

Digital Media Management Strategy of the Protocol Division Region Secretariat of Yogyakarta Special Region Through E-Government

Claresta Putri Syaharani, Fajar Junaedi

Department of Communication Science, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, 55183, Indonesia

*Corresponding author's email: clarestasyaharani@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Keywords

Government Digital Media;
E-Government; Public Communication;
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The use of digital media by the government has become an important part of e-government implementation to enhance information transparency and public communication. However, the management of digital media is not always carried out by units that have a formal public communication function, leading to the emergence of dynamic management practices at the unit level. This research analyzes the practice of managing digital media by local government Protocol units within the framework of e-government through the perspective of institutional role differentiation to understand the division of institutional roles that influence digital media management within government organizations. This research uses a qualitative approach with case study methods, in-depth interviews, and documentation analysis. The research results show differences in the interpretation of e government practices at the unit level. The Protocol Unit in media practice functions more as a means of reporting regional leader activities rather than as a strategic communication medium. These findings indicate that the practice of digital communication within work units is influenced by the division of roles and functions of authority, as well as the work culture of local government bureaucracy. With an institutional perspective, this research emphasizes the importance of understanding the internal dynamics of the bureaucracy in assessing the practice of government digital media management through e-government studies.

1. Introduction

The use of digital media by the government is an integral part of the implementation of e government, which aims to enhance information transparency, accountability, and the effectiveness of communication between the government and the public. The existence of digital-based communication strategies becomes important to implement in building government institutions that are adaptive to technological developments. The main communication strategy can be described as a strategy for harmonizing the relationship between public bodies and citizens (Minaeva, 2019). The quality of information and the perception of trust in government social media have a significant positive impact on the engagement of government digital media in promoting public participation through government digital initiatives (Yuan et al. 2023).

The special status of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, with its distinct governance character compared to other regions, also shapes the dynamics of bureaucracy and local government communication practices. The position of the Governor of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, which has a symbolic and historical role, strengthens the role of protocol in the administration of regional

government. The Protocol function regulated by Law Number 9 of 2010 concerning Protocol and Internal Regulations of Local Government, which places the Protocol unit as part of the government institution. The Protocol unit also plays a role in supporting information transparency as stipulated in Law Number 14 of 2008 concerning Public Information Disclosure by providing accurate, truthful, and non-misleading information.

Through its strategic role in regional leadership activities, units such as Protocol are not positioned as public communication managers. They play a crucial role in international relations and can be utilized for non-verbal communication to create a public impact (Rana, 2022). This condition affects how digital media is understood and managed by the protocol unit, especially in relation to transparency and institutional representation. The implementation of daily protocol activities generates a lot of information that needs to be documented and published as a form of visual reporting on the activities of regional leaders. However, in practice, the presence of digital media in certain units is not always accompanied by the dialogic character of digital communication as per the e-government concept. The use of digital media by the Protocol Unit of the Special Region of Yogyakarta tends to function as a means of documentation and reporting of regional leaders' activities. Therefore, in the context of regional government, the practice of managing digital media cannot be separated from the institutional character and bureaucratic structure inherent in each region.

Several previous studies have discussed the use of digital media in governance. The findings of Criado & Villodre (2022) indicate that interactive service patterns are not standardized across all work units, especially those functioning administratively (Criado & Villodre, 2022). This condition indicates a potential gap between the e-government policy framework and the practice of digital media management at the unit level, which can be understood through the perspective of institutional role differentiation, where each unit has different mandates, authorities, and work logics. Another study by Fahlevvi & Muslim (2025) on protocol units at the local government level shows that the protocol function can play a strategic role in the management of administration, documentation, and digital publication as part of government communication (Rezza Fahlevvi & Aulia Muslim, 2025). This condition explains that non-public communicator units can also play a role in the digital space openly. The perspective of government communication helps to understand how public communication policies are interpreted differently by work units according to their functions (Canel & Sanders, 2016).

This research analyzes the practice of digital media management in the Protocol Unit of the Special Region of Yogyakarta within the framework of e-government through the perspective of institutional role differentiation, which refers to the process of specific roles, activities, and responsibilities within an institution becoming distinct and specialized (Donnelly, 2011). Thus, there are still limitations in studies that specifically analyze the practice of digital media management in the protocol unit within the context of regional authority distribution. This analysis focuses on how non-public communication units, which play a strategic role with the regional leadership agenda, can manage the technical aspects of digital communication and also highlights the dynamics of authority and role distribution among work units.

2. Method

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study strategy to analyze the practice of digital media management in the Protocol Unit of the Special Region of Yogyakarta within the framework of e-government. This approach was chosen to deeply understand how digital media is managed by a work unit that does not have primary authority as a public communication coordinator, emphasizing the questions of "how" and "why" a phenomenon occurs (Morris et al., 2014).

Research data were collected through semi-structured interviews with the digital media management team as the main informants, as well as representatives from the public relations unit as supporting informants to provide context on public communication policies and e-government implementation. In addition, data collection was conducted through documentation of internal

policies, communication guidelines, and the forms of digital media content managed by the protocol unit. Non-participant observation was also conducted by understanding the patterns of publication practices carried out. Data analysis was conducted qualitatively through the stages of data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing with the aim of suggesting conclusions and supporting research decision-making. (Gomez-Perez et al., 2017).

3. Result and Discussion

3.1. Results

3.1.1 The Role of Digital Media in the Protocol Unit of the DIY Regional Government

In the Protocol Unit of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, in accordance with Law Number 9 of 2010 regarding Protocol Guidelines, it is the primary task and main function of the protocol unit to perform duties related to regulations in state events, including venue arrangement, ceremonial procedures, and honors. In this context, digital media serves as a means of reporting the performance of the protocol unit to regional leaders (governor, deputy governor, and regional secretary) to the public.

The findings indicate that the management of digital media in the Protocol Unit of the Special Region of Yogyakarta is understood as a supporting activity in the execution of protocol duties and publication activities that are not mandatory. Content production becomes flexible and depends on the internal considerations of the unit. Publication is carried out primarily during official events or agendas deemed important for the public to know.

The informant stated that social media is more understood as a means of visual reporting rather than as a dialogic space. The lack of demand for strategic social media management is due to the division of roles and job desks in each leadership agenda, including the Protocol section as the ceremony and event management team, the Household section as the equipment team, and the Public Relations section as the communication team to the public. Thus, the social media of the Protocol section becomes an initiative and creativity of the Protocol unit through its translation.

3.1.2. Practice and Orientation of Digital Media Management in the Protocol Unit In practice, the decision to publish content becomes situational and depends on the internal considerations of the unit, including the relevance of activities or the appeal on the ground from the regional leaders' agenda. The absence of formal standard operating procedures makes content production spontaneous, visual based on activity documentation, and not all agendas or forms of audiovisual reporting are published.



Figure 1. Recap Content of Activities by the Protocol Unit of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Government through the Instagram account @protokoldiy

The content published by the protocol unit generally consists of recaps of ceremonial activities, work visits, or other formal agendas, featuring footage of event preparations organized by the Protocol unit and the presence of regional leaders. The captions presented are informative and descriptive, explaining the time, place, and context of the activities without containing an interactive dialog platform for public participation. Although the leader activities are the dominant content, not

all protocol agendas are published on social media. The informant explained that the publication is done selectively, especially for activities deemed to have visually appealing elements in the field. Thus, the publication process is not routine or scheduled, but rather depends on the internal unit's consideration of the appeal of an activity.



Figure 2. "Behind The Scene" Content of Protocol Activities through Instagram @protokoldiy

Amidst the dominance of documentary style content, a pattern of initiative and creativity has emerged from the Protocol team in presenting lighter content variations, such as how the Protocol operates behind the scenes, with a focus on the protocol aspect to provide a more relaxed perspective without diminishing the formal reporting function of activities. This initiative is individual and not established as a formal unit policy. On several occasions, the unit involves internship students to help provide more current ideas and trends in digital communication. Because this initiative has not yet been institutionalized in the form of policies or formal guidelines, this practice relies on certain individuals. The use of the reels format is also accompanied by the use of background music that follows trends on the Instagram platform. However, the selection of music is still adjusted to the character of the reported activity.

The informant also conveyed that there is an evaluation process regarding the publication pattern being implemented. In the initial stages, the activity recap content primarily featured the regional leaders as the main visual focus. However, over time, adjustments were made to showcase more aspects of the protocol unit's role in preparing and managing the events. In addition, the protocol unit also once tried to utilize artificial intelligence (AI) technology in creating visual content in the form of posters. However, the experiment faced challenges with visual representation that did not align with the cultural context and institutional expectations, leading to a decision to take down the published post.



Figure 3. Entertainment Content from the Protocol Unit of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Government through the Instagram account @protokoldiy

In terms of entertainment content and aligning trends in the digital communication space, the Protocol Unit of the Special Region of Yogyakarta also implements entertainment content with a focus on the protocol duties. Based on the findings, when entertainment content is presented, the potential for audience interaction is actually more relevant to civil servants who have duties within a similar work scope compared to the general public. The informant stated that the content produced by the Protocol unit does not always have relevance to the public because the public does not experience the dynamics of protocol work.

In terms of performance evaluation, the Protocol unit does not have specific key performance indicators in digital media management. The informant stated that there are no targets for the number of uploads, interaction achievements, or any standards that serve as a reference. Thus, the evaluation is conducted informally based on internal considerations and the general perception of the produced content.

3.1.3. Division of Roles and Authority Among Units in Digital Media Management

Based on the findings, there is a clear division of authority between the Protocol unit and the Public Relations unit within the structure of the Special Region of Yogyakarta Government. The Public Relations Unit is under the regional apparatus of the Communication and Information Office and functions as the coordinator of public communication. Meanwhile, the protocol unit focuses on organizing the agenda and technical aspects of regional leaders' activities. In addition, in terms of regional device organization, the official website of the General Bureau and Protocol is managed by a team in the General Bureau that has the authority for administration and independent activity coverage.

In practice, the informant conveyed that the publication of content on social media is carried out based on internal initiative, without direct guidance from anyone. The relationship between Public Relations and Protocol occurs on specific agendas such as official ceremonies, where both units collaborate on social media posts. However, there is no formal coordination mechanism that integrates all government digital media; each unit continues to perform its publication functions based on its own authority and core tasks.

The management of the official website within the regional device organization of the General Bureau and Protocol, the Protocol unit does not have direct authority. The informant explained that the publication of activity news through the website is carried out by the General Bureau unit, which is directly responsible for managing the website. The Protocol unit is only involved in field activities and the technical aspects of regional leadership activities. This condition shows that the management of digital media within the Special Region of Yogyakarta's local government operates according to structural divisions without any special managerial integration between the protocol function and the public communication function.

In addition to the established division of roles, the dynamics of authority are also evident in public interactions on social media. The informant stated that on several occasions, the social media account of the Protocol unit received public attention through account mentions or questions related to government issues beyond the functions of protocol. This situation places the Protocol unit in a dilemma, because although the Protocol account represents the local government institution, structurally, the Protocol unit does not have the authority to provide clarification or responses to the public.

3.1.4. Digital Media Management Strategy Through the E-Government Framework

In the context of the e-government framework, the Protocol unit practices digital media management in the information provision stage. Based on the research findings, social media is used to convey documentation of leadership activities as a form of administrative transparency and as a report on the implementation of protocol activities.

Content strategy develops through adaptation to the dynamics of the digital space, which is flexible and selective, determined by field considerations and the relevance of activities, as well as adaptation to the dynamics of digital platforms such as the use of reels format and trending music, so this develops through the internal initiative of the protocol unit and the institutional form that

wants to be displayed. However, the informant conveyed that this remains oriented toward the reporting function.

Furthermore, the informants explained that Protocol content is not always relevant to the wider community. The public tends not to have a direct interest in the event preparation process, which is the task and focus of protocol duties, so the form of content presented tends to be predominantly documentary in nature. Thus, digital media in the Protocol unit has developed as an administrative practice that is responsive in the context of local government digitalization.

3.2 Discussion

3.2.1 The Role of Digital Media in the Protocol Unit of the DIY Regional Government

The findings of this study indicate that the use of digital media in the Protocol unit has not evolved as an institutionalized public communication function, but rather as an administrative function in documenting the activities of regional leaders. This shows that the use of digital media in government organizations does not always fundamentally change roles. Media continues to be used in accordance with the main tasks that are already inherent in the Protocol unit. In the perspective of institutional role differentiation, each unit within the bureaucratic structure has different tasks and authorities. Differentiation explains how the structure of social systems and organizations creates specific positions (Donnelly, 2011). This difference affects how a unit translates the use of digital media in its practice. Because the Protocol unit has authority over ceremonial procedures and the management of official events, digital media is positioned as a reporting function, not as a space for dialog with the public. These findings are in line with the research by Criado & Villodre (2022), which states that not all units in digital government develop strategic communication through social media. This research also reinforces the view that government communication is distributed and not all units have the same authority in managing public communication (Canel & Sanders, 2016). Thus, this research shows that the implementation of e-government at the unit level is influenced by the structure and division of roles within the bureaucracy. Digitalization does not automatically change institutional functions, but rather adjusts to existing authorities.

3.2.2 Practice and Orientation of Digital Media Management in the Protocol Unit

The practice of managing digital media in the protocol unit has not yet shown a formally structured function. The absence of standard operating procedures and performance indicators indicates that digital activities have not yet become a primary focus. Based on the perspective of institutional role differentiation, this condition is understandable because each unit operates according to its main duties and functions (Donnelly, 2011).

Government content production includes the creation of photos, videos, captions, or live reports that are documentary in nature and will be distributed through digital media (Holroyd, 2019). The dominant content pattern presenting protocol activities shows that the content orientation is administrative rather than dialogical. This is because administrative content helps maintain the consistency and clarity of the information conveyed to the public as an important part of the protocol duties. The adaptation of content that emerges creatively becomes a practice initiated by the management team, and the evaluation is conducted informally without a clear structure. Thus, the digitalization that occurs more reflects an effort to keep up with platform developments rather than a strategic transformation for the public.

3.2.3 Division of Roles and Authority Among Units in Digital Media Management

In terms of roles and authority, the Protocol unit has full authority over the technical activities of the leadership, while the Public Relations unit holds the function of public communication. This shows that each unit carries out digital practices based on its authority without integration that unifies all government communication channels. In the perspective of institutional role differentiation, this division of functions is a form of specialization within the bureaucratic structure (Donnelly, 2011). However, this differentiation results in clear boundaries of authority, so units like Protocol do not take on the role of public communication even though they operate in the same digital space. Although digital platforms have the potential to provide more open communication, especially in public responses, they cannot always be directly handled by specific units. The dilemma faced by the Protocol unit when receiving public attention indicates that the digital space of the government is

influenced by the boundaries of bureaucratic structure. Thus, this explains that the relationship between social media and the public involves the potential for the spread of misinformation, necessitating a public coordinator for its management (Kotsiopoulos, 2014).

3.2.4 Digital Media Management Strategy Through the E-Government Framework

In the context of e-government, the practice patterns provided by the Protocol unit in presenting content focus on administration and information reporting by the protocol agenda. This condition indicates that social media is at the Informing stage (Government to Citizen – G2C Information Sharing) characterized by one-way communication, as developed by (Indrajit, 2002). The main focus and objective of the information are on transparency, activity publication, and the openness of information that is easily accessible to the public (Reddick, 2004).

Content strategies evolve through the adaptation of platform trends, indicating a response to digital dynamics, resulting in strategies that are operational rather than transformational. The informant's statement regarding the low relevance of content to the public indicates that the function of digital media has not yet been directed toward the broader needs of the public. This condition shows that the implementation of e-government is still focused on the informing stage rather than engagement or participation, so this finding indicates that the digitization of bureaucracy is not always identical to the transformation of public communication, but rather operates as a practice of what already existed before.

Overall, this research shows that the strategy for managing digital media in work units is greatly influenced by institutional structure. E-government in practice does not always appear as an integrated system, but rather develops under the authority of each unit. Although social media is used in the context of government communication, the communication orientation is still at the informing stage and is delivered without efforts to build dialog with the public. Thus, the government's digital transformation is contextual and depends on institutional dynamics.

4. Conclusion

This research shows that the management of digital media in the Protocol unit of the Special Region of Yogyakarta has developed as a practice for reporting the activities of leaders, rather than as a strategic public communication instrument. Through the perspective of institutional role differentiation, this finding emphasizes that the Protocol unit maintains the boundaries of its role as the technical executor of leadership activities. In the framework of e-government, the practices of the Protocol unit are at the stage of information provision (informing) and are developing in a oneway orientation. These findings affirm that the implementation of e-government in work units is heavily influenced by authority and bureaucratic structure in accordance with the institutional dynamics of each unit. This research contributes by showing that government digital communication does not automatically result in participatory public communication, but is influenced by the institutional roles within the government structure.

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