

The Effectiveness Of Social Media In Increasing Training Participant Engagement At BBPVP Medan

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of Instagram as a social media platform in increasing participant engagement in training programs at the Medan Center for Vocational Training and Productivity (BBPVP), as well as to identify the inhibiting factors. The method used is a descriptive qualitative approach with data collection techniques including in-depth interviews, observation, and documentation. The research informants consist of public relations staff, social media administrators, training participants, and members of the public who use social media. The results show that Instagram plays an effective role as a public communication medium in increasing participant engagement through the presentation of attractive visual content, clear information, and interactive features that encourage audience involvement. This effectiveness is reflected in the increased awareness, interest, and registration actions of training participants. However, the effectiveness has not yet been optimal due to several obstacles, such as limited human resources, lack of consistency in content publication, and low levels of interaction among certain segments of the audience. The conclusion of this study indicates that social media has great potential to enhance participation in training programs if supported by well-planned digital communication strategies, relevant content, and professional management.

Keywords: *Social Media Effectiveness, Instagram, Training Participation, Digital Communication, Audience Engagement*

INTRODUCTION

The development of digital communication has significantly transformed the pattern of interaction between institutions and society. Social media is no longer merely a channel for delivering information, but has evolved into an interactive space that enables dialogue, collaboration, and active public engagement (Tahir, 2024). In the context of government institutions, particularly vocational training institutions, social media plays a strategic role in bridging communication between institutions and the public as the target of programs (Muchtar, 2023).

The Medan Center for Vocational Training and Productivity (BBPVP), as an institution under the Ministry of Manpower, plays an important role in improving the quality of human resources through competency-based training programs. One indicator of the success of these programs is the level of participant engagement in training activities (Septia et al., 2024). However, the effectiveness of achieving these objectives is highly dependent on the public communication strategies employed, including the use of social media as a means of promotion, information dissemination, and interaction with the public (Bangga, 2022).

Theoretically, effective communication in public relations emphasizes the importance of two-way, dialogic, and participatory communication. The two-way symmetrical communication model suggests that relationships built through reciprocal interaction can enhance trust and public engagement (E.GRUNIG, 1992). In practice, social media provides a space that supports such communication while enabling engagement between institutions and audiences (Imron Rosadi, Akhsanul Huda, 2025).

With internet penetration in Indonesia reaching 78.2% and social media users totaling 189 million in 2024 (Kemp, n.d.), social media has become a powerful instrument for increasing public participation. However, its utilization requires appropriate digital communication strategies, relevant content, and professional management to produce optimal impact (Juliana, 2023).

Empirically, the use of social media at BBPVP Medan shows development in terms of publication frequency and information reach. Nevertheless, its effectiveness in increasing participant engagement has not been fully optimized. Data indicate fluctuations in the number of training participants: 8,430 participants in 2020, increasing to 9,120 in 2021, and declining to 7,890 in 2023, with an active completion rate of 73% (Kemnaker, 2024). This condition suggests that social media activities have not yet consistently encouraged public engagement

Several previous studies reveal that low engagement is caused by communication that remains one-way and the lack of interaction between administrators and audiences (AUDIVA, 2023). In addition, platforms such as YouTube have not been optimized to create active public interaction (Muhammad Zahir Muzhaffar Muchtar, 2023). Limitations in human resources in digital communication and a lack of audience analysis also constitute obstacles in managing social media within training institutions (Septia et al., 2024).

From the public perspective, the perception that vocational training is limited to certain groups also contributes to low participation (Nelda & Randan, 2024). This indicates that the challenge lies not only in the technical aspects of social media but also in communication strategies that can build program relevance and a positive image for diverse audiences.

Academic studies on the effectiveness of social media in the context of government training institutions remain limited. Most research focuses more on the effectiveness of training programs rather than the supporting public communication strategies. Therefore, there is a research gap that needs further examination, particularly regarding the role of social media in increasing training participation.

Based on this background, this study focuses on two main issues: how effective Instagram is in increasing participant engagement in training programs at BBPVP Medan, and the factors that hinder such effectiveness. This study aims to analyze the effectiveness of social media use in increasing participant engagement and to identify the obstacles encountered in its implementation.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method, aiming to understand phenomena in depth based on the perspectives of the informants. This approach is chosen because it is capable of describing social reality holistically, particularly regarding the use of social media in increasing training participant engagement. In qualitative research, the researcher acts as the primary instrument who directly interacts with informants to obtain contextual and in-depth data. Thus, this study focuses not only on the final outcomes but also on the processes and meanings formed through these social interactions (Parapat & Azhar, 2024).

The research was conducted at the Medan Center for Vocational Training and Productivity (BBPVP), located at Jl. Amal No. 9, Lalang, Medan City, North Sumatra, during the period from February to April 2026. The selection of this location was based on the consideration that the institution actively utilizes social media as a means of public communication and promotion of training programs.

The research subjects consist of informants selected using a purposive sampling technique, based on their relevance to the research data needs. The main informants include one public relations staff member or publication officer, one social media administrator (if different),

and five to seven training participants. In addition, the study involves two supporting informants from the productive-age community who are social media users. The selection of these informants aims to obtain comprehensive data regarding social media management strategies, user experiences, and their influence on participant engagement..

Research data were collected through in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation study. Interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner to explore information related to social media usage, forms of participant engagement, as well as supporting and inhibiting factors affecting its effectiveness. Observations were carried out by examining the social media publication activities of BBPVP Medan, including types of content, posting frequency, and interactions between administrators and audiences. Documentation study was conducted by reviewing archives, social media posts, activity photos, and other supporting documents to strengthen the data obtained from interviews and observations.

The research instruments used include interview guidelines, observation guidelines, and documentation. The interview guidelines serve as a reference for systematically collecting data, while the observation guidelines ensure the alignment between empirical data and field practices. Documentation functions as supporting data that enrich the research findings.

Data analysis was conducted using the interactive analysis model by Miles and Huberman, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involves selecting and focusing on data relevant to the study. The reduced data are then presented in descriptive form to facilitate understanding and pattern identification. The final stage involves drawing conclusions, which are repeatedly verified to ensure the validity and consistency of the research findings.

Through these stages, this study produces a comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of social media in increasing training participant engagement at BBPVP Medan, as well as the factors influencing it.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on interviews with the main informant (public relations/publication staff of BBPVP Medan) and five training participant informants, this study shows that social media—particularly Instagram—plays a strategic role in increasing training participant engagement. These findings not only reflect a quantitative increase in the number of participants but also indicate a transformation in public organizational communication patterns, shifting from conventional approaches toward more interactive, participatory, and audience-oriented digital communication. From a modern communication perspective, this condition suggests that social media has functioned as a two-way communication space that enables both information exchange and meaning-making between institutions and the public. Furthermore, this transformation reflects a shift from a linear communication model to a convergent communication model, where the boundaries between communicators and audiences become increasingly blurred. Audiences not only receive messages but also participate in disseminating, interpreting, and even modifying them through interactive social media features. Thus, communication success is no longer solely determined by institutions but also by the active participation of audiences within the digital ecosystem.

However, social media use also has consequences for interpersonal communication quality. High intensity of social media usage may reduce face-to-face communication quality and increase the likelihood of misunderstandings. Moreover, dependence on social media can affect individuals' ability to build deeper social relationships (Harahap, 2024). These findings enrich the study, showing that although Instagram effectively increases participation, interactions tend to be more dominant in digital spaces than in direct interactions.

When analyzed using the Uses and Effects theory, the findings strongly support the assumption that audiences are active and goal-oriented in media use. Informants indicated that they use Instagram to fulfill information-seeking needs as well as personal development needs. Interest in training is based on alignment with personal interests, career needs, and future opportunities, such as digital marketing and Japanese language training. This shows that media use is purposive and selective, where audiences consciously choose content relevant to their needs.

However, the level of audience activeness is not entirely homogeneous. Some informants actively engage through comments and content sharing, while others are more passive, merely saving or viewing information without further interaction. This indicates that although Uses and Effects theory emphasizes active audiences, in practice there are variations in engagement levels influenced by personal factors, needs, and media usage habits. Thus, media effects are not uniform but depend on individual characteristics.

Content attractiveness emerges as a key factor in shaping social media effectiveness. Informants consistently emphasized that video-based content, reels, and interactive content are more appealing than static content. Statements such as “video content... funny and engaging” and “not monotonous” indicate that entertainment elements play a significant role in capturing audience attention. Additionally, alumni testimonials and activity documentation function as *social proof*, enhancing the credibility of training programs. From the perspective of the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (Petty & Cacioppo, n.d.), these visual and emotional appeals operate through the peripheral route, influencing audience attitudes quickly.

Beyond content attractiveness, credibility is also a crucial determinant in influencing participation decisions. Informants emphasized that information from the official BBPVP Medan account is considered valid and trustworthy. This trust forms the basis for decision-making, particularly in the context of training programs related to career development. Therefore, social media effectiveness is determined not only by engaging content but also by the credibility of the information source, in line with the concept of *source credibility*.

The media effects identified in this study can be classified into three main dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Cognitively, audiences gain clear and relevant information about training programs. Affectively, engaging and credible content fosters interest and trust. Behaviorally, these effects are reflected in concrete actions such as training registration. The main informant even noted that after certain content was published, “within hours, there was an increase in registrations.” This demonstrates that social media not only shapes perceptions but also drives real actions.

Clarity and completeness of information also play an important role in enhancing communication effectiveness. Informants stated that the information presented on Instagram was “clear,” “detailed,” and “easy to understand.” The use of infographics helps audiences understand procedures and requirements systematically. From an information processing perspective, well-structured messages reduce cognitive load and improve comprehension, thereby increasing the likelihood of action.

Nevertheless, the study also identifies several limitations in social media management. Training information sometimes becomes “buried” due to the high volume of content and lack of repetition. Additionally, human resource constraints and platform algorithm changes present challenges in maintaining communication consistency. These findings indicate that social media

effectiveness depends not only on content quality but also on well-planned and sustainable communication management. Without structured content strategies, the potential of social media as a strategic communication tool cannot be fully optimized.

Compared to previous studies, these findings align with research showing that social media plays a significant role in increasing audience engagement and participation. However, in the context of BBPVP Medan, this effectiveness is strengthened by the practical and skill-oriented nature of the content. This represents a unique aspect, where social media functions not only as an information medium but also as a tool for community empowerment through access to training.

Overall, this study confirms that the use of social media, particularly Instagram, significantly increases training participant engagement at BBPVP Medan. These findings not only support the Uses and Effects theory but also enrich the understanding of how social media operates within public organizational communication. In this context, social media functions as a communication ecosystem integrating information, interaction, persuasion, and social distribution simultaneously.

The practical implications of this study highlight the importance of strengthening digital communication strategies based on audience needs and data analytics. BBPVP Medan should optimize the use of video content, implement content segmentation to make training information more targeted, and improve consistency in publication schedules. Additionally, enhancing human resource capacity in understanding digital trends and platform algorithms is a strategic step to sustain communication effectiveness. With more structured and adaptive management, social media has the potential to become an increasingly effective instrument for increasing public participation in training programs.

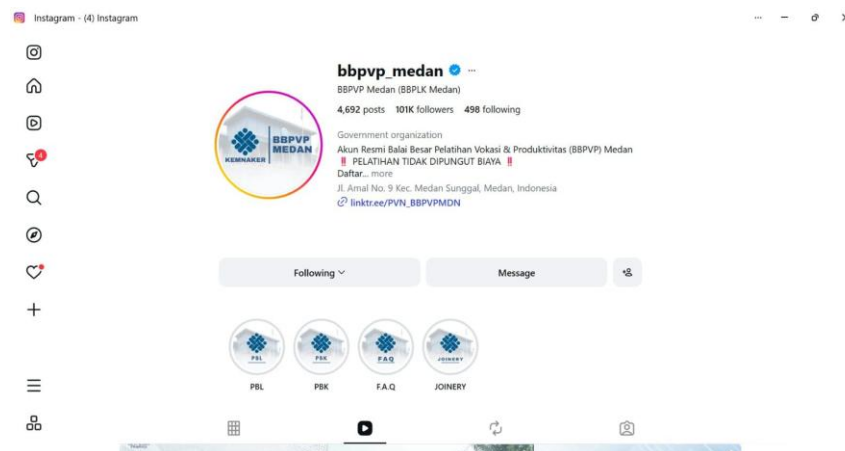


Figure 2. Official Instagram Profile of BBPVP Medan

Figure 2 illustrates the verified official Instagram profile of BBPVP Medan, which reflects institutional credibility and digital legitimacy. The structured bio—containing organizational identity, location, and access links—functions not only as basic information but also as a trust-building mechanism that reduces audience uncertainty. From a communication perspective, this profile configuration serves as an initial credibility cue (source credibility), which plays a crucial role in influencing audience willingness to engage with and act upon the information provided.



Figure 3. Instagram Feed of BBPVP Medan

Figure 3 presents the Instagram feed dominated by informational and program-related content, such as training announcements and selection procedures. The use of structured visual infographics indicates a deliberate application of visual communication strategy aimed at simplifying complex information. Analytically, this reflects an effective message design that reduces cognitive load and enhances information processing efficiency, thereby increasing the likelihood of audience comprehension and subsequent participation.

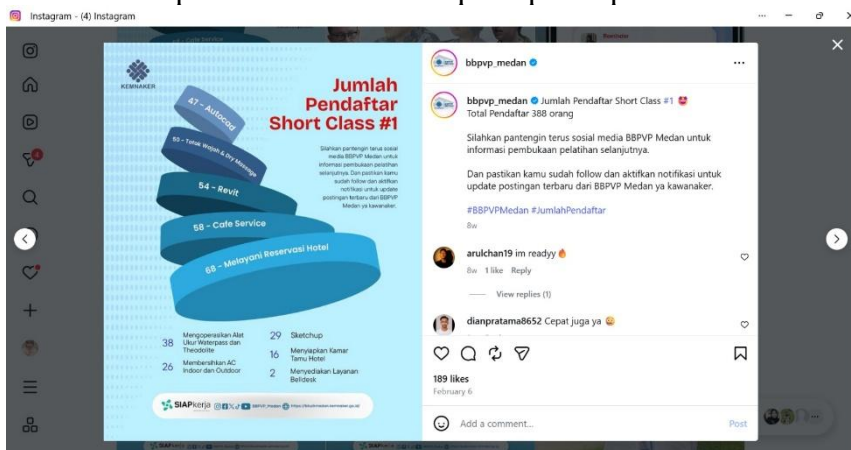


Figure 4. Content Program)

Applicant Data (Short Class)

Figure 4 displays content presenting the number of applicants for a training program, which functions beyond mere information delivery. The visualized data serves as a transparency mechanism while simultaneously acting as *social proof*, reinforcing perceived program attractiveness and legitimacy. From a behavioral perspective, this type of content can trigger conformity effects, where individuals are more likely to participate when they perceive high levels of existing public interest.

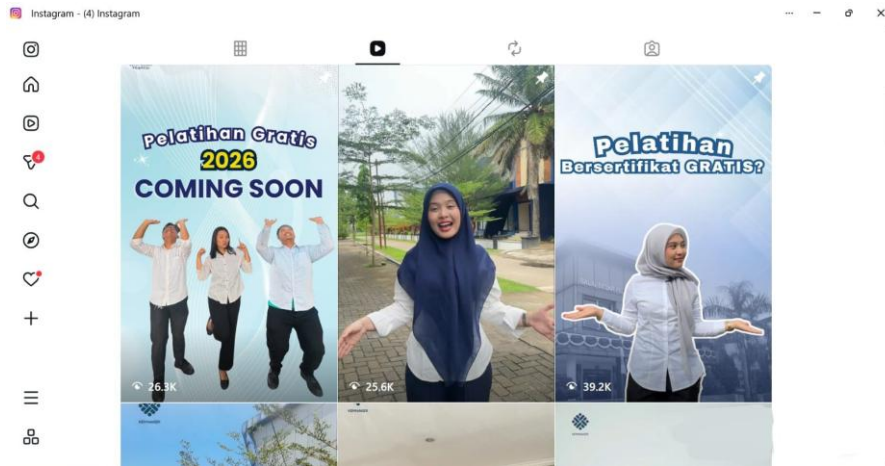


Figure 5. Instagram Video/Reels Content of BBPVP Medan

Figure 5 highlights the use of video-based content (Reels) that integrates visual, auditory, and narrative elements. This format demonstrates alignment with current platform algorithms and audience consumption patterns, where dynamic and short-form content tends to generate higher engagement. Analytically, the use of Reels reflects a shift toward affective and experiential communication strategies, which are more effective in capturing attention and stimulating audience interaction compared to static content.

CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the use of Instagram by BBPVP Medan plays a significant role in increasing training participant engagement, particularly through its ability to disseminate information widely, quickly, and attractively, as well as to build more interactive communication with the public. This effectiveness is reflected in the increased access to information, the emergence of audience interest, and the presence of concrete actions in the form of training registrations, which are influenced by visual content, clarity of information, and the credibility of the official account. However, this effectiveness has not yet been fully optimized, as several obstacles remain, including low levels of two-way interaction, limited human resources in social media management, lack of consistency in content strategy, and reduced visibility of information due to the high volume of posts. In addition, public perceptions and variations in audience engagement levels also influence the overall success of communication efforts. Therefore, Instagram can be considered an effective medium for increasing training participation at BBPVP Medan; however, it requires more strategic, well-planned, and audience-oriented management in order to produce more consistent and optimal outcomes.

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