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## The Utilization of Social Media as an Information Platform for Hajj by the Ministry of Religious Affairs (A Descriptive Analysis of the Instagram Account @informasihaji)

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**Abstract:** The increasing number of prospective Hajj and Umrah pilgrims each year impacts the information management system that must be communicated to the pilgrims. Effective and efficient dissemination of information is crucial in the organization of Hajj and Umrah, serving as a preventive measure against misinformation and requiring various information to be socialized to the public. This study analyzed the utilization of the social media platform Instagram as an information medium for Hajj by the Ministry of Religious Affairs through the account @informasihaji. We employed a descriptive qualitative method. The data collection techniques used documentation of information and posts on the @informasihaji Instagram account, encompassing images, videos, and captions. For the data analysis, the Miles and Huberman theory was used. The findings indicate that the @informasihaji account has successfully provided timely and easily understandable information through a variety of visual posts and collaborations with other accounts. However, some shortcomings remain, such as an unorganized feed layout and a lack of two-way interaction with followers. In the context of Media Richness Theory, this account reflects aspects like quick feedback and variety in cues, but there is still room for improvement in forming a more personal connection with its followers.

**Keywords:** Instagram, Social Media, Hajj Information

### INTRODUCTION

Social media represents a communication activity that utilizes tools to improve users' ability to collaborate and share with one another. In other words, social media is a tool that leverages the internet to facilitate interaction between people (Nasrullah, 2015). The ease with which society can access social media significantly impacts the flow of information (Adani, 2020).

In January 2024, the media company We Are Social reported that there are 167 million active social media users in Indonesia. This figure represents 60.4% of the total population in Indonesia, comprising millennials and Generation Z (ages 16-41). This data also reveals that

WhatsApp is the most widely used social media platform, with a usage rate of 90.9%, followed by Instagram at 85.3%. Facebook and TikTok hold the third and fourth positions with usage rates of 81.6% and 73.5%, respectively (We Are Social, 2024).

Referring to the data above, Instagram, with 85.3% user penetration, is the most widely used social media platform in Indonesia after WhatsApp. Instagram is popular among people from teenage to adult age groups, primarily because of its user-friendly interface and features. According to Damayanti et al. (2023), the dissemination of information to the public through Instagram's design significantly influences public interest. Fundamentally, people prefer visual content over extensive text. Desfiana and Karsa (2021) also argue that the higher the quality of content on Instagram, the better it meets users' information and educational needs.

At the moment, the use of social media platforms like Instagram has been very popular among organizations, companies, and government agencies for communication and publication purposes (Nafsyah et al., 2022). The Instagram account "Informasi Haji" is utilized as a medium for disseminating public information, particularly to prospective Hajj pilgrims, by the Public Relations of the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah (Ditjen PHU), which is directly accountable to the Minister of Religious Affairs. As a crucial component of an institution, public relations practitioners are required to maximize their performance and role, including the dissemination of information and publication regarding the operational activities of the relevant institution to both internal and external parties.

Public Relations (PR) serve as intermediaries in disseminating information, with the task of transforming institutional or leadership policies into information suitable for public dissemination to meet information needs. A critical aspect of information dissemination efforts is that PR must convey information concretely, in an updated, innovative, and credible manner through various postings on publication media or social media, particularly regarding Hajj and Umrah information. The PR of the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah (Ditjen PHU) has used several social media platforms for Hajj and Umrah information and socialization, including Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, websites, and TikTok. This approach aims to facilitate and optimize service delivery through social media as a means of providing information and socialization about Hajj and Umrah by Ditjen PHU.

The phenomenon found for this study is that the majority of prospective Hajj pilgrims are novices, meaning they are performing Hajj for the first time and thus are lack knowledge and experience about the pilgrimage. Novice pilgrims typically receive information about Hajj through *manasik* (ritual guidance) or training from their respective KBIH (Hajj Guidance Groups). Changes in policies or new regulations related to Hajj and Umrah organization each year are also noteworthy. For example, policies such as quota increases, embarkation, and immigration. Therefore, it becomes essential to socialize Hajj services, especially to novice pilgrims.

According to the data from the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia, the Hajj quota for Indonesia in 2024 is 241,000 pilgrims, consisting of 213,320 regular quotas and 27,680 special quotas. With the increasing number of prospective Hajj and Umrah pilgrims each year, there will inevitably be an impact on the information management system that must be communicated to the pilgrims. An effective and efficient process of information dissemination is crucial in the organization of Hajj and Umrah, as it serves to prevent misinformation and demands that various information be socialized to the public.

Based on the above background, this study was then aimed to analyze the utilization of the Instagram account @informasihaji as an information platform for its followers and provide recommendations for improving the quality of Hajj information services managed by the Public Relations of the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method (Sugiyono, 2015). The data presentation in qualitative research consists of text and non-numeric descriptions. Qualitative research provides detailed and clear explanations through detailed and explicit expressions (Musfiquon, 2016). The data collection technique used was documentation of information and posts on the @informasihaji account. The types of data included primary and secondary data. For the primary data, the researcher used tools to observe the research object, such as images, videos, and captions (texts) found on the Instagram account @informasihaji (Hasanah, 2017). The secondary data was obtained from journals and previous research, which was then reviewed thoroughly and meticulously.

The data analysis used the Miles and Huberman theory. In the first stage, the researcher collected and searched for data on the Instagram account @informasihaji in the form of documentation of posts relevant to the research. In the data presentation stage, the researcher organized and analyzed the posts on the @informasihaji account. Finally, conclusions were drawn from the data analysis obtained.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study employed the Media Richness Theory. The Public Relations of the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah (Ditjen PHU) has appropriately chosen Instagram as a social media platform due to its various comprehensive features, allowing for the dissemination of complete information to the public, particularly Instagram users. This theory posits that media exists on a continuum based on its "richness" in conveying information. Draft and Lengel (1984) categorize media usage into four criteria that determine the level of media richness as follows:

**The Speed of Feedback.** Daft and Lengel, as cited in Pace & Faules, explain that "the speed of feedback refers to a media's ability to present information continuously and receive feedback quickly." This can impact the communication process because if the message delivery is delayed, the information may no longer be considered important.

The Instagram account @Informasihaji has extensively published posts about Hajj information, with a total of 158 posts from January to May 2024. These posts are categorized into four types of information:

- **Educational Information.** This category includes general knowledge about the Hajj pilgrimage and the mechanisms of its organization, aiming to educate and provide direct understanding to the public. The purpose of these posts is to increase public awareness about the Hajj pilgrimage. There are 46 educational posts in this category.
- **Documentation Information.** These posts constitute specific informational content uploaded by @Informasihaji related to news and annual activities of the Hajj journey in Indonesia, as well as collaborative activities with other parties. This category comprises 27 documentation posts.
- **General Information.** These posts provide explanations regarding various publications and general announcements related to activities associated with Hajj. The information includes weekly activities of the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah (Ditjen PHU), information on the selection of Hajj officials, directives from stakeholders regarding policies, and other related matters. There are 73 posts categorized under general information.
- **Persuasive Information.** Persuasive messages convey information that encourages or influences public actions within a specific context. In these posts, the Public Relations of Ditjen PHU includes testimonial messages from pilgrims aimed at motivating and influencing the public to register for Hajj. These posts have received positive responses from followers. There are 12 persuasive posts in this category.

In this study, it was found that the Instagram account @informasihaji makes use of various features of Instagram available for disseminating information about Hajj.

### **Feed**

Every day, the Instagram account @informasihaji posts photo or video content related to information about Hajj, including posts in the form of informational, educational, persuasive, and other types of content, even on national holidays and weekends. This demonstrates that the Public Relations of the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah (Ditjen PHU) has effectively utilized the immediacy of information through Instagram's Feed feature.

### **Instagram Story**

This feature is temporary and lasts only for 24 hours before being automatically deleted by the system. The researcher observed that the @informasihaji Instagram account uses the Story feature to upload important information for easy access and awareness among followers. Additionally, the Public Relations of Ditjen PHU has utilized this feature several times to interact with followers through Q&A sessions, allowing followers to ask questions about Hajj-related information they are unsure about.

### **Highlights**

The Highlights feature is utilized by the Public Relations of Ditjen PHU to save more important information, such as Q&A sessions on the mechanisms and rituals of Hajj, educational information on registration and cancellation of Hajj, and other relevant topics. Highlights are similar to Stories, but the key difference is that Highlights can be accessed repeatedly as this feature is not limited by time.

### **Reels**

The Reels feature has gained popularity among Instagram users for showcasing short-duration video posts that are considered clear and engaging, making disseminated information easier to consume. The Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah (Ditjen PHU) utilizes this feature, among others, to create persuasive messages. Among the Reels posts shared by the Instagram account @informasihaji are stories of individuals' journeys striving to perform Hajj. These Reels posts have garnered positive responses from followers of @informasihaji as they are perceived as captivating and motivating individuals to embark on the Hajj pilgrimage. This feature is also frequently used to create documentation content of the annual Hajj pilgrimage in Indonesia.

The Public Relations of Ditjen PHU provides up-to-date information to the public through Instagram on current phenomena and topics surrounding the Hajj pilgrimage. The disseminated information has been well-received by @informasihaji followers, evident from their responses through comments and likes on each post by Informasi Haji. Based on the researcher's observations, crucial posts on Instagram @informasihaji are regularly shared daily, especially during the current Hajj season, where daily content updates relevant news about the 2024 Hajj pilgrimage activities.

### **Diversity of Signals (The Capacity to Carry Multiple Cues)**

In this section, the @informasihaji account has been observed to incorporate posts that combine audio and visual elements. Collaborative posts between @informasihaji and other accounts often utilize original audio that improves the content. One example is the post titled "Apa Kata Witan," which collaborated with the Instagram account @asramahaji\_balikpapan. The audio in this post is particularly effective, capturing users' attention and encouraging them to watch. The concept employed in this post, such as the use of opening audio commonly used by influencers, makes the content current and engaging (Sekar Dwisari & Anggieta Putri,

2023). According to Nindya (2023), engaging concepts in posts are utilized to ensure that the information conveyed can be effectively received.



Source: Instagram, 2024 (<https://www.Instagram.com/p/C7Yy4xevTOR/>)

Furthermore, clear nonverbal communication is evident in posts featuring a prominent national footballer. Clear and straightforward nonverbal communication is depicted through facial expressions, comfortable body language, direct eye contact with the camera reflecting intimacy with the audience, and hand gestures that complement verbal communication.

Verbal communication on the Instagram account @informasihaji is also apparent in its Instagram Story feature and posts. The account presents information in the form of infographics designed to be as visually appealing as possible. Based on observations, the account prioritizes clarity in its posts, including the choice of font type. Each post uses fonts that are suitable and readable for information consumers. Moreover, contemporary design elements attract information consumers to engage with the content. This is supported by Sovira & Abidin's (2021) research indicating that the visual presentation of content significantly influences whether consumers are interested in the presented posts or not.

### Language Variations (Ability to Use Natural Language)

One of the criteria of Media Richness Theory demonstrates its capability in using varied language to improve the understanding of information consumers (Putra & Irwansyah, 2020). This is evident through the methods used to communicate concepts/ideas through language. The @informasihaji account predominantly posts content in Indonesian language. Through the content and captions, it is apparent that the language usage is precise and minimizes errors. For instance, in a collaborative post with the Ministry of Religious Affairs' Instagram account, the captions adhere to the EyD guidelines. This is evident in the use of language, capitalization, and proper punctuation. Additionally, in several posts, the account integrates English and Indonesian languages, known as bilingualism. This is clearly seen in the post about "Launching Senam Haji Indonesia," where the title combines both languages: "Launching" is in English, meaning introduction or launch, while "Senam Haji Indonesia" is in Indonesian.





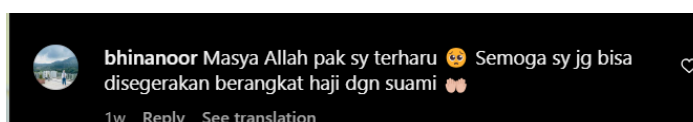
Source: Instagram, 2024

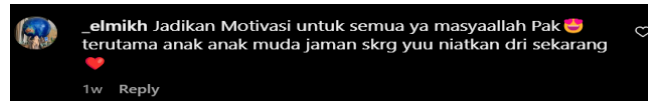
Furthermore, the utilization of this criterion is also reflected in the variety of posts presented. Providing information through diverse posts allows Instagram users to enjoy and become educated by the information provided. This can be observed in one of @informasihaji's posts titled "Rencana Perjalanan Haji Tahun 1445 H/2024 M," which disseminates information to educate users about the planned Hajj journey. Responses from Instagram users vary widely, including follow-up questions, supportive comments, and opposing views. This demonstrates that the language used in @informasihaji's posts is well-received, enabling information consumers to understand and respond to it effectively.

### Personal Sources (The Degree of Personal Focus)

This criterion focuses on how a media platform can evoke personal feelings and emotions among involved parties, including information consumers (Mi'raj & Sya, 2021). The Instagram account @informasihaji demonstrates its capability in influencing emotions through the uploaded information. This criterion is evident in the post titled "Kisah Haru Uçok Berangkat Haji dari Hasil Dagang Sayur Keliling," as observed from the responses of viewers in the comment section. The emotions conveyed by @informasihaji include feelings of emotional touch and motivation to inspire other users.

Certainly, this has received positive responses from Instagram users, as indicated by comments reflecting emotions. One such comment from @bhinanoor reads, "*Masya Allah pak sy terharu 🥺, semoga sy jg bisa disegerakan berangkat haji dgn suami 🙏*" ("Masya Allah, sir, I am moved 🥺, hopefully I can also go on Hajj soon with my husband 🙏"). Also, another comment by @\_elmikh which reads "*Jadikan motivasi untuk semua ya, masyallah Pak 🥰 teurtama anak anak muda jaman skrg yuu niatkan dri sekarang ❤️*" ("Let's make this as a motivation for everyone, masyallah Pak 🥰 especially the young generation nowadays, let's intend from now on ❤️"). These comments demonstrate the emotions of information enthusiasts on the @informasihaji Instagram account. The addition of emojis in these comments also helps users express the mood they feel (Hilmi, 2022). Content containing video testimonials and information presented in an engaging format with audio background and captions enables users to express their emotions in the comment section.





Source: Instagram, 2024

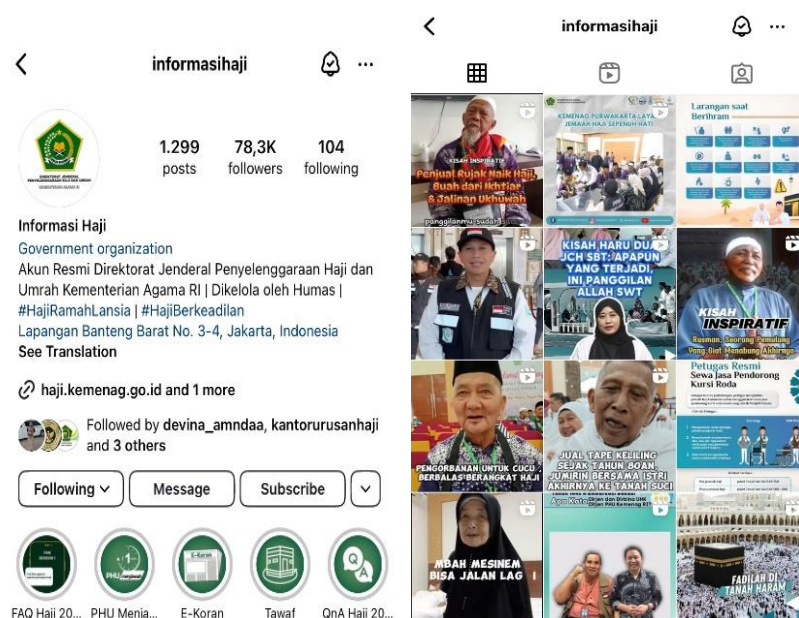
Instagram has become one of the popular social media platforms among the public today (Widyaputri, Suwu, & Tumiwa, 2022). Here is how the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah of the Ministry of Religious Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia utilizes Instagram as an information tool.

Firstly, in terms of information media through Instagram. Instagram is one of the social media platforms used by Informasi Haji along with Twitter, TikTok, Facebook, and YouTube. Instagram @informasihaji began actively uploading content on July 31, 2017, and continues to do so to this day. The @informasihaji Instagram account has a feed color scheme predominantly featuring green, blue, black, and white. The account typically posts between 3 to 6 times per day, with the type of information uploaded varying depending on the day's priorities. Irsyad, Nuryasin, & Setyawan (2023) state in their research that Instagram posts are one of the most critical elements in providing information to users, featuring videos and images packaged attractively with captions.

Secondly, the aspect of utilizing Instagram as an information tool. Instagram, as a social media platform, offers various features to support comfortable user interaction. Moreover, posts that are engaging and insightful tend to receive high numbers of likes, comments, shares, and bookmarks (Kinanti & Putr, 2017). In other words, the higher the number of likes, comments, shares, and bookmarks, the more engaging the post is perceived to be. The @informasihaji Instagram account also optimally utilizes other Instagram features such as:

### Photos dan Videos

The @informasihaji account has recorded 1,300 posts as of May 31, 2024. Each post features photos and videos presented in an appealing format. In photo posts, the account employs infographic-style designs with a dominant color scheme of green and white. Additionally, the videos are carefully edited with engaging audio backgrounds and emphasize information delivered by speakers.



Source: Instagram, 2024

## Hashtags

Furthermore, @informasihaji consistently utilizes hashtags (#) in every post. This practice on Instagram facilitates easier access to hajj-related information for users seeking it. Several hashtags used by the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah (Ditjen PHU) categorize the information they disseminate, such as: #TamuAllah, #SehatJemaah, #NyamanIbadahnya, #InfoHaji, #KuotaHaji, #IbadahHaji, #HajiRamahLansia, #HajiBerkeadilan, among others.

## Connection with Other Accounts

In every infographic post, the account also includes usernames from other social media accounts related to hajj information and the Ministry of Religious Affairs (Kemenag), such as YouTube, Facebook, the website, Twitter, and TikTok. Moreover, the account frequently collaborates with other accounts sharing similar goals, including the Instagram accounts of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Regional Offices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, Islamic Guidance, and Ministry of Religious Affairs accounts in various regions.

Referring to the Media Richness Theory discussed, the @informasihaji account has been able to maximize the four criteria. This can be observed in terms of information freshness, where the account provides almost daily updates according to the needs of Instagram users seeking information about Hajj, and receives direct feedback through comments on posts. Furthermore, concerning the criterion of multiple cues, the account has presented visually appealing posts that are comfortable to read. Additionally, the videos are contemporary in style, ensuring that viewers remain engaged and can comprehend the information presented. However, one of the shortcomings noted is the arrangement of the information feed. It is evident that the feed lacks consistency due to collaborations with other accounts that have differing designs. Yet, a well-organized feed would attract Instagram users to the uploaded information. Research by Qorib, Rinata, & Fianto (2021) supports this, indicating that an attractive Instagram feed enhances user engagement and account insights..

According to Subiyanto & Valiant (2022), making use of Instagram as an information platform is an appropriate form of communication in today's era of globalization. The ease of accessing Instagram is a significant factor in choosing it as an information medium. In practice, @informasihaji not only presents educational posts about Hajj but goes beyond that to offer useful information such as inspirational stories and service details, enabling pilgrims to gain early knowledge and more. In the current era, many government agencies utilize Instagram as a means to disseminate information to the public. Harnessing this social media platform should be a strategic move to ensure easy access to information for dissemination to individuals in need (Yoraeni et al., 2023). Consequently, each person can be educated according to the function of information, thereby enhancing their knowledge and benefiting society.

The Instagram account @informasihaji serves as a highly sought-after information medium for its users. Clearly, the abundance of comments on each post and the number of shares establish this account as a relevant information source in society. When Hajj-related information via @informasihaji spreads on social media, it serves as a foundation of knowledge for individuals (Alika, 2022). The use of social media by the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah's Public Relations Office (Humas Ditjen PHU) is part of the implementation of planning management. At this stage, Humas Ditjen PHU compiles and sorts educational content related to Hajj for dissemination to the general public.

## CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

### Conclusion

Upon analyzing the above discussion, it can be concluded that the Instagram account @informasihaji has effectively utilized the Informasi Haji Instagram account as a means of disseminating information and publicity to its followers. Overall, the @informasihaji



Instagram account has been able to provide relevant information to Instagram users. The use of Instagram features has been optimized by the account managers to deliver information quickly, accurately, and comprehensibly. Various types of posts allow information enthusiasts to digest the provided information. The appealing concepts and polished editing have positively impacted the progress of this account. Insights from the @informasihaji Instagram account demonstrate that the information services provided meet the needs of its followers. This is evidenced by the number of views on reels videos exceeding 100,000, likes surpassing 1,000, and comments containing questions in response to the information presented.

In the context of Media Richness Theory, the use of Instagram by the Public Relations Office of the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah (PHU) reflects various aspects of media richness such as rapid feedback, signal variety, language variation, and personal sources. This is evident from the capability of the @informasihaji account to present engaging, informative, and motivational content, while also fostering personal connections with its followers. However, there are shortcomings in the irregular arrangement of feed posts, which can possibly impact the appearance and attractiveness of the account to its followers.

Furthermore, in reality, the @informasihaji Instagram account has yet to fully engage its followers in two-way interactions with each post, thus limiting the flow of information between the PHU Public Relations and its followers. This should be considered as an area for evaluation by the PHU Public Relations to enhance interaction with followers regarding responses, feedback, criticisms, and suggestions provided in the comment section, thereby improving the overall effectiveness of the Informasi Haji Instagram account.

### Suggestion

In this research, researchers still have not described how by the Public Relations Office of the Directorate General of Hajj and Umrah (PHU) manages the social media Instagram account @informasihaji and comprehensively compared the most effective social media for Hajj information. It is hoped that future researchers can develop and fill the gaps that still exist due to the limitations of this research to obtain better results and be useful for science, especially in the field of Hajj and Umrah Management.

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