

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SOCIAL MEDIA  
IN SUPPORTING THE PUBLIC RELATIONS ROLE OF THE INDONESIAN  
ULEMA COUNCIL IN BUILDING ORGANIZATIONAL  
IMAGE AND CREDIBILITY**

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Abstract : This study examines the public relations role of the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia/MUI) in building the organization's image and credibility through social media. Employing a qualitative approach with a case study method and social media content analysis, the findings reveal that MUI has actively utilized various social media platforms to disseminate religious information, fatwas, and relevant programs, contributing to increased public engagement. Social media has proven effective in shaping MUI's image and credibility, particularly in raising public awareness and trust in the organization. The study recommends that MUI continue to strengthen its social media strategy to build organizational image and credibility, as well as to regularly monitor and analyze the effectiveness of its social media efforts. This research provides significant implications for MUI in leveraging social media to enhance its image and organizational credibility.

Keywords: MUI, Public Relations, Effectiveness, Strategy, Social Media

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## Introduction

Public relations, as the term suggests, involves all activities related to creating and maintaining relationships with the general public (Singh & Pandey, 2017). Today, public relations (PR) is widely recognized as an essential instrument for building trust and understanding among clients, employees, and the broader public (Smith, 2016). The use of communication to create and maintain goodwill remains a central topic in public relations discourse.

One of the primary objectives of public relations is to build the company's image. To leave a positive impression in the public eye, one way is by articulating the company's identity. The operational model developed by Gray and Balmer in 1998 illustrates the connection between public relations and corporate image. It is evident that corporate identity and reputation are reflections of that identity. Moreover, a positive reputation and image can yield significant advantages for a business. In relation to public relations, it can be stated that one of its main functions is corporate communication.

Public relations can significantly influence public awareness at a lower cost compared to advertising. For instance, organizations often attract media attention through the information they disseminate. According to Lynn (1999), public relations efforts undeniably enhance the economic value of financial institutions by establishing brand recognition and public awareness. According to industry standards, PR goals may vary depending on the desired outcomes of each organization.

Effective communication is crucial for information dissemination, and public relations plays a key role in connecting organizations with the public by ensuring message delivery, meeting public needs, and fostering trust and a positive image (Sekar, 2023). Rosady Ruslan notes that PR serves as a bridge between organizations and the public by facilitating two-way communication. This means PR does not merely deliver messages but also gathers feedback to meet public needs, build trust, maintain harmony, and support organizational success (Rosady, 2017).

Public relations holds a strategic role in various organizations, including the Indonesian Ulema Council (Majelis Ulama Indonesia, or MUI), which serves society through religious fatwas and sharia compliance oversight. MUI's PR is responsible for maintaining relationships with religious groups and the public, addressing religious issues, and educating the community, including promoting halal products to MSMEs and other businesses (Ansori, 2020).

As one of the largest religious organizations in Indonesia, MUI plays a pivotal role in shaping and nurturing religious life in the country. In today's digital era, MUI has also adopted social media as a communication tool to build organizational image and credibility. In the context of public relations, MUI must implement strategic communication planning to foster a positive image this includes managing content in accordance with Islamic values and ethical standards for social media communication.

MUI must be prepared to address the negative challenges arising from social media use, such as the spread of misinformation or public criticism. By improving service quality through well-managed information, data, and publication systems that meet public needs, satisfaction can be enhanced. Additionally, listening to public complaints, criticism, and suggestions and responding appropriately can help the organization maintain a positive image and protect its reputation.

The presence of a public relations function is essential for maintaining an organization's reputation, and this is achieved through strategic communication.

However, it is not the sole responsibility of the PR department rather, all internal elements of the organization must support and strengthen one another to ensure institutional reputation and continuity.

Through the Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH), a non-ministerial government institution directly accountable to the President of the Republic of Indonesia, MUI supports halal certification processes. Established under Presidential Regulation No. 153 of 2024, BPJPH serves as the primary authority for halal product assurance in Indonesia in accordance with Law No. 33 of 2014 concerning Halal Product Assurance.

BPJPH defines halal products as goods or services that comply with Islamic law, are free from prohibited substances such as pork and alcohol, and are processed according to sharia guidelines (BPJPH, Head Regulation No. 20 of 2023). One of the most commonly used and consumed halal product types by the public is food, largely produced by MSMEs.

With strategic planning and effective communication, MUI can continue to play a significant role in Indonesian society in this digital age. However, the increasing use of social media presents greater challenges in building and maintaining organizational image and credibility. Therefore, it is important to analyze the effectiveness of social media in supporting MUI's public relations efforts in this regard.

The findings of this study are expected to benefit MUI in understanding the effectiveness of social media in fulfilling its public relations function and contribute to the development of organizational communication theory and practice.

### **Research Methodology**

This study employs a qualitative approach focused on understanding social phenomena through narrative description. In this research, the researcher serves as the primary instrument responsible for interpreting various events, behaviors, perceptions, and social activities at both individual and group levels. The approach aims to explore and analyze phenomena in-depth to gain a comprehensive understanding. It is chosen because it enables the researcher to thoroughly examine how social media is used by the public relations division of MUI as a strategic communication tool for building the organization's image and credibility.

To support the data collection process, the researcher prepared several instruments, including analysis of the BPJPH MUI website, interactions on social media platforms, and in-depth interviews with MUI officials, particularly the Human Resource (HR) admin, to ensure that the data obtained is detailed, accurate, and aligned with the research objectives (Marinu, 2023). This study also adopts a case study approach, focusing on specific social media accounts managed by MUI.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the HR Admin to gain in-depth insights into the communication strategies employed and their perceptions of MUI's image and credibility. These interviews allowed the researcher to explore subjective views and individual experiences related to the BPJPH website. The researcher also carried out direct observations of MUI admin activities, such as participatory observation, which indicated that MUI has been effectively using social media in building organizational image and credibility. These observations were conducted either directly or through content analysis of previously published materials.

Content analysis techniques were employed to evaluate the types and themes of content shared by MUI on social media. This includes textual analysis to identify

frequently discussed keywords and topics, as well as sentiment analysis to determine whether public responses to the content were positive, negative, or neutral. Documentation was used to gather secondary data in the form of social media content. However, there remain areas for improvement, such as enhancing content quality, increasing posting frequency, and improving engagement with the public.

This approach is used to gain a deep understanding of social phenomena. In the context of this study, the qualitative method enables the researcher to explore how MUI utilizes social media in its public relations efforts and how audiences respond to the content shared. The study also adopts a case study approach focusing on selected MUI social media accounts. Through an in-depth analysis of one or more cases, the researcher aims to draw conclusions about best practices and challenges encountered in building a public image through social media.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **The Concept of Public Relations**

Public relations theory explains that public relations is the process of building and maintaining relationships between an organization and its publics. In the context of MUI's public relations, the use of social media serves as a strategy to build the organization's image and credibility. Public relations via digital platforms refers to the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) and social media as tools for managing communication between an organization and its audience. According to Huang et al. (2017), digital public relations promote direct interaction with the public and provide channels for information dissemination, which are crucial for developing interaction.

In the case of MUI, this involves using social media platforms to disseminate religious messages and information. Communication is a process of exchanging information between two or more parties. The two-way communication theory is highly relevant in the context of MUI's public relations on social media. Social media enables dynamic interactions between MUI and the public, allowing for direct feedback and public responses. This aligns with Kent & Taylor's interactive communication model, which emphasizes the importance of transparency and information accessibility. Such an approach allows MUI to enhance public engagement and build a positive image. Therefore, social media communication is a key tool in building organizational image and credibility.

MUI's public relations division plays an essential role in shaping the organization's image and credibility. By understanding public relations theories, as well as the concepts of image and credibility, MUI can enhance its communication capabilities in establishing strong public relationships. Organizational image refers to public perception of the organization, which affects trust and loyalty. Organizational credibility, on the other hand, refers to the institution's ability to fulfill its promises and commitments, impacting public trust.

In this regard, MUI's public relations holds broader responsibilities beyond information dissemination. As a mediator between the institution and the public, it must effectively leverage digital platforms to enhance organizational communication. Social media serves as a strategic tool to reinforce MUI's institutional presence. By integrating technology, creative storytelling, and community collaboration, public relations can optimize the use of social media to strengthen institutional reputation. However, this role requires a continued commitment to adapting to technological and

social changes. Through a holistic and flexible approach, MUI's public relations can establish a strong, credible, and sustainable image.

### **Social Media**

The emergence of the internet as a modern communication medium has significantly transformed the way people interact. Nearly everyone now possesses communication devices that allow them to connect globally through social media (Sari, 2018). Social media is an online platform where users can easily participate, share, and create content, including blogs, social networks, wikis, forums, and virtual worlds. Among these, blogs and social networks are the most commonly used forms worldwide (Ainiyah, 2018).

There are various types of social media widely recognized by the public. According to research by We Are Social, the most popular platforms among Indonesians include YouTube, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. Social media can be integrated across sectors to disseminate content that aligns with target audiences and serves organizational vision, mission, and goals (Nuzulita, 2022).

Based on research findings, MUI utilizes several social media platforms such as Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook to disseminate information and engage directly with the public. This improves organizational transparency and strengthens public relations. The two-way interactions facilitated by social media enable MUI to respond swiftly and appropriately to emerging issues, thereby fostering sustainable public trust.

MUI's social media is managed with a strategic plan, including the development of content aligned with Islamic values and fatwa guidelines, such as Fatwa No. 24 of 2017 on ethical social media usage. The content provided is not only informative but also educational, thereby enhancing MUI's credibility as a trustworthy source of religious guidance.

### **Strategy from the BPJPH Website**

The Halal Product Assurance Organizing Agency (BPJPH) is a non-ministerial government institution (LPNK) directly accountable to the President of the Republic of Indonesia. Established under Presidential Regulation No. 153 of 2024, BPJPH is the main authority responsible for managing halal product assurance in Indonesia, as mandated by Law No. 33 of 2014 on Halal Product Assurance.

According to BPJPH Regulation No. 1 of 2024, the agency's organizational structure consists of:

1. Head of BPJPH: Leads and oversees the agency's operations.
2. Deputy Head: Assists the Head in executing BPJPH's tasks and functions.
3. Main Secretariat: Coordinates administrative functions and operational support services.
4. Deputy for Partnership and Halal Standardization: Manages strategic partnerships and develops halal standards.
5. Deputy for Halal Registration and Certification: Handles the halal registration and certification processes.
6. Deputy for Guidance and Supervision of Halal Product Assurance: Oversees the implementation and monitoring of halal product assurance systems.

Based on Law No. 33 of 2014, BPJPH is authorized to:

- a. Formulate and determine policies related to halal product assurance (JPH);
- b. Establish norms, standards, procedures, and criteria;

- c. Issue and revoke halal certificates and labels;
- d. Register halal certificates for foreign products;
- e. Conduct socialization, education, and publication of halal products;
- f. Accredite Halal Inspection Bodies (LPH);
- g. Register Halal Auditors;
- h. Monitor halal product assurance systems;
- i. Provide training to Halal Auditors; and
- j. Cooperate with domestic and international institutions in implementing halal product assurance.

To carry out JPH, BPJPH collaborates with ministries/agencies, LPHs, Halal Product Process Assistance Institutions (LP3Hs), the Indonesian Ulema Council (MUI), and the Halal Product Fatwa Committee. BPJPH also engages in international cooperation related to halal assurance.

Domestically, BPJPH partners with stakeholders including government ministries, regional governments, SOEs, private sectors, universities, business associations, civil society organizations, training institutions, halal centers, and others. BPJPH continues to expand its synergy to strengthen halal assurance implementation.

Through these initiatives and strategic innovations, BPJPH accelerates halal certification processes and strengthens Indonesia's halal ecosystem. The ultimate goal is to realize Indonesia's vision of becoming the world's number one halal product producer.

## **Conclusion**

MUI has actively utilized various social media platforms to disseminate religious information, fatwas, and relevant programs, which have contributed to increased public engagement. Social media has proven effective in building MUI's image and credibility, particularly in enhancing public awareness and trust toward the organization. Therefore, MUI needs to continuously strengthen its social media strategies to further reinforce its organizational image and credibility.

There are important implications for MUI in leveraging social media to build its image and credibility. MUI must improve the quality of its social media content to support its reputation and public perception. Additionally, it is essential for MUI to regularly monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its social media platforms to ensure that its strategies remain impactful and aligned with its institutional goals.

Overall, this study confirms that the effectiveness of social media in supporting MUI's public relations efforts highly depends on the organization's ability to adapt to digital dynamics and foster constructive relationships with the public. Recommendations for MUI include enhancing digital literacy and implementing more rigorous oversight of the content being disseminated, to maintain a sustainable and positive public image. Consequently, it is crucial for MUI to regularly assess the performance of its social media initiatives to ensure the continued success of its image-building strategies.

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