

PROMOTING VOCATIONAL EDUCATION INSTITUTION THROUGH INSTAGRAM: EVIDENCE FROM THE INSTAGRAM ACCOUNTS OF MAJOR POLYTECHNICS IN INDONESIA

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Abstract: The use of Social Media (i.e. Instagram) allows the vocational education institutions in Indonesia to communicate to broader target audiences effectively and efficiently. By using the platform, they promote various types of posts dedicated to the diverse stakeholder of the institution. Considering the unpopularity of vocational/polytechnic education in Indonesia, promoting such education through Instagram should be performed appropriately. Therefore, determining which content categories that could attract more attention and differentiate a polytechnic education institution from other polytechnic campuses is become paramount. This study aims to investigate the content categories of Instagram posts presented by the main polytechnic institutions in Indonesia in reaching their target audiences and the various categories associated with different polytechnic campuses. Results of visual content analyses and correspondence analysis revealed that “*Campus Life*” and “*Event*” as the most presented categories, while “*Alumni*”, “*Prospective Student*”, and “*Promotion*” were noted as the less presented categories in the Instagram accounts studied. Importantly, each polytechnic campus tends to be associated with different content categories. In addition, other conclusions related to the field of research and practice of higher education marketing are also formulated.

Keywords: *Promotion, Polytechnic education, Social media, Instagram, Correspondence analysis*

1. Introduction

The use of Instagram as a communication and marketing channel has become increasingly widespread nowadays (Belanche, Flavián, & Ibáñez-Sánchez, 2020). Various organizations and products use the platform extensively to be able to communicate with their stakeholders (Latiff & Safiee, 2015) and further overcome communication problems related to distance, time, and cost (Leung, Lo, Fong, & Law, 2015). A similar situation also applied within the context of higher education, particularly the vocational education institution in Indonesia. As the Government plans to revitalize and promote vocational educations in supporting the national development programme, polytechnic campuses start to establish a close relationship with their strategic stakeholders. In doing so, they utilize various social media channels to be able to communicate effectively with the stakeholders.

One of the social media platforms used extensively by polytechnic campuses in promoting their vocational education is Instagram. As a visual content-based social media platform, Instagram

has a distinctive factor compared to other platforms, namely, Instagram is primarily aimed at smartphone users (Salleh, Hashima, & Murphy, 2015). Consequently, along with the increasing number of smartphone users who continue to grow (Gössling, 2021), the number of Instagram users has also increased significantly (del Rocío Bonilla, Perea, del Olmo, & Corrons, 2020). In 2019, approximately 815 million people used the photo-sharing platform Instagram at least once a month. Currently, Instagram has nearly 1.2 billion active users worldwide (Statista, 2022) and shares about 95 million photos and videos daily on the social media platform (Lister, 2022).

By managing such social media, polytechnic institutions could post various types of content in order to communicate and promote the benefits of learning vocational educations. Moreover, they also use different graphic visuals like photographs, videos, and infographics in conveying the strategic promotional messages to their main stakeholders such as prospective students, industries, parents, government, alumni, employees/lecturers, and alumni.

From the stakeholder's perspective (i.e. prospective students), the official Instagram account of the polytechnic campus also could provide considerable benefits for them. Such benefit particularly is the platform could serve as a trusted source of information in collecting important information related to the educational institutions. Moreover, stakeholders are also allowed to search, collect, and evaluate various information related to the vocational education system by accessing the official Instagram account of the polytechnic campus before a decision to study in such a vocational education institution.

Interestingly, Instagram is also recognized as a prevalent social media and used widely by adolescents that in general are also considered as the potential markets for polytechnic campuses. The potential benefits of the use of Instagram as a promotional vehicle for education institutions further stimulated the emergence of various studies on this field of research. One of the first studies in this field conducted by Zachos, Paraskevopoulou-Kollia, & Anagnostopoulos (2018), found that Instagram was tremendously used by students and lecturers for various academic and non-academic purposes like "support", "educational process", "academic performance", and "communication and collaboration". In line with the previous result, social media (e.g. Instagram) was also found as one of the influential social media for prospective students in their decision to participate in a university matriculation event (Shields & Peruta, 2018). Interestingly, Instagram has proven to be a useful social media platform for marketing higher education institutions (Rusle, Jamil, Zolkipli, & Shaharane, 2021).

Table 1. The statistics of higher education in Indonesia

| Types of education | Number of Institution | Number of New Student | Number of Enrolled Student |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|
| Universitas/Institut/Sekolah Tinggi | 3.403 | 1.983.796 | 7.981.059 |
| Politeknik/Akademi Komunitas | 1.190 | 179.886 | 502.154 |

Source : Higher Education Statistics 2020

Despite previous studies on the use of Instagram as a promotion tool for higher education institutions, none of the studies focused on the promotional effort concerning the vocational education institution in Indonesia. The government's focus on developing and advancing vocational education in Indonesia has not been responded positively by stakeholders (especially the prospective students). Moreover, such situation also reflected the low interest of high school graduates to continue their study at campuses that offer vocational education (table 1). Such a situation is very unfortunate given the fact that the government's focus on developing and advancing vocational education in Indonesia nowadays.

Considering the previous-mentioned situation, the vocational education institutions in Indonesia need to enhance their promotional efforts in various available social media

particularly on Instagram (as one of the popular social media in adolescents). Although the use of Instagram is quite common in the context of vocational education institutions, an effort to improve the use of such medium as a promotional tool is needed. Therefore, this current study aims to reveal the promotional efforts performed by the Polytechnic campuses, identify which Polytechnic campus associated closely with different types of categories of promotional content on the Instagram used to convey information to stakeholders, disclose the relative differentiate promotional content conducted by the Polytechnic campuses through their Instagram accounts, and further identify different types of positioning strategies applied by the Polytechnic campuses in promoting and communicating their institution to its stakeholders.

2. Literature Review

Computer mediated communication

The increasingly complex human life signified the integrated use of the internet and communication technology in almost every aspect of life. Through the use of these technologies, humans could spread and exchange information. Moreover, it also allows people to interact with each other with more flexibility. Such a phenomenon is referred to by many scholars as Computer-Mediated Communication (CMC).

CMC is a symbolic text-based interaction between humans facilitated through digital-based technology, such as the Internet, cell phone text, instant messaging (IM), email, and other types of digital technology (Spitzberg, 2006). In line with the previous definition, Lee (2020) argued that CMC is a term that includes various forms of human communication performed over networked computers, can be synchronous or asynchronous, and involve one-to-one, one-to-many, or many-to-many exchanges.

In the beginning, communication activities that can be categorized as CMC were relatively few and more related to textual materials (such as exchanging/sending and receiving e-mails, exchanging messages through web applications, and downloading or uploading files from a computer device) (Carr, 2020). However, nowadays it evolves and tends to be varied due to the massive use of different social media in our daily life (Yan, Tan, Jia, & Akram, 2020). Writing a review in an online review site, giving *like* and/or *comment* are some examples of new activities that commonly performed when people involved in a communication process take place in social media (Schneebeli, 2019). In other words, it is proper to say that the use of social media has been demonstrated to have a major impact on the development and expansion of CMC.

Social Media (Marketing) in Higher Education

Social media enables its users to conduct information exchange activities and share word of mouth communication electronically (Tham, Croy, & Mair, 2013). Moreover, the current development showed that social media as communication media were increasingly get broader acceptance both from individuals and organizations (Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2011). The evidence of such acceptance reflected from the number of the social media users, which currently reach over 2 billion user across all social media platforms around the world. Such amount equivalent to 29 percent of the world's total population (European Publisher Council, 2105).

When defining social media, scholars refer to various different terms such as, social software, social websites, consumer-generated media, user-generated media, user-generated content websites and web 2.0 (Fotis, Buhalis, & Rossides, 2011). Despite the disagreement, there are several definitions that tend to gain wide acceptance and often cited in various studies. One of the definitions proposed by (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2011), where they defined social media as “a

group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content". Other definition proposed by (Lange-Faria & Elliot, 2012), who explain that in general, social media are web application which enable the participants to state their expression and share it to other users. Similarly, most scholars also come out with different categories when classifying social media (Alizadeh & Mat Isa, 2015). According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2011), there are six general types of social media namely, social networking sites, blogs, content communities, collaborative projects, virtual social worlds, and virtual game worlds.

The variety of social media platforms that is existed provided a broader choice for marketers in promoting their products and communicating with their target markets. In the context of higher education, social media is also used as a means of effective communication and marketing by various campuses across the world. One of the popular social media that are used extensively by higher education institution and younger generation is Instagram (Ramadanty, Safitri, & Suhendra, 2020). Such a situation further stimulates the emergence of various studies that investigate the use of social media (Instagram) as the platform for the promotion and communication within the context of higher education institutions.

One of the first studies in this field conducted by Zachos et al. (2018), found that Instagram was tremendously used by students and lecturers for various academic and non-academic purposes like "support", "educational process", "academic performance", and "communication and collaboration". In line with the previous result, social media (e.g. Instagram) was also found as one of the influential social media for prospective students in their decision to participate in a university matriculation event (Shields & Peruta, 2018). Interestingly, Instagram has proven to be a useful social media platform for marketing higher education institutions (Rusle et al., 2021).

3. Method

This current study observed three official Instagram accounts of major Polytechnics campuses in Indonesia namely Politeknik Elektronika Negeri Surabaya (PENS), Politeknik Negeri Jakarta (PNJ), and Politeknik Negeri Batam (Polibatam) (table 2). The accounts from the three institutions were chosen because they representing the best Instagram accounts of the 2019 DIKTI (Directorate General of Higher Education, Ministry of Education and Culture the Republic of Indonesia) Public Relations Award. As for the data collection, we analysed and categorized posts from the three Instagram accounts during the period of 1 January 2019 – 31 December 2019.

Table 2. Instagram Account of Polytechnic Campuses (DIKTI's PR Award 2019 Winner)

| No. | Vocational Institution | Instagram Address |
|-----|---|---|
| 1. | Politeknik Elektronika Negeri Surabaya (PENS) | https://www.instagram.com/penseepis/ |
| 2. | Politeknik Negeri Jakarta (PNJ) | https://www.instagram.com/politekniknegerijakarta/ |
| 3. | Politeknik Negeri Batam (Polibatam) | https://www.instagram.com/polibatamofficial/ |

In total, this study collected 800 images posted on the Instagram accounts of the three campuses observed during the data collection period. As illustrated in table 3, of the total number of photos, a total of 504 photographs (63%) came from the posts of the PENS Instagram account. Moreover, 143 photos (17.9%) were gathered from the PNJ Instagram account, while the remaining 153 photos (19.1%) were collected from the Polibatam Instagram account.

Table 3. Number of Post Analysed from the Instagram Accounts

| No. | University | Sample Post |
|-----|---|-------------|
| 1. | Politeknik Elektronika Negeri Surabaya (PENS) | 504 |
| 2. | Politeknik Negeri Jakarta (PNJ) | 143 |
| 3. | Politeknik Negeri Batam (Polibatam) | 153 |
| | Total | 800 |

After the data collection process completed, a visual content analysis technique was applied to all the data (photographs) collected. Accordingly, each photo on the Instagram accounts was classified into one of the nine categories adopted from (Ramadanty et al., 2020) namely, “Event”, “Promotion”, “Achievement”, “Campus-Life”, “Alumni”, “Prospective Students”, “Research/Collaboration/Community Development”, “Covid 19 Info”, and “Overall Info”. As presented in table 4, the previous-mentioned categories were further defined according to the research purposes. This is mainly done to make it easier for coders in this study to classify Instagram account posts into one of these categories.

Table 4. Content categories and definitions

| Type Content | Information Category |
|--|--|
| Event | Various types of activities that will be held by the study program or higher education institution |
| Promotion | Information regarding the introduction of study programs and universities, including campus facilities |
| Achievement | Information about student achievements, lecturers’ achievements, and achievements of higher education institution |
| Campus Life | Information about activities related to campus life from the side of students or lecturers at the higher education institution |
| Alumni | Information about achievements, collaborations, and alumni engagement activities |
| Prospective Students | Information related to scholarships and activities intended for prospective students by study programs or higher education institution |
| Research/Collaboration/Community Development | Research activities/results and information on community/community service activities carried out by lecturers and students |
| Covid-19 Info | Information related to health protocol, learning processes and other info related Covid 19 pandemic for lecturers, students, prospective students and other stakeholders |
| Overall Info | Information regarding other information but still related to study programs and higher education institution |

In order to assure the reliability of the collected data, an inter-coder analysis was performed for this study. Such an analysis was conducted by calculating the proportion agreement between the first and the second coder on the 30% sample of the posts based on the categories proposed earlier. Subsequently, the proportion agreement was divided by the total case observed in this study. The result of the inter-coder reliability showed that there was 88.87% agreement (711 cases) between the two coders. Accordingly, the data analysed in this study was considered reliable.

Correspondence analysis

After finishing the visual content analysis, this study assessed the comparison of polytechnics’ relative position based on the different categorizations projected on Instagram. This analysis enables the visualization of two sets categorical data concurrently in a multiple dimensional perceptual map. Consequently, it allows the study to identify the propensity of Instagram posts presented by the three polytechnic campuses. By using such an analysis, this study also

assessed the different position of each polytechnic campuses in promoting and communicating their organizations to their stakeholders.

4. Result and Discussion

The main purposes of this current study are to reveal the promotional efforts performed by the Polytechnic campuses through their Instagram accounts, identify which Polytechnic campus associated with different types of categories of promotional content, disclose the relative differences of such content, and identify different types of positioning strategies applied by the Polytechnic campuses in promoting and communicating their institution to its stakeholders. In order to accomplish the previously – mentioned objectives, a series of analyses (visual content analysis and correspondence analysis) were performed.

The general result of the content analysis is summarized in table 5 below. The table shows that “*Campus Life*” and “*Event*” are the two top categories on the Instagram account of PENS. As for PNJ, “*Covid 19 Info*” and “*Event*” find as the categories that appear most frequently in its Instagram account, while for Polibatam, “*Event*” and “*Campus Life*” appear as the two most often occurring categories. On the contrary, “*Alumni*” and “*Prospective Student*” turn up as the categories that are rarely displayed by Instagram accounts of PENS and PNJ. Slightly different findings show in the context of Polibatam, where “*Promotion*” and “*Prospective Students*” appear as the least categories presented in its Instagram account.

Table 5. The Frequency of Content Categories in the Polytechnic Instagram Accounts

| Category | Polytechnic Campus | | |
|-------------------------------|--------------------|-------------|------------|
| | PENS | PNJ | Polibatam |
| Event | 136 (26.9%) | 31 (21.7%) | 43 (28.1%) |
| Promotion | 7 | 8 | 2 (1.3%) |
| Achievement | 58 | 5 | 19 |
| Campus Life | 204 (40.5%) | 27 | 29 (18.9%) |
| Alumni | 0 (0%) | 1 (0.7%) | 6 |
| Prospective Students | 5 (1%) | 1 (0.7%) | 4 (2.61%) |
| Research /Colaboration/ComDev | 30 | 9 | 16 |
| Covid-19 Info | 52 | 55 (38.47%) | 25 |
| Overall Info | 12 | 6 | 9 |
| Total | 504 (100%) | 143 (100%) | 153 (100%) |

In addition to the visual content analysis, this current study also performed a correspondence analysis. The summary of correspondence analysis (table 6) showed a significant χ^2 value of 131.040 ($p < 001$) that indicated significant differences among the Polytechnic campuses categories posts on their official Instagram accounts. In other words, there were significant differences between the Polytechnic campuses projected categories on their Instagram accounts.

Moreover, it exhibited the singular values of the first two dimensions (.339 and .221 respectively). Since the values were greater than 0.2, a two dimensions solution was deemed suitable for this analysis. Furthermore, the table also showed that the first dimension explained 70.1% of total inertia in the model, while dimension 2 explained 29.9% of total inertia in the model. A two-dimensional solution is considered appropriate for this analysis.

Table 6. Summary of correspondence analysis

| Dimension | Singular Value | Inertia | χ^2 | Sig | Proportion of Inertia | | Confidence Standard Deviation | Singular Value Correlation |
|-----------|----------------|---------|----------|-------------------|-----------------------|------------|-------------------------------|----------------------------|
| | | | | | Accounted for | Cumulative | | |
| 1 | .339 | .115 | | | .701 | .701 | .036 | .069 |
| 2 | .221 | .049 | | | .299 | 1.000 | .040 | |
| Total | | .164 | 131.040 | .000 ^a | 1.000 | 1.000 | | |

Importantly, the result of the further analysis on the correspondence analysis (as illustrated in table 7 below) also indicates that the two dimensions contribution in the analysis explaining the variance of all Polytechnic campuses posts (PENS, PNJ, and, Polibatam) are 100%. Accordingly, none of the information related to the Polytechnics’ Instagram posts in this study is lost. Therefore, the perceptual map presented in this study managed to describe the posting trend of each Instagram account studied accurately.

Table 7. Dimensions and correspondence

| Polytechnic Campus | Mass | Score in dimension | | Inertia | Contribution | | | | Total |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|-------|---------|----------------------------------|-------|----------------------------------|------|-------|
| | | 1 | 2 | | Of Point to Inertia of Dimension | | Of Dimension to inertia of Point | | |
| | | | | | 1 | 2 | 1 | 2 | |
| PENS | .630 | -.404 | .153 | .038 | .303 | .067 | .914 | .086 | 1.000 |
| PNJ | .179 | 1.108 | .464 | .083 | .648 | .174 | .898 | .102 | 1.000 |
| Polibatam | .191 | .295 | -.937 | .043 | .049 | .760 | .132 | .868 | 1.000 |
| Active total | 1.000 | | | .164 | 1.000 | 1.000 | | | |

Finally, the two – dimensional perceptual map (as seen in figure 1) shows that the three polytechnic campuses are situated in different positions from each other. Consequently, each polytechnic campus also tends to be associated with different content categories. In particular, PENS is associated with only one category, namely the “*Campus life*”. While PNJ is associated with two different categories which are “*General/Covid Info*” and “*Promotion*”. As for Polibatam, the campus tends to be associated with two different categories namely “*Other*” and “*Prospective Student*”.

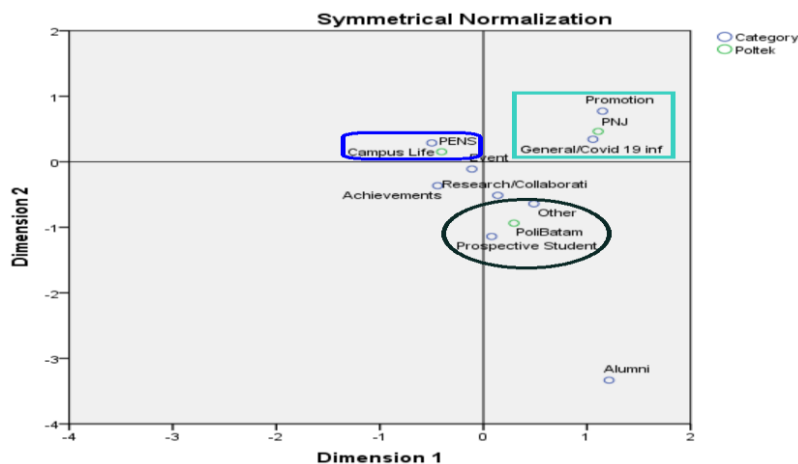


Figure 1. Campus Life

5. Conclusion

In general, the three Polytechnic campuses in this study apply different approaches in promoting and communicating their institution to their target audience. Furthermore, the difference in how each Polytechnic communicates promotional messages through Instagram also demonstrated the different strategies in promoting their campus to the public. Importantly, each polytechnic campus tends to be associated with different content categories. Moreover, the differences in the presentation of promotional content categories are also reflecting the Polytechnics' positioning for its stakeholders. PENS is associated closely with “*Campus Life*”, PNJ is associated with “*General/Covid Info*”, and “*Promotion*”, while Polibatam is associated with “*Other*” and “*Prospective Student*”.

Interestingly, “*Campus Life*” and “*Event*” were found as the most presented categories. “*Alumni*”, “*Prospective Student*”, and “*Promotion*” were noted as the less presented categories in the Instagram accounts studied. Such propensity indicated that the polytechnic campuses in this study tend to be internally oriented rather than externally in conducting their communication and promotional activities through the official Instagram accounts. Therefore, the polytechnic campuses should expand their promotional efforts by presenting various types of posts that are dedicated primarily to the external target audiences. All in all, the polytechnic campuses should adapt different strategies and positioning depending on who are the priority targets (the main stakeholders) of their promotional efforts.

Limitation

This study, like any other, has several limitations that present potential investigation for further research. First, this study only took into account the image posted on the Instagram accounts and disregarded the accompanying text (caption) of the photographs. Therefore, future study in this field should consider to incorporate the visual content analysis along with analysis of the caption (text analysis).

Another limitation, the study was limited its analysis to only single social media platform (i.e. Instagram). Consequently, we suggest that future study should consider to investigate the use of different type social media utilized by Polytechnic campuses (e.g. Youtube, Tik Tok, Twitter, etc) in promoting their institution. Finally, this current study limited its analysis only to three polytechnic campuses in Indonesia. Such limitation further restricting the generalizability of results of this study. Future studies should consider to analyse more Instagram accounts from different polytechnic campuses in Indonesia and abroad.

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