's interests and concerns. This understanding is crucial in improving the efficiency of social media communication and promoting meaningful interaction between the government and its constituents.

Literature review

2.1 Social media and government

Social media encompasses many digital platforms and tools, including Facebook, which are increasingly employed for public health communication [1]. Health organisations globally utilise social media platforms, particularly Facebook, as an alternative communication channel to distribute health messages, conduct disease surveillance, raise health awareness, and address public health issues among the general population [2]. Facebook has emerged as a powerful platform with several advantages over conventional communication routes. It has proven to be an efficient and economical method for disseminating health messages, allowing for specific targeting of marginalised groups to enhance public health interventions [3].

In Malaysia, there has been an increasing trend of the population turning to online sources for health information, especially during personal health crises like Covid-19. Local studies have shown that the public perceives such information as valuable and reliable. Consequently, more individuals are turning to healthcare professionals on social media for direct advice [4]. The proliferation of online health information seekers and unauthorised health websites or social media accounts that disseminate inaccurate health content—often promoting unregistered products and services—has compelled health organisations to engage strategically with social media users [5].

Moreover, various technical and individual factors—such as health information characteristics, post timing, marketing elements, socio-demographics, internet literacy, and educational background—have been shown to significantly influence engagement on social media [6]. This study aimed to improve the exchange of information between the Ministry of Health, Malaysia, and Facebook users, ultimately enhancing health literacy through effective information sharing and consumption. The findings may guide health organisations in Malaysia and beyond to improve their health communication strategies and inspire more impactful engagement with online audiences.

Engagement, in the context of modern technology, refers to mutual benefits gained by health organisations and internet users [7]. Health promoters seek to increase the effectiveness of health message dissemination by fostering active engagement on social media platforms. This can be achieved through mechanisms such as viral reach (sharing), content appraisal (liking), and message discussion (commenting) [8]. Interactions are influenced by four main factors: authority, privacy, evidence, and incentive appeals—all of which shape how individuals interpret health content [9]

2.2 Facebook and government

Facebook is one of the world's most popular social media platforms. It was founded by Mark Zuckerberg under the name "The Facebook" in February 2004 [10]. Accessible through mobile devices, computers, and laptops, Facebook allows users to connect with others, share media, and access various services. As of January 2023, it had over 2.9 billion monthly active users [11].

Social media, often referred to as "Socmed," has become an essential element of public discourse and daily life [12]. The widespread use of social media has transformed the way people access and share information [13]. Malaysians reportedly spend an average of five hours and 47 minutes daily on social media, placing the country among the top users in Southeast Asia [14]. According to a 2018 MCMC report, over 78% of Malaysia's population was active on social media, with 97.3% preferring Facebook for communication [15].

Inspired by the private sector's tech-savvy approaches, government agencies are adopting social media to enhance communication and service delivery, improve performance, and boost public interaction [16]. Social media enables 24/7 access to government services and serves as a platform for real-time public engagement. It facilitates two-way communication, allowing governments to address citizen concerns

effectively [17]. During the Covid-19 pandemic, social media proved essential in disseminating accurate information and mitigating public anxiety [18].

Nevertheless, social media was also linked to the rapid spread of misinformation during the pandemic. For instance, false social media claims in Iran led to fatalities from alcohol poisoning, believed to cure Covid-19 [19]. In Malaysia, the Quick Response Team debunked over 200 cases of fake news by March 2020 [20].

The pandemic triggered unprecedented engagement with government social media platforms, with citizens seeking timely and trustworthy information. Live updates, interactive communication, and frequent messaging by authorities strengthened public trust [18].

2.3 Facebook engagement

Local governments have adopted Facebook as a primary tool for public engagement. This has transformed traditional PR strategies, integrating websites with social media platforms [21]. Facebook offers unique opportunities for sustained interaction between the public and local governments, providing a space for open dialogue and feedback [22]. Features such as status updates, comments, media sharing, and real-time messaging make it an ideal platform for community engagement [23].

It is hypothesised that users prefer obtaining information through social interaction on platforms like Facebook rather than through more complex means like newspapers or academic papers [23]. This provides governments with the chance to understand citizen needs better and gain valuable feedback for improving policies and services [24].

Social media has enabled the proliferation of user-generated content and fostered democratic discussions, allowing stakeholders to continuously voice preferences [25]. Governments now use platforms like Facebook to engage in two-way communication with citizens, enhancing trust, transparency, and responsiveness [25].

Operating Facebook pages requires fewer resources than traditional websites, offering default features that encourage dialogue [26]. This facilitates broader, more personal communication and helps build social capital [27].

2.4 The Malaysian public sector as a content study

In Malaysia, the public perceives social media content from healthcare authorities as credible and useful, leading to more interactions with health professionals through platforms like Facebook [4], [5]. Engagement—measured through shares, likes, and comments—is shaped by content credibility, timing, and socio-demographic factors [6], [7], [8], [9].

By analysing Facebook engagement with the Ministry of Health Malaysia, this study offers insights into improving health literacy and effective digital communication. It urges health agencies to produce more compelling content and develop long-term relationships with their audiences.

RESEARCH METHOD

The methodology used in this research is content analysis by going through every single post from January 2023 until June 2023 in the Ministry's official Facebook page. A number of likes, shares and comments would be collected as data alongside the characteristics of every post in the period of the research. Tools that would use in this research are SPSS and Microsoft Excel. This Research focus on 3 Ministry:

1. Ministry of communication and digital.
2. Ministry of home and affairs and ministry of women.
3. Family and community development.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

1. Ministry of communication and digital

Table 1 shows the total engagement that happened on the Facebook page for the Ministry of Communication and Digital.

Table 1. Total engagement

Engagement	Total
Post	2596
Like	115849
Comment	5101
Share	53128

Table 1 displays the level of involvement on Kementerian Komunikasi dan Digital's official Facebook page, as measured by the number of likes, comments, and shares on posts made between January 2023 and June 2023. A total of 2596 posts were analysed and categorised over a period of six months. The engagement rate based on likes is the greatest, with a cumulative total of 115,849 likes from the posts throughout the specified period. Subsequently, the number of shares reaches a commendable 52128, surpassing both the number of likes and comments to secure the second highest position. Comments are least prevalent in the posts on the official Facebook page of the Ministry of Communication and Digital.

Table 2. Four models of public relations

4 Model public relations	N	%
Public agency/ publicity (one way)	192	7.4%
Public information (one-way)	2381	91.7%
Two-way asymmetrical (two-way)	29	1.1%
Two-way symmetrical (two-way)	0	0.0%
Total	2596	100%

A total of 2596 posts were categorised. Among the four models of public relations, the Public Information model had the most posts (n=2381) from January 2023 to June 2023, accounting for 91.7% of the sample. The Public Information model has a much

higher number of posts compared to other models. The model used in this study is Public Agency, which consisted of 192 posts, accounting for 7.4% of the total sample. The sample consisted of 29 postings, which accounted for 1.1% of the total, and followed a two-way Asymmetrical model. Regarding the two-way symmetrical model, none of the posts adhered to the model, resulting in zero contribution to the overall percentage of the posts. (Refer to Table 1 for a comprehensive overview)

2. Ministry of home affairs (KDN)

Table 3 shows the total engagement that happened on the Facebook page for the Ministry of Home Affairs (KDN).

Table 3. Total engagement

Engagement	Total
Post	559
Like	42,808
Comment	2,634
Share	2,023

Table 4 displays the level of engagement on the official Facebook page of the Ministry of Home Affairs (KDN), as measured by the number of likes, comments and shares on posts made between January 2023 and June 2023. A total of 559 posts were analyzed and categorized over a period of six months. The engagement rate based on likes was the largest, with a cumulative total of 42,808 likes from posts over the stated period. Subsequently, followed with the number of comments reached 2,634, surpassing the number of shares by 2,023. Shares are least prevalent in the posts on the official Facebook page of the Ministry of Home Affairs (KDN).

Table 4. Four models of public relations

4 Model public relations	N	%
Public agency/ publicity (one way)	15	2.7
Public information (one-way)	493	88.2
Two-way asymmetrical (two-way)	51	9.1
Two-way symmetrical (two-way)	0	0.0
Total	559	100

In total, 559 posts were coded. Of the Four Models of Public Relations, Public Information had the highest number of posts (n=493) from January 2023 until June 2023, which contained 88.2% of the sample. Other models only had a few posts compared to the Public Information model. The following model is Two-way Asymmetrical, which had 51 posts that covered 9.1% of the sample. Public Agency model could be found in 15 posts, making up 2.7% of the total sample. As for the Two-way symmetrical model, no post followed the model, which did not contribute any percentage to the post's total.

3. Ministry of women, family community development

Table 5 below shows the total engagement that happened on the Facebook page for the Ministry of Women, Family Community Development.

Table 5. Total engagement

Engagement	Total
Post	747
Like	9040
Share	2022
Comment	708

The table 5 shows the engagement of The Ministry Women, Family and Community Development official Facebook page based on likes, comments and share on posts from January 2023 until June 2023. Total posts that were coded for the six months are 747 posts. The sum of likes, comments and share from the total of post are 9040, 2022 and 708.

Table 6. Four models of public relation

4 Model public relations	N	%
Public agency/ publicity (one way)	66	8.8%
Public information (one- way)	677	90.6%
Two-way asymmetrical (two-way)	0	0.0%
Two-way symmetrical (two-way)	2	0.3%
Total	747	100%

Table 6 show, in total, 747posts were coded. Of the four models of public relations, Public Information had the highest number of posts (n=677) from January 2023 until June 2023, which contained 90.6% of the sample. Other models only had a few posts compared to the Public Information model. The following model is Public Agency, which had 66 posts that covered 8.8% of the sample. As for the two-way symmetrical model could be found in 2 posts, making up 0.3% of the total sample.

Discussion

To summarise, the research emphasizes the necessity for the Ministry to improve its strategic communication goals on Facebook, ensuring they align with the changing interests and concerns of the public. This necessary modification will enhance the efficiency and impact of the Ministry's interaction with the audience, promoting a deeper connection between the Ministry and the public it serves.

Based on this three ministry that are randomly pick, Therefore Ministry should consistently enhance its strategic communication goals on Facebook to remain responsive to the changing interests and concerns of the public. The Ministry can use regular evaluations of public opinion, popular subjects, and feedback to shape its content strategy, guaranteeing its continued relevance and impact. Although Ministry is actively

involved in interacting with citizens, the research emphasizes the need for improvement in enhancing two-way communication. To bridge this deficiency, engaging with public posts can enhance the Ministry's online visibility, promoting more substantial engagements with the public.

To enhance efficiency and speed up the content analysis process, creating an automated system that incorporates keyword coding for each desired attribute is strongly recommended. Using this computerized methodology, the research team may significantly diminish the need for manual labor, improve productivity, and guarantee a methodical examination of posts on the Ministry Facebook page. The system should be designed to identify and classify postings using pre-established keywords linked to specific attributes, offering a more advanced and efficient approach to data processing. Furthermore, it is crucial to regularly update and continuously monitor the system to adjust it to changing trends and ensure its long-term efficacy.

CONCLUSION

Fundamental Finding : This study underscores the necessity for the Ministry to refine its strategic communication objectives on Facebook to better align with the evolving interests and concerns of the public. Although current efforts show active engagement, the research reveals a gap in two-way communication and highlights the need for a more dynamic and responsive content strategy. **Implication** : Strengthening audience interaction through regular evaluations of public sentiment and strategic content adaptation can significantly enhance public trust and institutional transparency. The development of an automated content analysis system is recommended to improve the efficiency and accuracy of social media performance assessments. **Limitation** : The study is limited to a six-month period and focuses on only three randomly selected ministries, which may not fully capture broader engagement trends across all government institutions. **Future Research** : Subsequent studies should expand the sample size and duration to validate these findings further and explore the effectiveness of automated analytical tools in facilitating real-time monitoring and strategy refinement for government social media platforms.

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