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**Digital Communication Strategy for Government Public Relations in Indonesia and  
Thailand**

Farida Nurfalah, M. Nuruzzaman, Siti Khumayah and Nico Irawan



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 Farida Nurfalah,  M. Nuruzzaman,  Siti  
Khumayah and  Nico Irawan

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**Abstract**

**Purpose:** Government Public Relations (GPR) increasingly depends on Digital Public Relations platforms to communicate policies and maintain the government's public image. This study aims to identify the implementation, obstacles, and improvement efforts of Government Digital Public Relations in Indonesia and Thailand.

**Methodology:** Using a descriptive qualitative method, data were collected through interviews, observations, and documentation from seven purposively selected informants consisting of government PR officers and citizens from both countries.

**Findings:** The findings reveal that both governments emphasize transparent and factual communication through various digital platforms. Indonesia predominantly uses Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, and official websites, while Thailand utilizes Instagram, Line, Facebook, television, bloggers, and vloggers. Indonesia also demonstrates clear information segmentation and corrective strategies such as press releases when discrepancies occur. Positive outcomes include increased public support and enhanced government image, although user-generated reinterpretations may influence social perceptions. Key obstacles involve limited human resources, inadequate infrastructure, the need for frequent updates, and delays in information processing, which may hinder public service quality and policy implementation.

**Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy:** Efforts to strengthen Digital PR include establishing supportive regulations, enhancing coordination, providing HR training, delivering timely information, and improving real-time engagement with communities and stakeholders.

**Keywords:** *Government Public Relations, Public Communication, Public Information*

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## INTRODUCTION

Government Public Relations (GPR) plays a vital tactical and strategic role in public administration. Tactically, GPR disseminates information and shapes public attitudes toward government policies, while strategically it contributes to decision-making through insights and recommendations that support institutional goals (Ruslan, 2011). Its core functions—building reputation, mediating communication, and fostering mutually beneficial relationships make GPR central to maintaining government credibility (Nilasari, 2012).

The transformation brought by the Industrial Revolution 4.0 requires governments to shift communication practices toward digital platforms. Digital Public Relations enables faster, interactive, and more transparent policy communication, aligning with public expectations for real-time information (Hasbiran, 2018). The effectiveness of digital PR relies on four key elements: transparency, porosity, the internet as an agent, and richness plus reach of content (Gabrina & Suharyanti, 2017)

Analytically, these findings highlight a tension between the potential and performance of Digital Government PR. On one hand, digital channels create opportunities for participatory governance through real-time feedback loops. On the other hand, fragmented inter-agency coordination, lack of digital literacy, and institutional inertia often impede effective implementation. This duality suggests that the success of Digital Government PR is not merely a technological issue, but also an organizational and governance problem.

Previous studies show that digital platforms such as Instagram can effectively support government program outreach (Margaretha & Sunarya, 2017). However, other research reveals that Digital PR often faces challenges, such as limited resources, weak interaction, and inconsistent communication strategies, which reduce its effectiveness (Nurnisya & Nurjanah, 2016). Digital platforms also pose risks, as public opinion can quickly strengthen or damage government reputation (Pratama, 2017).

The growing influence of social media, rapid spread of misinformation, and rising public demand for transparency make it urgent for governments to strengthen their Digital PR practices. This urgency is particularly relevant in Southeast Asia, where digital adoption is high but institutional capacities differ. Indonesia and Thailand provide important comparative cases for understanding how governments adapt to these challenges.

Comparative studies on Digital Government PR between countries remain limited, especially those that use the framework of the four elements of online PR (transparency, porosity, the internet as an agent, richness & reach of content). Moreover, little is known about how institutional barriers such as human resource capacity, organizational coordination, and ICT infrastructure shape Digital Government PR performance across different governance contexts. Therefore, there is a clear research gap in understanding how and why Digital GPR is implemented differently across countries with similar digital uptake but distinct institutional characteristics. Addressing this gap is academically significant because it advances theoretical discussions on digital governance, and practically relevant because it provides evidence-based insights for improving government communication strategies. Existing research largely focuses on single-country analyses, specific platforms, or individual campaigns. Comparative studies on Digital Government PR between countries remain limited, especially those that use the framework of the four elements of online PR. Little is known about how institutional barriers such as human resources, coordination, and infrastructure shape Digital Government PR performance across different governance contexts. This study addresses the following questions:

How is Digital Government Public Relations implemented in Indonesia and Thailand? What obstacles hinder its implementation?, and What efforts are undertaken to improve Digital Government Public Relations in both countries?

### **Theoretical framework**

This study is grounded on three major theoretical foundations:

1. Government Public Relations theory;
2. E-Government concepts;
3. The Four Elements of Online Public Relations proposed by Phillips and Young (2009). These frameworks collectively explain how government communication operates within a digital governance ecosystem and guide the analysis of Digital Government PR practices in Indonesia and Thailand.

### **Government Public Relations Theory**

Government Public Relations (GPR) provides the conceptual basis for understanding the roles, objectives, and functions of government communication. According to (Ruslan, 2011)(Ruslan, 2011), GPR performs two major roles: (1) a short-term tactical role focused on disseminating information and influencing public attitudes, and (2) a long-term strategic role supporting decision-making and institutional policy design. (Nilasari, 2012) further highlights three core objectives of GPR: building reputation and image, acting as a communication bridge between government and citizens, and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships. Bernays' perspective reinforces these functions, emphasizing information provision, persuasion, and alignment between institutional actions and public expectations. These concepts frame GPR as a central mechanism for achieving transparency, accountability, and trust in public administration.

### **E-Government Concepts**

E-Government theory supports the shift from traditional bureaucratic processes to technology-driven public service delivery. As defined by (Sudrajat, 2015), E-Government represents the use of ICT to enhance government performance, improve service quality, and widen stakeholder access. Its benefits include stronger transparency, reduced administrative costs, increased efficiency, and greater citizen empowerment. Indrajit (2006) identifies three forms of E-Government interaction—publication, interaction, and transaction each requiring communication capabilities between government agencies and stakeholders. The success factors defined by AS (2013) (laws, organizational structure, business processes, information technology, and strategic vision) emphasize that E-Government cannot function without effective communication. Thus, GPR becomes a critical component in ensuring that digital services are understood, trusted, and utilized by the public.

### **Digital Public Relations: The Four Elements of Online PR.**

The digital dimension of GPR is explained using Phillips and Young's (2009) Four Elements of Online Public Relations, which offer a comprehensive framework for understanding communication in the cyber environment.

**Transparency:** Online communication demands openness, real-time information sharing, and visible accountability. Different forms of transparency (radical, controlled, institutional, overt, covert, and unintentional) shape how governments provide information and how stakeholders interpret it.

**Internet Porosity:** Digital platforms create porous communication spaces where information flows rapidly and informally. This results in both intentional and unintentional exposure of organizational

information, highlighting risks in digital communication environments. The

**Internet as an Agent:** The internet actively transforms messages through reinterpretation, reposting, remixing, and discussion by bloggers, influencers, and online communities. This agency affects how government narratives evolve and how public opinion is shaped.

**Richness in Content and Reach:** Digital platforms allow governments to distribute multi-format content (text, photos, videos, graphics) with wide and diverse reach. Richness and reach work simultaneously to expand government visibility, strengthen engagement, and shape public perception. These four elements provide analytical lenses to examine the implementation, challenges, and strategies of Digital Government Public Relations. They help identify how digital transparency, message flow, content diversity, and audience reach contribute to or hinder effective government communication. Integrating Bernays, E-Government, and Digital PR produces a coherent analytical trajectory:

1. Bernays clarifies why communication is central to governance (legitimacy, consent, and opinion formation),
2. E-Government explains how digitalization restructures state–citizen interactions, and
3. Digital PR describes the communicative strategies and infrastructures required for governments to operate effectively within digital media ecosystems.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The research method that will be used in: Implementation of Digital Public Relations for Government in Indonesia and Thailand, by collaborating with Foreign Lecturers, namely from the Thai Global Business Administration Technological College, Thailand. The research team conducted this research to determine the mapping regarding the implementation of digital Government Public Relations in Indonesia and Thailand so as to obtain a model for implementing digital Government Public Relations in Indonesia and Thailand with the obstacles and efforts made by Public Relations in managing digital PR. The research method used is descriptive qualitative with data collection through interviews, observation and documentation. The informant selection technique used purposive sampling of 8 (eight) informants consisting of Public Relations and the people of both countries for discussions both online and offline. In this research, data collection techniques are through interviews and observations with the parameters of transparency, porosity, the internet as an agent, richness in content, and reach, as well as inhibiting factors and efforts made by Public Relations, so the author assumes that digital public relations can be effective if these four elements are met, and with the presence of data analysis techniques, the results of the analysis data that will be calculated will be valid.

### **Country Selection and Sampling**

Indonesia and Thailand were selected using purposive country selection based on the following considerations:

**Comparable Governance Context:** Both countries are Southeast Asian countries with active e-government agendas and similar bureaucratic communication challenges.

**Digital Transformation Momentum:** Indonesia's Electronic Government System (ESBS) policy and Thailand's "Digital Government Development Plan" demonstrate a strong national commitment to digital public communication.

**Collaborative Academic Partnerships:** This study involved collaboration with foreign lecturers from the Thai Global Business Administration Technological College and the Thai community.

Cultural-Administrative Differences: Differences in political culture, administrative traditions, and digital communication practices provide a strong basis for comparison.

### **Data Collection**

#### **In-Depth Interviews**

- Semi-structured interviews were conducted with public relations officials, digital communications staff, and citizens, The interview guide covered:
- Transparency practices in digital communications
- Information flow and porosity
- Message transformation through online intermediaries (the internet as an agent)
- Richness and accessibility of digital content
- Audience reach and engagement
- Inhibiting factors (technical, organizational, cultural)
- Strategic efforts to overcome barriers
- Interviews were conducted online (Zoom/Google Meet) and offline when possible.

#### **Observation**

- Direct observations were conducted on:
- Government websites
- Social media accounts
- Public service platforms
- Online engagement activities
- Forms of digital interaction with citizens

### **Documentation Analysis**

Documents included:

Press releases, infographics, and digital publications

These documents supported triangulation and enriched understanding of digital public relations practices in each country.

### **Data Analysis**

Data were analyzed using:

- Data Reduction, which summarizes and selects key information based on the conceptual framework.
- Data Display, which organizes research findings, and
- Conclusion Drawing, which develops a model for implementing Government Digital Public Relations.

## **FINDINGS**

### **Transparency in Government Digital Public Relations**

#### **Transparency as the Foundation of Government Digital PR**

Transparency is the primary foundation of government Digital PR in the digital era. Findings show that both Indonesia and Thailand are committed to providing public information through digital channels. However, significant differences emerge in terms of speed, mechanisms, and approaches to disseminating information. The government also supports every detail of the information and conveys the truth, they form partnerships and carry out massive promotions. (Nurfalah et al., 2020) experienced, then constructing the entire explanation of the meaning and essence of the experience.

#### **Information Transparency: Regulatory vs. Responsive Approaches**

In Indonesia, transparency is embedded within a strong regulatory framework, especially through the Public Information Disclosure Act (UU KIP No. 14/2008). Informants indicate that government information disseminated through digital platforms reflects accuracy, accountability, and adherence to formal standards.

Thailand, on the other hand, demonstrates a more responsive and adaptive model of transparency. Government information is updated quickly, easily accessible, and disseminated without lengthy bureaucratic procedures. This is evident in the use of government applications, websites, official social media, and popular platforms such as Line.

#### **Government Digital Media: Platform Diversity and User Preference**

Both countries utilize diverse digital media to disseminate information. Indonesia relies on Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter (X), websites, and television. Thailand uses similar platforms but shows stronger integration with traditional television and messaging applications like Line. These platform preferences reflect not only public digital habits but also strategic government communication choices. The study contributes to cross-country communication research (Nurfalah et al., 2023) by demonstrating how Southeast Asian students navigate digital environments, the opportunities social media provides for education and civic engagement, and the risks related to misinformation and online behavior

#### **Message Segmentation in Digital PR**

Findings reveal disparities in segmentation practices. Some Indonesian informants, particularly outside central government institutions, view segmentation as unnecessary due to the perceived homogeneity of audiences. Others highlight its importance for effective communication. Thailand demonstrates a more advanced understanding of audience segmentation. Through initiatives aligned with a Society 5.0 vision, Thailand differentiates messages based on age, occupation, needs, and personal interests.

#### **Controlled Transparency: Procedures and Responsiveness**

Indonesia implements strict procedures for managing public information, including issue identification, data collection, risk analysis, message preparation, publication, and evaluation. In Thailand, although accuracy is still valued, processes are faster and less bureaucratic, allowing for more adaptive communication.

#### **Institutional Transparency: Credibility and Information Access**

Both countries show commitment to credibility through official information channels. Thailand, however, shows stronger inclusivity by leveraging private media networks, bloggers, and content

creators.

### **Overt Transparency: Direct Publication Strategies**

Overt transparency involves proactively disseminating information so the public can understand government programs clearly. Indonesia achieves this through spokespersons, official releases, press conferences, and agency social media. Thailand expands this approach by partnering with influencers, bloggers, vloggers, and mainstream media.

### **Internet Porosity**

#### **Defining Internet Porosity in Government–Public Relations**

Internet porosity describes the degree of interconnectedness between governments and external actors through digital platforms. Indonesia and Thailand exhibit relatively high porosity, though with distinct characteristics.

#### **Forms of Digital Interaction between Government and the Public**

Both governments interact with citizens through social media, live discussions, digital public services, interactive platforms, and engagement with civic organizations.

Indonesia shows a more formal and structured pattern, while Thailand emphasizes direct, participatory, and responsive interaction.

#### **Benefits of Digital Porosity**

Citizens identify several benefits of digital interaction: - faster public services, - easier access to information, - stronger government–public relations, - increased public participation, - reduced misinformation through official channels, - improved government image. Thailand's porosity appears higher due to the public's familiarity with interactive digital communication.

#### **The Internet as an Agent**

#### **The Internet as an Actor in Meaning-Making**

The internet functions not only as a medium but also as a social actor capable of reshaping meaning. In Indonesia, message reinterpretation often occurs through blogs, social media, and unofficial channels.

#### **Social Dynamics Influencing Message Interpretation**

Public interpretation depends on social experience, trust levels, and political preferences. Government Digital PR in both countries must therefore adapt communication to meet these evolving dynamics

- Richness in Content and Reach
- Government Collaboration as a Determinant of Message Reach
- Content richness and reach are essential indicators of Digital PR effectiveness.
- Indonesia collaborates primarily with local and national media, producing formal and informative content.
- Thailand collaborates with bloggers, vloggers, independent creators, and even international media, enabling broader and faster dissemination.

#### **Variations and Innovation in Digital Content**

Thailand excels in creative and varied content—short videos, interactive infographics, thematic

campaigns while Indonesia emphasizes consistency, formality, and regulatory compliance.

### **Impact on Public Perception**

Content richness shapes public perception significantly. Thai citizens tend to receive government messages more quickly due to accessible and engaging formats.

In Indonesia, perception is more influenced by institutional credibility and mainstream media.

### **Comparative Analysis: Digital PR in Indonesia and Thailand**

A comprehensive comparison reveals fundamental differences in strategy and orientation. Indonesia excels in regulation, accuracy, and structure, while Thailand excels in speed, collaboration, creativity, and participatory approaches.

Both countries possess strengths and challenges that may complement each other in Southeast Asian Digital PR development.

### **Discussion**

The comparative findings between Indonesia and Thailand highlight important theoretical and practical implications for understanding how Government Digital Public Relations operates within different political, cultural, and technological ecosystems. Although both countries share a commitment to transparency and digital engagement, the mechanisms through which these principles are implemented reveal contrasting orientations and institutional capacities.

### **Transparency Practices: Regulation vs. Responsiveness**

The analysis confirms that transparency remains the cornerstone of Digital PR, aligning with Phillips and Young's (2009) framework. Indonesia's transparency model reflects a regulatory and compliance-driven approach shaped by legal instruments such as the Public Information Disclosure Act. This produces communication that is accurate and accountable, yet sometimes slower due to bureaucratic procedures.

In contrast, Thailand demonstrates a more agile model where information is disseminated rapidly through diverse platforms, including Line and television. This responsiveness enhances accessibility but may lack the structured governance found in Indonesia. These differences illustrate how transparency is shaped by institutional culture: Indonesia prioritizes control and standardization, while Thailand prioritizes speed and adaptability.

### **Internet Porosity and Government–Public Interaction**

Both governments exhibit high internet porosity, but its manifestation differs. Indonesia's interaction model is structured, following official protocols for digital engagement, which aligns with the role of government PR as communication technicians and facilitators. Thailand, however, adopts a more participatory approach with direct, real-time communication, enabling citizens to engage more actively.

This finding supports the notion that digital porosity thrives in environments where government communication culture is open, collaborative, and less hierarchical. Thailand's higher porosity underscores the importance of digital familiarity and public readiness, which enhances co-creation and government–citizen dialogue.

### **The Internet as an Agent of Meaning-Making**

Consistent with Phillips and Young's concept of "the internet as an agent," both countries experience reinterpretation of government messages through blogs, vlogs, and user-generated

content. However, Thailand is more proactive in collaborating with content creators to manage narrative shifts, whereas Indonesia relies more on institutional authority and legacy media to maintain message accuracy.

This contrast shows that government communication strategies must account for digital reinterpretation and employ adaptive narrative management to prevent misinformation and maintain public trust.

### **Richness in Content and Reach: Creativity vs. Formality**

Thailand's strength lies in its creative, multimedia-rich content that resonates with diverse audiences. Its use of influencers, independent creators, and thematic campaigns increases message reach and accelerates public comprehension. Indonesia maintains strong institutional credibility but tends to produce more formal, standardized content.

This suggests that richness and reach are not solely dependent on technological capacity, but also on communication culture. Countries prioritizing innovation, collaboration, and audience segmentation succeed in achieving broader digital impact.

### **Complementary Strengths and Regional Implications**

The comparative insights show that Indonesia and Thailand possess complementary strengths. Indonesia excels in regulatory structure, information governance, and consistency, while Thailand leads in speed, creativity, and participatory engagement.

This indicates opportunities for cross-learning: Indonesia can adopt more agile and innovative digital strategies, while Thailand can strengthen governance mechanisms to ensure accuracy and accountability. (Kreimer, 2025) Public science communication practices have changed in recent years

### **Theoretical Contributions**

This study contributes to Digital PR theory by demonstrating how Phillips and Young's four elements transparency, porosity, internet agency, and richness & reach, manifest differently across national contexts. The findings illustrate that Digital PR is not purely technological; it is deeply embedded in sociocultural and institutional environments that shape government communication behavior.

### **Practical Implications**

For policymakers and government PR practitioners, the findings highlight the need to: strengthen audience segmentation and message customization, adopt hybrid communication models that balance regulation and responsiveness, leverage influencers and creators strategically, enhance training for PR personnel to manage rapid digital interaction, develop systems to monitor reinterpretation and guide public meaning-making.

### **Limitations and Future Research**

The study relies on a limited number of informants (eight), which may restrict generalizability. Future research could incorporate cross-country surveys, digital content analysis, or network analysis to measure audience engagement patterns quantitatively. Expanding the study to additional ASEAN countries may also provide a broader understanding of regional Digital PR practices.

The findings extend Phillips & Young's model by demonstrating that the four elements are not universal or technology-driven phenomena but contextually mediated outcomes shaped by

regulatory frameworks, political cultures, institutional capacities, and communication norms. This positions Digital PR within a broader socio-institutional paradigm and enriches the theoretical model for application in government settings.

Bernays' integration of e-government and digital PR emphasizes that establishing digital legitimacy depends on a clear narrative, institutional transparency, and two-way participation. Findings from Indonesia and Thailand indicate that trust, service adoption, and responsiveness increase when communication is executed strategically, not simply through publication. Therefore, recommendations focus on narrative consolidation, dashboard disclosure, feedback orchestration, issue command centers, GPR competency enhancement, and bilateral knowledge exchange.

### **Conclusion**

The implementation of Digital Public Relations (Digital PR) in Indonesia and Thailand shows that both governments are committed to delivering transparent, accurate, and factual information through various digital platforms. Indonesia relies heavily on social media such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, and websites, while Thailand combines social media with television, Line, bloggers, and vloggers. Both countries segment information based on target audiences and follow structured communication procedures to ensure clarity, accuracy, and alignment with public information openness regulations.

Their digital PR practices help strengthen government credibility, increase public participation, and improve access to information. Despite the benefits, several obstacles still hinder effective implementation. Limitations in human resources, technology, facilities, and the need for constant content updates can reduce the effectiveness of Digital PR. When these challenges are not managed well, they can negatively impact public service quality and weaken public trust. To address these challenges, both governments need stronger regulations, improved coordination, continuous HR training, and effective information management. Strengthening real-time communication with the public and collaborating with media partners are essential strategies for improving digital transparency and public engagement. By enhancing these efforts, Digital PR can continue to support better governance, foster public trust, and encourage positive social change.

Digital PR in the context of governance is not merely an online communication practice, but an infrastructure of public legitimacy formed from the interaction of legal procedures, service technologies, and digital culture. The Indonesia–Thailand study demonstrates two distinct pathways regulatory and responsive that are equally valid and open up space for a hybrid Regulated–Responsive Digital PR model as a conceptual synthesis and direction for GPR development in the region.

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