

DIGITALIZATION AND THE EVOLUTION OF PUBLIC RELATIONS: STRATEGIES FOR FACING THE NEW COMMUNICATION ERA

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Abstract. *The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed the role and practices of Public Relations (PR), shifting communication from traditional one-way interactions to more interactive, technology-driven engagement. Previous studies emphasize that digital communication, social media, and technological innovation have become essential in strengthening organizational reputation and stakeholder relationships (Putri & Yuliana, 2025; Septiyani, 2024; Alivia et al., 2024). This study aims to analyze the evolution of Public Relations in the digital era and identify effective communication strategies used to address contemporary communication challenges. A qualitative literature review approach was employed by examining relevant scholarly publications on digital communication and Public Relations. The findings indicate that digital platforms, social media, artificial intelligence, and data-driven communication have become strategic tools for enhancing organizational reputation and stakeholder engagement. Moreover, PR practitioners are increasingly expected to perform multiple roles as communicators, reputation managers, digital content creators, and crisis communication strategists. Despite these opportunities, organizations continue to face challenges such as misinformation, online reputation crises, and information overload. Therefore, adaptive communication strategies, digital competencies, and evidence-based decision making are essential for maintaining public trust and ensuring sustainable organizational communication in the digital era.*

Keywords: *Communication; Digital Transformation; Public Relations; Reputation Management; Social Media*

1. INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of information and communication technologies (ICT) has fundamentally transformed organizational communication, enabling faster, more interactive, and borderless exchanges of information. The widespread adoption of digital platforms and social media has shifted communication from traditional one-way dissemination toward participatory and two-way engagement, requiring organizations to develop more adaptive and technology-oriented communication strategies (Putri, 2025; Septiyani, 2024). This transformation has significantly redefined the role of Public Relations (PR), extending its function beyond information management to include stakeholder engagement, reputation management, and strategic digital communication.

In the digital era, stakeholders are no longer passive recipients of information but active participants who create, distribute, and influence public discourse through platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, YouTube, LinkedIn, and X (formerly Twitter). Consequently, organizations are expected to communicate transparently, respond rapidly to public issues, and utilize digital technologies to maintain credibility and organizational reputation (Alivia et al., 2024; Ummah & Adla, 2025). Furthermore, emerging technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), big data analytics, and social media monitoring have become integral components of modern PR

practices, supporting evidence-based decision-making and more effective audience engagement (Putri, 2025).

Previous studies have examined the influence of digital media, social networking platforms, and technological innovation on Public Relations practices (Septiyani, 2024; Alivia et al., 2024). However, existing research primarily focuses on individual aspects of digital communication, with limited attention given to comprehensively explaining how the functions, competencies, communication strategies, and professional roles of Public Relations have evolved within the broader context of digital transformation. Addressing this gap, this study aims to analyze the evolution of Public Relations in the digital era by examining the transformation of PR functions, identifying effective digital communication strategies, and exploring the major challenges organizations face in maintaining stakeholder trust and organizational reputation in an increasingly digital communication environment.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

a) Public Relations

Public Relations (PR) is a strategic management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their stakeholders through planned, consistent, and ethical communication. According to Jefkins (2003), Public Relations encompasses all forms of planned communication, both internal and external, aimed at achieving mutual understanding between an organization and its publics. Furthermore, Kriyantono (2015) emphasizes that modern PR extends beyond information dissemination by integrating reputation management, stakeholder engagement, crisis communication, and strategic decision-making within organizational management.

The rapid growth of digital technology has significantly expanded the role of Public Relations. PR practitioners are now expected to function as strategic communicators, digital content creators, reputation managers, and crisis communication specialists while utilizing digital platforms to strengthen stakeholder relationships and organizational credibility (Septiyani, 2024; Ummah & Adla, 2025). Therefore, Public Relations has evolved into a multidisciplinary function that combines communication, technology, and management to support organizational sustainability in the digital era.

b) Digital Communication

Digital communication refers to the exchange of information through internet-based technologies and digital media that enable fast, interactive, and real-time communication. Unlike conventional communication, digital communication encourages two-way interactions, allowing audiences to actively create, share, and influence information through various online platforms (Alivia et al., 2024).

The development of social media, websites, mobile applications, artificial intelligence (AI), and big data analytics has fundamentally transformed organizational communication practices. These technologies enable organizations to engage stakeholders more effectively, monitor public sentiment, evaluate communication performance, and respond rapidly to emerging issues (Putri, 2025; Ummah & Adla, 2025). Consequently, digital communication has become an essential component of modern Public Relations, supporting transparency, stakeholder engagement, reputation management, and evidence-based communication strategies in an increasingly connected digital environment.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach using a literature review method to examine the evolution of Public Relations in the digital era. A literature review was selected because it enables researchers to synthesize and critically evaluate findings from previous studies to develop a comprehensive understanding of a particular research topic (Sugiyono,

2020). Secondary data were collected from peer-reviewed scientific journals, academic books, conference proceedings, and other credible scholarly publications discussing Public Relations, digital communication, social media, digital transformation, and organizational communication.

The literature selection process emphasized relevance, credibility, and recency to ensure that the analyzed sources accurately reflected current developments in digital Public Relations. Data collection was conducted through systematic identification, selection, and review of publications related to the research objectives. The collected data were then analyzed using descriptive qualitative analysis and comparative analysis by identifying similarities, differences, emerging themes, and research patterns across previous studies. Following the analytical framework proposed by Miles and Huberman, the analysis involved data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing to generate comprehensive findings regarding the strategic transformation, opportunities, and challenges of Public Relations in the digital communication environment (Ummah & Adla, 2025).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

a) Transformation of Public Relations Communication

The findings indicate that digital transformation has fundamentally changed Public Relations from a conventional one-way communication model into a more interactive, participatory, and technology-driven communication process. Digital platforms enable organizations to communicate directly with stakeholders, receive immediate feedback, and establish continuous engagement. This transformation has strengthened organizational responsiveness while improving communication effectiveness and stakeholder relationships (Septiyani, 2024; Ummah & Adla, 2025).

b) Social Media as a Strategic Communication Tool

Social media has become one of the most important communication channels for modern organizations. Platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn, YouTube, and X facilitate real-time information dissemination, public interaction, and organizational branding. Beyond delivering information, social media supports reputation management, audience engagement, crisis response, and relationship building with stakeholders, making it a strategic component of digital Public Relations (Alivia et al., 2024; Putri, 2025).

c) The Changing Role of Public Relations

The role of Public Relations practitioners has evolved significantly alongside digital transformation. Modern PR professionals are expected not only to communicate organizational messages but also to create digital content, manage online reputation, analyze audience data, monitor public sentiment, and develop communication strategies based on digital analytics. These expanded responsibilities demonstrate that Public Relations has become a strategic management function supported by digital technologies (Kriyantono, 2015; Septiyani, 2024).

d) Challenges in the Digital Era

Despite the opportunities offered by digital communication, organizations face several significant challenges. The rapid spread of misinformation, increasing risks of online reputation crises, information overload, cybersecurity concerns, and growing public expectations for transparency require organizations to respond quickly and strategically. Therefore, successful Public Relations practices depend on continuous digital competency development, ethical communication, and evidence-based decision making to maintain stakeholder trust and organizational reputation (Ummah & Adla, 2025; Alivia et al., 2024).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that digital transformation has fundamentally reshaped the role and practice of Public Relations in modern organizations. The findings demonstrate that Public Relations has evolved from a conventional one-way communication function into a strategic, interactive, and technology-driven discipline that emphasizes stakeholder engagement, reputation management, and data-informed communication. Digital technologies, including social media, artificial intelligence, and data analytics, have become essential tools for enhancing communication effectiveness and strengthening organizational credibility.

Despite these opportunities, organizations continue to face major challenges, including misinformation, online reputation crises, information overload, and increasing public expectations for transparency and rapid response. Therefore, organizations must continuously strengthen digital competencies, implement adaptive communication strategies, and uphold ethical and transparent communication practices. This study contributes to the understanding of the evolving role of Public Relations in the digital era and highlights the importance of integrating technology, strategic communication, and stakeholder engagement to achieve sustainable organizational reputation and public trust. Future research is recommended to examine the implementation of digital Public Relations strategies across different industries and organizational contexts.

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