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Optimizing Social Media in Building School Existence (Study on Instagram account @man1palembang.official)

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Article Info	ABSTRACT
	This study aims to explain the form of social media optimization of Instagram MAN 1 Palembang in building its existence. The method used is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach and uses Media Ecology theory. The research involved five informants consisting of the vice principal for public relations, Instagram management admins, teachers, OSIM members, and students. The results of the study show that the optimization of Instagram social media @man1palembang.official Instagram account has been optimal in building the existence of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Palembang. This is shown by the increase in prospective registrations by new students, the number of impressions on posts and Instagram followers. Through various efforts in channeling effective communication, presenting interesting and relevant content, responsive interaction with the audience, both interactions in post comments and DMs (Direct Messages), and planned content management, Instagram MAN 1 Palembang has succeeded in building its existence

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INTRODUCTION

Social media is one of the results of technological developments that play an important role in facilitating communication and interaction between humans. Starting with the advent of Friendster and MySpace, followed by Facebook and Twitter, and Instagram, these platforms have driven many changes in the way humans socialize. This social media not only makes communication easier but can also obtain information easily and quickly that can be accessed by users anywhere and anytime.

One of the social media that is currently very popular is Instagram. Instagram is an app that was launched on October 6, 2010. The name "Insta" comes from the word "Instant" which means fast (related to taking photos quickly), while "Gram" comes from the word "Telegram" which means sending information quickly. The combination of these two words makes up the name Instagram.

Instagram is used as a platform to share information and communicate, but as it develops, this application also serves as a means for self-actualization. Through Instagram, a person's personality can be expressed and judged based on what they upload, whether it's photos, drawings, artwork, or visual content like videos. In 2019, Instagram in Indonesia was ranked fourth as the most widely used social media, with 80% of internet users accessing it (Restusari, 2019).

In the context of educational institutions, existence is often associated with their ability to utilize technology, including social media, to promote their excellence and achievement. The use of Instagram provides innovation for schools to keep up with the trends that are currently popular. Instagram as one of the visual-based social media, has a great attraction to display creative content that is able to reflect the identity and excellence of the institution (Arch, 2022).

To ensure its popularity, schools must identify and respond to the needs of stakeholders. This means that schools need to strive to increase inputs and resources to meet the needs in the graduate education and printing process. In addition to competing in terms of academic achievement, the school environment also competes in health aspects, as well as trying to maintain and achieve other goals to maintain the sustainability of resources (Ma'sum, 2020).

This indicates that the existence of schools in the community has an influence in determining the quality of life of the surrounding community. Rather, schools contribute to improving the quality of life of the nation and state. Superior schools will certainly produce quality graduates, who are ultimately able to create a quality society. This is the great hope of all levels of society for the role and existence of schools.

With the existence of Instagram social media, schools have the ability to expand their existence in the digital world. Instagram, as a visual-based social media platform, allows schools to display various activities, programs, and achievements in an attractive and easily accessible manner to the wider community. The existence of Instagram allows schools to reach a wider audience without geographical restrictions, so that information about the school's excellence and identity can spread faster.

Schools use the Instagram social media platform as a tool to show their existence and build an image, One of the schools that has Instagram is Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Palembang and makes Instagram MAN 1 Palembang an object of research for researchers. MAN 1 Palembang uses Instagram to build a closer relationship with the public and help MAN1 Palembang to increase public trust in the quality of education and facilities shown through Instagram.

In an effort to build an existence, through the @man1palembamg.official Instagram account, MAN 1 Palembang can interact directly with students and other Instagram users through comment columns, Direct Messages and questions, or uploading daily activities through IG Story. This interaction not only increases engagement but also helps MAN 1 Palembang understand the needs and expectations of their audience, so that they can adjust the communication process more effectively.

From the observations made by the researcher, in Instagram @man1palembang.official it was found that there were fluctuations/changes or instability that occurred up and down in the number of likes and comments. This is due to various factors such as the relevance of the content, the time of upload, the level of engagement of the audience towards the context of the published post. In addition, another factor that shows that the use of Instagram is not optimal is Instagram features such as IG live, and highlight highlights often have not been utilized so that the delivery of information tends to be monotonous through posts and reels only.

Based on the above background, the researcher is interested in finding out more about how "Instagram Social Media Optimization in Building the Existence of MAN 1 Palembang".

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used is a qualitative method with a descriptive approach. According to Cresswell (2014) in his book entitled Research Design, Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approach. Qualitative research methods are an investigative process that involves a deep understanding of social or human problems, through the analysis of non-numerical data such as interviews, observations, and texts.

The Course of Research
Observation

In this case, the researcher will observe the Instagram account of @man1palembang.official and make direct observations at the research location of the PTSP MAN 1 Palembang room and the admin who manages the MAN 1 Palembang Instagram account.

Interview

The interview will be conducted in the PTSP MAN 1 Palembang room with the resource persons who will be interviewed, including the Deputy Principal of the Public Relations department of MAN 1 Palembang and the admin who manages the MAN 1 Palembang Instagram account. The following are the names of the informants interviewed by the researcher to obtain data, including, Ahmad Alamsyah, Putra Kumbara, Emilia Agustini, Ihsan, Wafailmi

Data Analysis
Data reduction

Data reduction is a stage where researchers select data and information that has been obtained during the research process in the field. The focus in this stage is to simplify the data that has been collected.

Data presentation

In the process of presenting this data, the researcher will tell the phenomena obtained from the field by telling or presenting with text. As for data that strengthens an activity or activities from research, the researcher uses a data presentation technique with images (photos).

Data verification

The last step after the data is presented, the researcher will verify the data or what is often called conclusion drawing by telling it in the form of writing supported by valid evidence when the researcher collects data, then the conclusion that will be presented is a credible or trustworthy conclusion.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Instagram as a means of existence of MAN 1 Palembang

Instagram as a social media that plays a role in the continuity of effective communication in disseminating information, increasing interaction, and forming school identity in the digital realm (Beautiful, 2022). In today's digital era, people not only get to know a school from direct visits or word of mouth, but also through how the school presents itself on social media such as displaying academic and non-academic achievements and displaying testimonials from alumni and parents of students about their positive experiences at school so that they are known and known by the outside world easily (Nuraisah, 2024). In this case, the @man1palembang.official Instagram account is a digital representation of MAN 1 Palembang, shaping how the public sees and views MAN 1 Palembang. Informant Ahmad Alamsyah explained that MAN 1 Palembang builds its representation through Instagram social media by displaying various positive achievements and activities, so that the identity of MAN 1 Palembang is known as a school that is not only oriented to religious education but also general education.

In line with the first assumption of the theory of Media Ecology by Marshall Mcluhan which explains that media is an integral part of our lives, media envelopes our reality so that we cannot escape the media. In this case, Instagram as a medium used by MAN 1 Palemhang displays

reality that is in accordance with their goal to build the existence of MAN 1 Palembang in order to shape the perception of the public who think that schools like MAN 1 Palembang are not only superior in religious based but also superior in general lesson-based. Without Instagram social media, the reality of MAN 1 Palembang may only be known by the internal environment, but with Instagram social media, the image and existence of MAN 1 Palembang can spread more widely.

Therefore, MAN 1 Palembang cannot avoid or escape from the optimization of Instagram social media in shaping public identity and perception. Identity is divided into two types, namely physical and non-physical identities, physical identities include elements such as names, slogans, symbols, colors and symbols.

Meanwhile, non-physical identity includes aspects such as philosophy, historical background, values, and culture (Nawa, 2023). Positive perception is a person's perspective that gives a good judgment on an object or information. The word positive has a meaning that is in line with expectations for the object being observed and in accordance with the applicable provisions or norms (Fauziyah, 2022). Communication strategies through social media are an important part of building a positive and accurate image (Wulandari, 2024).

Instagram expands interacting relationships

Social media has evolved into more than just an information-sharing platform. It has become a social space and interaction that connects individuals, communities, and even institutions on a broader scale (Diyanto, 2024). For educational institutions, such as schools and universities, social media is a strategic means to build closeness virtually even without face-to-face (Asari, 2023). Through engaging and interactive uploads, institutions can build identity, strengthen existence, and create more personalized two-way communication (Fitriani, 2024).

In the case of the MAN 1 Palembang Instagram account, the admin of the @man1palembang.official Instagram management will respond if there is interaction with the audience and respond quickly and informatively. Any comments or questions about incoming schools from students, parents, alumni, or prospective students are responded to in a friendly and attentive manner.

As can be seen from the image above, it is the interaction between the Instagram admin and the audience. The interaction takes place in an Instagram feature called Direct Message (DM). DM allows the admin of the @man1palembang.official Instagram manager to have more personal and intimate conversations, where the audience can express questions, feedback, or even just send appreciation directly (Rizky, 2023). The admin of the Instagram manager seems to understand manners, namely answering greetings from the chat opponent and using formal and easy-to-understand language. Good interaction carried out by the admin of the @man1palembang.official instagram management via DM can also be an effective promotional tool, when prospective students or parents are satisfied with the response given, they are likely to recommend the school to others.

Here, the researcher sees that the interactions carried out by the Instagram admin @man1palembang.official still use a manual method in answering messages from the audience in DM (Direct Message) and have not used chatbot/AI automatic messaging technology. Researchers see that this method is not effective and efficient, especially when the volume of messages increases, so that it has the potential to cause delay in response and reduce the quality of communication services with the audience. However, based on an interview with the informant, Mr. Putra Kumbara, he admitted that when there was a message that came in the DM (Direct Message), he immediately replied and responded to it quickly, attentively and friendly.

In addition, one of the teachers at MAN 1 Palembang uses Instagram as a visual interaction medium to strengthen relationships with students outside of formal learning activities. He makes Instagram a forum for interaction and documentation of student assignments in a structured but still interesting manner. Teachers can also monitor and assess the work of their students by commenting on the account posts. Warm interactions like this are seen by the rest of the audience. The rest of the audience will judge that the interaction that occurs between teachers and students is very close.

Furthermore, MAN 1 Palembang students also like to share school posts on instastories and other social media. This will make the existence of MAN 1 Palembang more widely known. When reposting or resharing, the reach of information becomes wider, not only among students but also in their circle of friends, even to parents or the larger community. By doing this repost, it will raise questions or statements that can provoke discussion, thus encouraging active involvement of the audience in the interaction (Siallagan, 2018). Therefore, the more people who know about the activities of MAN 1 Palembang, the stronger the image and existence of MAN 1 Palembang in the eyes of the public.

Instagram optimization through content management

The thing that needs to be considered in the management of school Instagram content is to determine the identity and purpose of communication (Siti Aisyah et al., 2024). Schools must understand how they want to be known, whether as a school of excellence in academics, religious-based, or having excellence in extracurricular fields (Fitriah et al., 2024).

The theme of MAN 1 Palembang's instagram content is always adjusted to the activities that occur at MAN 1 Palembang every day. The selection of this theme is carried out flexibly, following various activities that take place, so that the content created always adjusts to the circumstances.

This activity was attended by all MAN 1 Palembang students and is an activity that is carried out routinely every Friday The theme of the content presented on the @man1palembang.official Instagram account is free and adapts to the activities. Judging from the content above, it means that the theme of this content is a religious theme. In addition, it is necessary to conduct research and observation on Instagram accounts belonging to other schools that present quality content is important, in order to get inspiration and then prepare a draft caption that is in harmony with the predetermined theme (Sinaga et al., 2024).

There are various types of activity content that are often shared on Instagram @man1palembang.official such as the content of morning ceremony activities, muhadhoroh every Friday, and late student character building activities. All uploads are presented in visual form, such as photos and videos. Character building activities are activities that are often applied by MAN 1 Palembang students. This

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activity is carried out with the aim of punishing students who are late but does not punish the students in physical form but instead educates students' morals to be better so that student discipline increases.

Departing from the perspective of Media Ecology theory, Marshall Mcluhan defines how media and communication processes affect human perception, feelings, and understanding and values adhered to. Mcluhan said that media ecology has its own advantages, where the media, in this case the content must be able to adapt to the environment or ecosystem so that it allows the content to remain relevant and in line with the development of the times (Faieq, 2023). In this case, through Instagram @man1palembang.official, the content displayed such as the character formation activities of students late can make the outside community's perspective on the punishment applied by the school not in the form of physical punishment, but this punishment is educational for character formation that aims to instill discipline, obedience, and a sense of responsibility for students. This will shape the public perception that MAN 1 Palembang is a humanist and educational school.

In addition, MAN 1 Palembang has an activity program that is favored by the school because this is an exciting activity where all parties, both teachers and students, participate in this activity. And this activity became content material for @man1palembang Instagram account. official.

The intensity of the audience towards the reels content shows a positive value, namely getting quite a lot of likes with the number of impressions or viewers up to 3,050 times and 6 shares. The like button plays an important role in influencing the reach of a photo or video posted. The more Instagram users give a like to the post, the more likely it is that the content will appear on the search page or be recommended by the Instagram system (Susilawati, 2023).
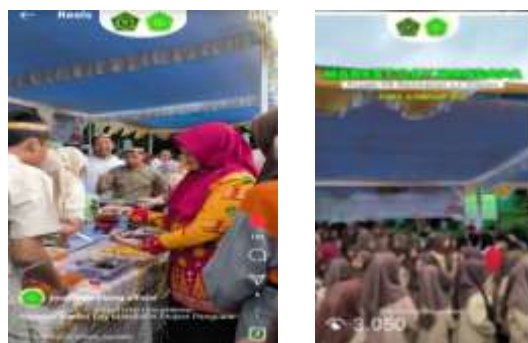
In addition to the content of school activities, Instagram @man1palembang.official also displays content from extracurricular organizations. By displaying this extracurricular content, it provides an overview of student activities that are always active as well as their social media. When Instagram @man1palembang.official always consistently posts various information, be it the content of academic activities, extracurriculars, to exciting moments for students such as class meetings, competitions, and other exciting moments, this can attract public attention.

Building a school's existence in the digital era does not only depend on academic and extracurricular activities within the school environment, but also how the school is able to display its achievements to the public (Purnomo et al., 2025). This method is also done by Instagram @man1palembang.official in showing the achievements achieved by students and is important for reputation and pride for the school.

The various efforts made in optimizing social media carried out by the @man1palembang.official Instagram account are not only through the type of content, but setting the right time schedule to upload posts on Instagram MAN 1 Palembang is also very important. The @man1palembang.official Instagram account tries to provide updated information when there is an activity, then upload it on the same day and upload 1 to 2 hours after the activity is carried out because it requires an editing process first. Maintaining a consistent content upload schedule has an impact on increasing the reach and visibility of a post on Instagram (Irawan, 2024). Instagram @man1palembang.official schedules post uploads according to the time of the activity. In addition, the @man1palembang.official Instagram account seems to avoid content accumulation, ensuring that every piece of information is conveyed properly without interfering with the publication of the next content.

Based on the observations of researchers at MAN 1 Palembang, the effect of the optimal use of MAN 1 Palembang Instagram social media produces outputs that have an impact on the admission of prospective new students so that the quota for new student admissions of MAN 1 Palembang has exceeded the targeted achievement. The use of social media provides an opportunity for schools to reach a wider audience, which ultimately impacts an increase in the number of new student enrollees (Anggelia et al., 2024).

The @man1palembang.official Instagram account uploaded a post about PPDBM 2025. The post contains information about the registration of MAN 1 Palembang which has been opened from February 02 to March 14, 2025. This post aims to invite prospective students who are looking for a school.

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The post had 10 comments, 262 likes, 41 shared marks, added to favorites 15 times and received 12,174 views. This post also reached 4.714 thousand. Based on the insights above, it can be concluded that the use of MAN 1 Palembang's Instagram social media in building its existence has been optimal. The high number of likes, comments, and interactions such as shared and added to favorites shows that the uploaded content has managed to attract attention to the audience, especially students, teachers, and the public know the existence of MAN 1 Palembang.

CONCLUSION

The optimization of Instagram social media @man1palembang.official account, has been optimal in building the existence of Madrasah Aliyah Negeri 1 Palembang, through various efforts in channeling effective communication, presenting interesting and relevant content, responsive interaction with the audience, both interaction in post comments and in DM (DirectMessage), reposting from students and teachers, setting a schedule of content, as well as the consistency of posts on activities that are often carried out. MAN 1 Palembang has succeeded in creating a positive image to the community. Instagram not only serves as a platform to disseminate information, but also as a tool to build a school identity, expand interaction relationships, and increase the interest of potential new students. The Instagram features used are optimal, but there are still features that have not been used at all such as live features and highlights. The results of the use of social media have proven to be effective in increasing new student admissions, creating a sense of pride among students, and strengthening the position of MAN 1 Palembang as an educational institution that excels in various aspects, both academic and non-academic.

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