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Development Communication in the Algorithmic Public Sphere (A Netnographic Study of Government Instagram Communication)

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Abstract

This study examines how government development communication operates within algorithmically mediated social media environments, focusing on the Instagram account @indonesiabaik.id as a cross-ministerial communication platform in Indonesia. Despite its large audience reach, the account exhibits fluctuating engagement patterns, indicating that communication outcomes cannot be explained solely by message quality or production intensity. Using a qualitative netnographic approach combined with content and interaction analysis, this research investigates the relationship between development messages, algorithmic visibility, and public interpretation. The findings reveal a structural gap between top-down communication strategies and bottom-up audience responses, shaped by the interplay of platform algorithms and participatory digital publics. Algorithms function as key mediators that determine content visibility based on engagement metrics, while users actively reinterpret and reshape messages through comments and interactive practices. These dynamics highlight that communication in digital environments is non-linear, recursive, and co-constructed. To address this complexity, the study proposes the Algorithm–Development–Interaction (ADI) Communication Model, which conceptualizes communication as a cyclical process integrating institutional message production, algorithmic filtering, and public engagement. This model offers a theoretical contribution to digital development communication by reframing communication as a process of circulation and negotiation within platform ecosystems, while also providing practical insights for designing more adaptive and participatory government communication strategies.

Introduction

The rapid expansion of digital media has significantly transformed the ways governments communicate with citizens. Social media platforms have become central arenas for public communication, enabling governments to disseminate information, promote policy initiatives, and engage with audiences in real time. Among these platforms, Instagram has emerged as a particularly influential communication channel due to its visual orientation and high levels of user engagement. Governments increasingly use Instagram to translate complex policy information into visually accessible formats such as infographics, short videos, and educational posts. In Indonesia, one of the most prominent governmental communication platforms is the Instagram account @indonesiabaik.id*, which functions as a cross-ministerial channel designed to disseminate development narratives and public information. The account communicates government programs, policy initiatives, and national development achievements to a broad audience. Despite having more than one million followers, the engagement levels of its posts vary considerably. This fluctuation suggests that the effectiveness of digital government communication cannot be explained solely by the quantity or informational value of the content produced by institutions (Bonson et al., 2022).

Government communication on social media often reflects traditional top-down communication patterns inherited from bureaucratic information systems. Official accounts typically emphasize policy explanations, institutional achievements, and formal information dissemination. Although these messages aim to inform citizens, they do not always generate meaningful engagement or interaction in digital environments. Previous studies have noted that many government institutions continue to reproduce linear communication models on social media, prioritizing information delivery rather than dialogue or participatory engagement with citizens (Putri & Nugroho, 2023). As a result, a gap frequently emerges between the communicative intentions of governments and the ways in which citizens respond to,

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interpret, or interact with those messages within online environments.

This communication gap can be better understood through the theoretical perspective of development communication. Early scholars such as Wilbur Schramm conceptualized communication as a key mechanism for facilitating social change and modernization. Within this framework, communication functions as a tool to inform citizens about development programs, shape public understanding, and encourage participation in national development processes. Media systems are therefore expected to support development by disseminating information, educating citizens, and fostering collective awareness about development goals (Schramm, 1973). Although Schramm developed this theory during the era of traditional mass media, its fundamental principles remain relevant in contemporary digital contexts where governments continue to communicate development agendas through new media platforms. In digital environments, however, the dynamics of communication have become significantly more complex due to the interactive and decentralized nature of online media ecosystems.

In contrast to traditional mass communication models, digital communication environments enable audiences to actively interpret and negotiate the meanings embedded in institutional messages. This interpretative process can be explained through the encoding–decoding model proposed by Stuart Hall. According to Hall, communication messages are encoded by producers with particular intentions and meanings, but audiences may decode these messages differently depending on their cultural backgrounds, experiences, and social contexts. As a result, audiences may adopt dominant, negotiated, or oppositional interpretations of institutional narratives (Hall, 1980). This theoretical perspective highlights that development communication does not operate as a linear process of message transmission. Instead, the meaning of development narratives is continuously negotiated through the interpretative practices of audiences within specific social contexts.

The emergence of social media platforms further amplifies this interpretative dynamic by enabling audiences to publicly express their interpretations through comments, reactions, and discussions. Digital platforms create what scholars describe as networked publics, where users collectively participate in shaping discourse around social and political issues. In these environments, public communication becomes a collaborative process in which institutional messages are constantly reinterpreted, reshaped, and circulated by users. Networked publics therefore function not merely as audiences but as active participants who contribute to the construction of meaning within digital communication ecosystems (Papacharissi, 2019).

Another important dimension influencing digital communication is the increasing role of platform algorithms in regulating the visibility of information. Social media algorithms act as filtering systems that determine which content appears on users' timelines based on engagement metrics, behavioral patterns, and interaction histories. Consequently, the visibility of government communication is shaped not only by the authority of institutions but also by the algorithmic logic embedded within digital platforms. Content that generates higher levels of interaction (such as comments, shares, and reactions) tends to be prioritized by algorithms and distributed more widely across the platform. Conversely, informational or educational content that fails to generate immediate engagement may receive limited visibility within algorithmically mediated communication environments (Cotter, 2021).

These dynamics are closely related to the broader concept of platformization, which refers to the growing role of digital platforms as infrastructures that shape communication processes across society. Platformization theory suggests that digital platforms are not neutral communication channels but active mediators that structure how information is produced, distributed, and consumed. Through algorithmic curation and interface design, platforms influence which messages become visible, which discussions gain traction, and how audiences interact with content. As a result, communication strategies must increasingly adapt to platform-specific logics in order to remain effective in digital environments (Helmond, 2019).

Within this platformized communication ecosystem, government institutions face new challenges in disseminating development narratives. Educational or policy-oriented messages must compete with entertainment content, personal storytelling, and emotionally engaging material that often generates higher engagement levels. This competition creates a situation in which the success of government communication is influenced not only by informational quality but also by the capacity of messages to resonate within algorithmic attention economies. Scholars have emphasized that the attention economy transforms communication processes by making audience attention a scarce resource that is continuously contested across digital platforms (Napoli, 2023).

To understand how development communication operates within these complex digital environments, it is necessary to examine not only institutional communication strategies but also the ways citizens interpret and interact with these messages. One methodological approach that enables such analysis is netnography. Netnography, introduced by Kozinets, adapts ethnographic research methods to the study of online communities and digital interactions. The approach assumes that online discussions, comments, and interactions represent meaningful cultural expressions through which users construct collective interpretations of social issues. By analyzing digital conversations and interaction patterns, researchers can gain deeper insights into how online communities interpret institutional messages and negotiate their meanings within digital contexts (Kozinets, 2019).

Within the context of government communication, netnography provides a valuable analytical lens for examining how citizens respond to development narratives presented through social media. Comments and discussions on

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government Instagram posts may reveal diverse forms of interpretation, ranging from support and appreciation to criticism, humor, or reinterpretation of official narratives. These responses illustrate how digital publics actively participate in shaping the meaning of development communication rather than simply receiving institutional messages.

Indonesia provides a particularly relevant context for examining these dynamics due to its high level of social media participation and rapidly expanding digital public sphere. Public discussions about government programs frequently occur on social media platforms, where citizens interact with official accounts and express their opinions about policy initiatives. These interactions generate complex communication environments in which institutional narratives, algorithmic systems, and public interpretations intersect. Consequently, the meaning and visibility of development communication are shaped through ongoing interactions between governments, digital platforms, and citizens.

Despite the growing importance of social media in government communication, many studies on digital government communication remain limited to descriptive analyses of engagement metrics such as likes, comments, or follower counts. While these metrics provide useful indicators of interaction, they do not fully explain how citizens interpret government messages or how algorithmic systems influence the circulation of those messages within digital ecosystems. Furthermore, much of the existing literature focuses on Western institutional contexts, leaving significant gaps in understanding how digital development communication operates in developing countries such as Indonesia.

This study addresses this gap by examining how development communication messages disseminated through the Instagram account @indonesiabaik.id are produced, circulated, and interpreted within algorithmically mediated digital environments. By integrating perspectives from development communication theory, platformization theory, and audience interpretation frameworks, the study conceptualizes digital government communication as a multidimensional process involving institutional message production, algorithmic mediation, and public interpretation. Through a netnographic analysis of interactions within the platform, the research aims to provide a deeper understanding of how development narratives are negotiated within contemporary digital public spheres and how governments can design more adaptive communication strategies in increasingly platformized communication environments.

Method

This study employs a qualitative research design using a netnographic approach to examine how development communication is produced, circulated, and interpreted within an algorithmically mediated digital environment. Netnography is selected as the primary methodological framework because it enables the systematic analysis of online interactions, discourse, and cultural practices within digital communities. Unlike conventional content analysis, netnography allows the researcher to capture the contextual meanings embedded in user-generated interactions, making it particularly suitable for understanding how audiences interpret and negotiate government communication in social media environments (Kozinets, 2019).

The focus of this research is the Instagram account @indonesiabaik.id, which functions as a digital communication channel representing government development narratives. The unit of analysis consists of two main components: (1) content produced by the government, including visual posts such as infographics and short videos, and (2) user-generated responses in the form of comments and interaction patterns. This dual focus enables the study to examine both the production of development messages and the ways these messages are interpreted and reconstructed by digital publics. The selection of Instagram as a research site is based on its platform characteristics, which prioritize visual communication and algorithm-driven visibility, making it a relevant space for analyzing contemporary digital communication practices.

Data were collected through non-participatory observation of publicly available content on the platform. The dataset includes selected posts from @indonesiabaik.id over a defined observation period, as well as associated user comments and interaction metrics such as likes and replies. Sampling was conducted purposively to capture variations in engagement levels, including posts with high, medium, and low interaction. This strategy allows the researcher to identify patterns in how different types of content generate varying degrees of public response and visibility within the platform's algorithmic system.

The analytical process follows a reflexive thematic analysis approach. Data were coded iteratively to identify recurring themes related to message construction, audience interpretation, and interaction dynamics. The analysis focuses on three interrelated dimensions: (1) the characteristics of development communication messages, (2) patterns of audience interpretation reflected in comments, and (3) indications of algorithmic visibility inferred from engagement patterns. This approach allows the researcher to move beyond surface-level metrics and explore the deeper meaning-making processes that occur within digital communication environments (Braun & Clarke, 2019).

To ensure analytical rigor, the study applies several strategies for qualitative validity, including data triangulation and prolonged engagement with the dataset. Triangulation is achieved by comparing different types of data (content, comments, and interaction patterns) to identify consistent themes across multiple sources. Prolonged engagement enables the researcher to develop a nuanced understanding of interaction dynamics within the platform. In addition, reflexivity is maintained throughout the research process to acknowledge the researcher's interpretative role in analyzing digital discourse.

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Ethical considerations are addressed in accordance with guidelines for internet research. All data analyzed in this study are publicly accessible, and no private or sensitive user information is disclosed. User identities are anonymized in the analysis to protect privacy. The research follows established ethical standards for digital research, emphasizing respect for online communities and responsible data usage (Markham & Buchanan, 2017). Through this methodological framework, the study provides a systematic and context-sensitive analysis of how development communication is negotiated within algorithmically structured digital public spaces.

Result

Patterns of Development Message Production and Content Visibility

The analysis of the dataset demonstrates that the Instagram account @indonesiabaik.id consistently produces development communication content through structured and visually oriented formats. The content is primarily delivered in the form of infographics, short-form videos, and carousel posts, each designed to simplify complex policy information into digestible visual narratives. These formats reflect a deliberate institutional effort to translate abstract development agendas into accessible public communication. The dataset indicates that content production is not sporadic but follows a relatively stable pattern in terms of frequency and thematic consistency. Topics related to public policy, social programs, and national achievements are repeatedly presented across different posts, suggesting a systematic communication strategy. However, while the production process appears consistent, the outcomes in terms of visibility and engagement vary significantly. This discrepancy highlights that the process of message dissemination does not operate uniformly across posts. Instead, each piece of content enters a competitive digital environment where visibility is unevenly distributed. The variation in outcomes suggests that content production alone is insufficient to ensure effective reach. These findings indicate the need to examine not only what is communicated but how it performs within the platform ecosystem.

The dataset further reveals that posts with similar thematic content often produce markedly different levels of audience engagement. For example, posts addressing comparable development issues may generate either high interaction or minimal response depending on how the content is presented. This variation is evident across metrics such as likes, comments, and overall interaction rates. The inconsistency suggests that thematic relevance alone does not determine audience engagement. Instead, subtle differences in visual composition, caption framing, and narrative tone appear to influence how users respond to content. Posts that incorporate visually dynamic elements, such as strong color contrasts or engaging layouts, tend to attract more attention. Similarly, captions that evoke curiosity or emotional resonance often generate higher levels of interaction. In contrast, posts that rely on purely informational delivery without visual or narrative appeal tend to receive limited engagement. This pattern indicates that audience response is shaped by more than informational value. It reflects a broader dynamic in which content must compete for attention within a saturated media environment. The data therefore point to the importance of presentation strategies in shaping visibility outcomes.

Another key finding concerns the uneven distribution of engagement across the dataset. Rather than following a predictable pattern, engagement appears to be concentrated on a relatively small number of posts. A limited subset of content generates disproportionately high levels of interaction, while the majority of posts receive moderate to low engagement. This distribution suggests the presence of a "visibility concentration" phenomenon, where only certain posts achieve widespread reach. The data indicate that high-engagement posts often share specific characteristics, such as timely relevance, relatable framing, or visually compelling design. However, these characteristics are not consistently applied across all content. As a result, the visibility of development messages becomes fragmented, with only selected narratives reaching broader audiences. This fragmentation limits the overall reach of government communication efforts. It also indicates that audience attention is selectively allocated rather than evenly distributed. The pattern reflects the competitive nature of digital platforms, where visibility is contingent upon multiple interacting factors. These findings underscore the importance of understanding how visibility operates as a selective process.

The analysis also highlights the role of early interaction in shaping the trajectory of content visibility. Posts that receive immediate engagement shortly after publication tend to sustain higher levels of interaction over time. Conversely, posts with limited initial response often fail to gain momentum and remain relatively unnoticed. This pattern suggests that visibility is influenced by temporal dynamics, particularly during the early stages of content circulation. The data indicate that initial audience reactions play a crucial role in determining whether a post will reach a wider audience. This mechanism creates a feedback loop in which early engagement amplifies visibility, leading to further interaction. In contrast, the absence of early engagement reduces the likelihood of subsequent exposure. As a result, the success of content is not solely dependent on its inherent quality but also on its ability to generate immediate responses. This temporal sensitivity introduces an additional layer of complexity in understanding communication outcomes. It highlights that visibility is not static but evolves dynamically over time. These findings suggest that timing and initial reception are critical factors in content performance.

Furthermore, the dataset shows that different content formats produce varying levels of engagement. Video-based content, particularly short-form videos, tends to generate higher interaction compared to static infographics. Carousel posts also demonstrate relatively strong engagement, especially when they encourage sequential viewing. In contrast, single-image posts with dense informational content often receive lower levels of interaction. This pattern suggests that format plays a significant role in shaping audience behavior. The data indicate that users are more likely to engage with content that

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offers a dynamic or interactive experience. Visual storytelling elements, such as narrative progression or motion, appear to enhance audience attention. Meanwhile, content that requires cognitive effort to interpret may discourage interaction. These findings highlight the importance of format selection in communication strategy. They also suggest that the effectiveness of development communication is influenced by how information is packaged. The variation across formats reflects the need to align content design with user preferences. This alignment becomes crucial in maximizing visibility within the platform.

In addition to format, the analysis identifies the influence of narrative style on engagement patterns. Posts that adopt a more relatable or conversational tone tend to attract higher levels of interaction compared to those that maintain a strictly formal or institutional style. The dataset indicates that audiences respond more actively to content that feels accessible and emotionally resonant. Conversely, highly formal or technical language often limits audience engagement. This pattern suggests that narrative framing plays a crucial role in shaping how messages are received. It also reflects the broader tension between institutional communication norms and the expectations of digital audiences. While government communication is traditionally formal, digital platforms encourage a more informal and interactive style. The data indicate that content which bridges this gap is more likely to achieve higher visibility. This finding underscores the importance of adapting communication styles to platform-specific contexts. It also highlights the role of narrative in influencing audience perception and interaction. The variation in engagement suggests that tone is a key determinant of communication outcomes.

Overall, the findings demonstrate that development communication on @indonesiabaik.id operates within a complex visibility environment characterized by uneven engagement, selective amplification, and dynamic interaction patterns. The dataset shows that content performance is shaped by a combination of factors, including visual design, narrative framing, format, and early interaction. These factors interact in ways that produce highly variable outcomes across posts. As a result, communication success cannot be attributed to a single variable but must be understood as an emergent property of multiple interacting elements. The variability observed in the dataset indicates that digital communication is inherently unpredictable. It also suggests that institutional communication strategies must account for the dynamic nature of platform environments. The findings highlight the limitations of a purely production-oriented approach to communication. Instead, they point toward the need for a more adaptive strategy that considers both content design and interaction dynamics. This section provides a foundational understanding of how development messages are produced and circulated within the platform, setting the stage for further analysis of audience interpretation and interaction patterns.

Disjunction Between Message Production and Public Response

The analysis reveals a persistent gap between the production of development messages by @indonesiabaik.id and the ways in which these messages are received and responded to by digital audiences. While the account consistently disseminates structured and informational content aimed at explaining government programs and policies, audience responses do not always align with the intended communicative goals. The dataset indicates that posts designed to convey important development information often generate limited engagement, whereas content with more informal or relatable elements tends to attract higher levels of interaction. This divergence suggests that the communicative intent embedded in the content is not automatically translated into audience attention or participation. Instead, audience response appears to be shaped by factors beyond informational relevance. The findings highlight a disconnect between institutional communication strategies and audience expectations within digital environments. This gap becomes particularly visible when comparing the intended function of content with the actual patterns of interaction it generates. As a result, the effectiveness of communication cannot be assumed based on message design alone. The discrepancy points toward a more complex relationship between production and reception. It indicates that meaning and engagement are co-constructed rather than transmitted.

Further examination of the dataset shows that many posts categorized as highly informative fail to generate meaningful interaction. These posts often present detailed explanations of policies, programs, or development achievements, yet they receive relatively low levels of comments and audience engagement. In contrast, posts that incorporate elements of humor, simplified messaging, or visually appealing storytelling tend to attract more responses. This pattern suggests that informational density may not align with the consumption preferences of digital audiences. Instead of prioritizing informational completeness, audiences appear to respond more actively to content that is easily relatable and emotionally engaging. This finding reflects a structural tension between the goals of institutional communication and the behavioral tendencies of social media users. The data indicate that the more a post resembles traditional informational communication, the less likely it is to generate active participation. Conversely, content that adapts to platform culture tends to perform better. This imbalance highlights the limitations of relying solely on top-down communication strategies. It also suggests that audience engagement requires a more adaptive and audience-centered approach.

The gap between production and response becomes even more evident when analyzing the nature of user comments. Rather than directly engaging with the informational content of posts, many users respond with reactions that reinterpret or shift the meaning of the message. Comments often include humor, sarcasm, personal opinions, or unrelated discussions that diverge from the original intent of the content. This indicates that audiences do not passively receive messages but actively reconstruct them within their own interpretative frameworks.

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The dataset shows that even when posts aim to communicate specific policy messages, user responses may transform these messages into broader social commentary. This transformation reflects the participatory nature of digital communication environments. It also highlights the unpredictability of audience interpretation. The findings suggest that communication outcomes are not determined solely by message content but by how users engage with and reinterpret that content. This dynamic contributes to the widening gap between institutional intent and public response. It underscores the importance of examining communication as an interactive process rather than a linear transmission.

To further illustrate this gap, the dataset can be categorized based on the relationship between content type and audience response. The following table summarizes the observed patterns:

Table 1. Relationship Between Content Characteristics and Public Response

Content Type	Message Orientation	Expected Response	Observed Audience Response	Interaction Level
Informational Infographic	Policy explanation	Understanding & awareness	Minimal comments, passive likes	Low
Educational Carousel	Public guidance	Engagement & sharing	Selective interaction	Medium
Short Video (Narrative)	Storytelling	Emotional engagement	High comments and reactions	High
Visual Content with Humor	Relatable messaging	Participation & sharing	Active comments, humorous replies	High
Formal Institutional Post	Official statement	Credibility & trust	Limited interaction, low response	Low

The table highlights a consistent pattern in which content designed for informational clarity does not necessarily produce high engagement, while content that incorporates narrative or emotional elements tends to generate stronger audience responses. This pattern reinforces the idea that communication outcomes are influenced by how messages are framed rather than solely by their informational value. It also demonstrates that audience engagement is selective and varies across content types. The divergence between expected and observed responses indicates that institutional assumptions about audience behavior may not align with actual user practices. This misalignment contributes to the persistence of the communication gap. It also suggests that effective communication requires a deeper understanding of audience preferences and interaction patterns.

Another important finding relates to the imbalance between content production intensity and audience participation. The dataset shows that while the account maintains a steady flow of content production, audience participation does not increase proportionally. In many cases, increased posting frequency does not lead to higher engagement levels. Instead, interaction remains concentrated on specific posts that meet certain implicit criteria of visibility and relevance. This indicates that audience attention is not evenly distributed across all content. Rather, it is selectively allocated based on factors that are not entirely controlled by the content producer. This imbalance suggests that increasing the volume of communication does not necessarily enhance audience engagement. Instead, it may contribute to content saturation, where individual posts struggle to gain visibility. The findings highlight the limitations of quantity-driven communication strategies. They also emphasize the importance of quality and relevance in attracting audience attention. This pattern further reinforces the existence of a structural gap between production and response.

The persistence of this gap suggests that communication within digital platforms cannot be understood through a purely top-down framework. While the government produces messages with specific communicative intentions, audiences engage with these messages based on their own interests, experiences, and interpretative frameworks. The dataset indicates that this divergence is not incidental but systematic, reflecting the broader dynamics of digital communication environments. Audience responses are shaped by platform culture, interaction norms, and individual motivations, which may differ significantly from institutional expectations. This divergence creates a space where meaning is continuously negotiated rather than fixed. As a result, communication outcomes become fluid and context-dependent. The findings suggest that bridging this gap requires a shift from transmission-based communication models to more interactive and participatory approaches. It also highlights the need to reconsider how success is defined in digital communication contexts.

Overall, the analysis demonstrates that the relationship between message production and public response is characterized by misalignment, reinterpretation, and selective engagement. The dataset shows that institutional communication strategies do not always translate into meaningful audience interaction. Instead, audience engagement emerges through complex processes that involve interpretation, adaptation, and sometimes resistance. This section highlights the importance of understanding communication as a dynamic process shaped by both institutional intent and audience agency. The identified gap serves as a critical foundation for further analysis of how audiences interpret and interact with development messages.

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It also provides a basis for examining the broader dynamics of interaction and meaning-making within digital communication environments.

Public Interaction and the Dynamics of Meaning Reinterpretation

Public interaction on the Instagram account @indonesiabaik.id demonstrates significant variation in both the intensity and form of responses across different posts. Based on the dataset collected during the observation period, the number of comments per post ranges from fewer than 50 to more than 3,000 comments. On average, most posts generate between 300 and 800 comments, although certain posts significantly exceed this range. Meanwhile, the number of likes shows an even broader distribution, ranging from approximately 500 to over 25,000 likes. These figures indicate that public engagement is not only fluctuating but also highly dependent on the characteristics of the content being published. Informational content tends to generate lower interaction compared to posts that incorporate emotional appeal, humor, or trending issues within the digital public sphere.

When examining the distribution of interaction types, a notable distinction emerges between passive engagement (likes) and active engagement (comments). The data reveal that the comment-to-like ratio for most posts remains below 5%, suggesting that passive interaction dominates government digital communication. However, for posts addressing sensitive issues or controversial public policies, this ratio can increase to approximately 10–15%. This pattern indicates that users are more likely to actively engage when content resonates with their personal interests or triggers emotional responses. Thus, public interaction does not merely reflect engagement levels but also signals shifting patterns of attention and social relevance among digital audiences.

A closer analysis of comment content reveals that public responses are far from homogeneous. Based on qualitative categorization, comments can be grouped into three primary types: affirmative (supportive), critical (including criticism and sarcasm), and neutral or informational. The data indicate that approximately 40–50% of comments fall into the neutral category, while 30–40% are critical, and the remaining portion consists of affirmative responses. The relatively high proportion of critical comments suggests that users frequently utilize the comment section as a space to express opinions, critique policies, and challenge official narratives. This finding highlights that comment sections function not only as reactive spaces but also as discursive arenas where alternative interpretations of development messages are constructed.

Beyond individual comments, interaction patterns among users also reveal complex communicative dynamics. In posts with high engagement levels, threaded discussions frequently emerge, indicating interactions not only between the government and users but also among users themselves. The data show that approximately 20–30% of comments are replies to other comments, reflecting horizontal communication among digital publics. This phenomenon suggests that the comment section operates as a deliberative space where users collectively negotiate meaning and construct shared interpretations. Such horizontal interactions contribute to the formation of collective discourse, which can reinforce or reshape the original narrative presented by the government.

The level of public engagement is also influenced by the type of content being disseminated. Based on content classification within the dataset, short-form video content (Reels) consistently generates higher levels of interaction compared to static infographics. On average, video posts receive between 15,000 and 25,000 likes, while infographic posts range from approximately 2,000 to 8,000 likes. A similar pattern is observed in comment counts, with video content generating two to three times more comments than static posts. These findings indicate that audio-visual formats play a crucial role in enhancing user engagement, while also increasing the likelihood of algorithmic amplification within the platform.

Table 2. Distribution of engagement across different content types

Content Type	Average Likes	Average Comments	Comment Ratio (%)
Infographics	2,000–8,000	100–400	2–5%
Video (Reels)	15,000–25,000	500–2,000	3–10%
Carousel Posts	5,000–12,000	200–600	3–6%

The data clearly demonstrate that video-based content has a comparative advantage in generating both passive and active engagement. This suggests that platform algorithms are more likely to prioritize content that sustains user attention for longer durations, thereby increasing its visibility within users' feeds.

The dynamics of public interpretation are further reflected in the prevalence of humor, memes, and sarcastic expressions within comment sections. The dataset indicates that approximately 25–35% of comments on certain posts contain humorous or ironic elements, particularly in response to policy-related content. This pattern highlights that users do not passively consume information but actively reinterpret and reframe messages in ways that align with digital culture. Such reinterpretative practices can shift the meaning of development narratives from formal and institutional to more fluid and socially contextualized forms.

Overall, these findings demonstrate that public interaction on @indonesiabaik.id is dynamic, multilayered, and deeply embedded within both algorithmic structures and digital cultural practices. The variability of engagement levels, the prominence of critical discourse, and the emergence of horizontal interactions among users indicate that digital publics play an active role in shaping the meaning of development communication. Consequently, government communication in digital environments can no longer be

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understood as a one-way transmission process, but rather as an interactive and negotiated process of meaning-making mediated by platform algorithms.

The Gap Between Message Production and Public Interpretation

The findings reveal a persistent gap between the government's production of development messages and the ways these messages are interpreted by digital publics. While the Instagram account @indonesiabaik.id consistently produces structured, informative, and visually appealing content, the patterns of public interaction indicate that the intended meanings are not always received as expected. Data from the dataset show that posts designed to convey policy information or development achievements often generate relatively low engagement, with average interaction levels falling below 5,000 likes and fewer than 300 comments. In contrast, posts that incorporate humor, emotional narratives, or trending topics tend to receive significantly higher engagement. This disparity suggests that message production alone is insufficient to ensure visibility and resonance within algorithmically mediated environments.

This gap becomes more evident when examining the relationship between content intention and audience response. Government-produced content largely reflects a top-down communication logic, where messages are crafted to inform, educate, and persuade audiences about development initiatives. However, public responses frequently diverge from these intentions. The dataset shows that even in posts with clear informational objectives, a substantial proportion of comments shift the discussion toward unrelated issues, personal opinions, or broader socio-political concerns. In some cases, more than 40% of comments deviate from the original topic of the post. This indicates that audiences actively reinterpret content based on their own experiences, expectations, and digital cultural contexts, rather than passively accepting institutional narratives.

To illustrate these interpretative dynamics, the following examples demonstrate how public responses reshape, challenge, and redirect the intended meaning of government messages within the platform environment:

Table 3. Examples of Public Comments Reflecting Interpretative Dynamics

No	Post Topic	Type of Comment	Example Comment	Interpretation Pattern
1	Government program info	Critical	"The program looks good on paper, but the reality on the ground is very different."	**Policy skepticism / trust gap**
2	Economic development	Sarcastic	"Great, people are getting more prosperous… supposedly 😊"	**Irony and symbolic resistance**
3	Public service information	Neutral/Informative	"How do we register? Can it be done online or do we have to go to the office?"	**Information-seeking behavior**
4	Infrastructure development	Critical	"The roads in my area are still damaged—when will they be fixed?"	**Local contextual reinterpretation**
5	Social campaign	Affirmative	"Totally agree, hopefully there will be more programs like this."	**Supportive engagement**
6	Health campaign	Humorous	"Trying to live healthy but still overthinking all the time 😂"	**Cultural adaptation through humor**
7	Policy announcement	Critical	"Why only now? Where has this been all this time?"	**Temporal criticism / delayed response framing**
8	Education content	Mixed	"It's good, but the implementation really needs proper monitoring."	**Conditional acceptance**
9	Digital literacy campaign	Sarcastic	"Indonesian netizens: read the headline and immediately comment 😊"	**Meta-commentary on digital culture**
10	General development post	Off-topic	"Admin, who's running this account? Very active 😊"	**Engagement shift away from main message**

The examples presented above demonstrate that public comments frequently extend beyond the informational boundaries of the original posts. Rather than simply responding to content, users actively reinterpret messages through skepticism, humor, local experiences, and culturally embedded expressions. This pattern indicates that meaning construction in digital environments is not controlled solely by message producers but is co-created through ongoing interaction between institutional actors and digital publics. Consequently, the comment section emerges as a discursive space where official narratives are negotiated, contested, and, in many cases, transformed.

Algorithmic mediation further amplifies this gap by prioritizing content that generates interaction rather than

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content that carries institutional importance. The data demonstrate that posts with higher engagement—particularly those with rapid early interaction—are more likely to achieve wider visibility within the platform. Conversely, posts with limited initial engagement tend to experience reduced reach, regardless of their informational value. This creates a structural imbalance in which development messages that fail to meet algorithmic thresholds become less visible, thereby limiting their potential impact. As a result, the success of communication is increasingly shaped by platform dynamics rather than solely by message design or institutional authority.

The mismatch between production and reception is also reflected in the tone and sentiment of public responses. Although a portion of comments aligns with the intended message, a significant number of responses exhibit critical, sarcastic, or oppositional tones. In several posts analyzed in the dataset, critical comments account for up to 35–40% of total responses. These comments often question the credibility, relevance, or implementation of the policies being communicated. This pattern suggests that public interaction is not merely reactive but evaluative, with users actively assessing and contesting the narratives presented by the government.

Another dimension of the gap lies in the temporal dynamics of engagement. The dataset indicates that posts typically experience peak interaction within the first 24 hours, after which engagement declines sharply. Posts that fail to generate sufficient interaction during this initial period are less likely to be amplified by the algorithm. This temporal constraint places additional pressure on government communication strategies, as success becomes dependent on immediate audience response rather than sustained informational value. Consequently, the timing and initial reception of content become critical factors in determining whether development messages gain traction within the platform ecosystem.

Overall, these findings suggest that the gap between message production and public interpretation is not merely a communication limitation but a structural characteristic of algorithmically mediated environments. The interaction between institutional messaging, platform algorithms, and audience behavior creates a dynamic system in which meaning is continuously negotiated. This gap underscores the need for a more integrative communication approach that considers not only what messages are produced, but also how they circulate, are amplified, and are interpreted within digital platforms.

Discussion

The findings of this study demonstrate that government communication in digital environments cannot be adequately understood through conventional linear communication models. The empirical evidence from the Instagram account @indonesiabaik.id reveals that communication outcomes are shaped by a dynamic interplay between message production, algorithmic mediation, and public interpretation. This challenges traditional assumptions within development communication, particularly those rooted in top-down paradigms, where message effectiveness is primarily determined by clarity, consistency, and dissemination reach. Instead, the results suggest that communication in algorithmically mediated environments operates as a non-linear, recursive process in which meaning is continuously negotiated among multiple actors within the platform ecosystem.

At the core of this transformation lies the role of algorithms as active mediators of communication. The findings indicate that visibility and reach are no longer determined solely by institutional authority but are contingent upon engagement metrics such as likes, comments, and shares. This confirms that algorithms function as gatekeepers that structure attention and prioritize content based on interaction rather than informational value. Consequently, development messages that fail to generate immediate engagement are less likely to be amplified, regardless of their societal importance. This structural condition fundamentally alters the logic of development communication, shifting it from a model of information dissemination toward a model of attention competition within platform environments.

Simultaneously, the study highlights the increasing agency of digital publics in shaping communication outcomes. The analysis of comment patterns demonstrates that audiences actively reinterpret, contest, and reconstruct development messages through participatory practices such as commenting, humor, and symbolic resistance. These interactions reveal that communication is no longer controlled exclusively by institutional actors but is co-produced through ongoing engagement between governments and citizens. The presence of critical, sarcastic, and off-topic responses further illustrates that meaning is not fixed but emerges through discursive negotiation within the digital public sphere. This participatory dynamic reflects a shift from passive reception to active meaning-making, where publics function as interpretative agents rather than mere audiences.

The gap identified between message production and public interpretation can therefore be understood as a structural outcome of the interaction between algorithmic systems and participatory publics. Rather than viewing this gap as a communication failure, it should be conceptualized as an inherent feature of platform-based communication. The misalignment between institutional intent and public response reflects the coexistence of three distinct logics: the institutional logic of message production, the algorithmic logic of content distribution, and the cultural logic of public interpretation. Each of these logics operates according to different principles, creating a complex communication environment in which outcomes are contingent, dynamic, and often unpredictable.

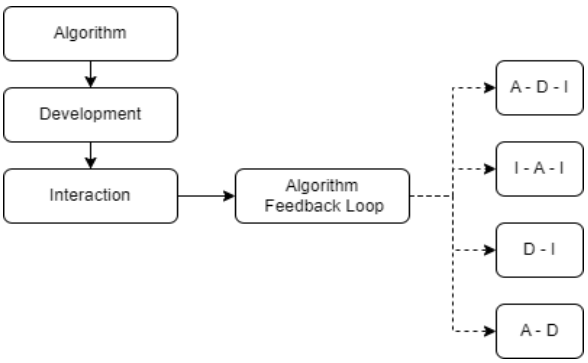
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Table 3. ADI Model Matrix

Dimensi	Indikator Utama	Karakteristik Temuan	Dampak terhadap Komunikasi	Pola Relasi
Algorithm (A)	Distribusi konten	Berdasarkan engagement (likes, komentar, share)	Menentukan visibilitas pesan	A → D
	Reach vs mentions	Tidak selalu linear	Kesenjangan jangkauan	A ↔ I
	Amplifikasi konten	Konten populer diprioritaskan	Viralitas selektif	A → I
	Filtering algoritmik	Konten tertentu tidak muncul luas	Bias distribusi	A ⊥ D
Development (D)	Produksi pesan	Infografis & reels	Adaptasi media sosial	D → A
	Narasi pembangunan	Informatif & persuasif	Penyederhanaan pesan	D → I
	Visual & storytelling	Visual menarik meningkatkan engagement	Resonansi emosional	D → A
	Relevansi isu	Tidak selalu sesuai pengalaman publik	Memicu negosiasi/resistensi	D ↔ I
Interaction (I)	Afirmasi	Dukungan & legitimasi	Penguatan pesan	I → A
	Negosiasi	Pertanyaan & klarifikasi	Dialog publik	I ↔ D
	Resistensi	Kritik & penolakan	Tantangan legitimasi	I ⊥ D
	Humor & out of topic	Fragmentasi makna	Distorsi pesan	I ↔ A

In response to these findings, this study proposes the Algorithm–Development–Interaction (ADI) Communication Model as a conceptual framework for understanding communication in digital development contexts. The ADI model integrates three interdependent dimensions. First, the algorithmic dimension emphasizes the role of platform infrastructures in shaping content visibility and circulation. Second, the development dimension focuses on the production of narratives, policies, and messages by institutional actors. Third, the interaction dimension captures the role of digital publics in interpreting, responding to, and reshaping these messages through participatory engagement. Unlike traditional models that prioritize message transmission, the ADI model conceptualizes communication as a cyclical and relational process in which these three dimensions continuously influence one another.

The ADI model advances theoretical discussions in development communication by reframing communication as a system of circulation rather than transmission. In this model, messages do not move linearly from sender to receiver but circulate within a networked environment where they are filtered by algorithms and reinterpreted by publics. This perspective aligns with contemporary understandings of platformized communication, where meaning is produced through interaction rather than delivered through authority. By integrating algorithmic and participatory dimensions into the analysis of development communication, the ADI model provides a more comprehensive framework for understanding how communication operates in digital societies.



Picture 1. ADI Model Diagram

The ADI Model Matrix also reveals a pattern of circular relationships among its three dimensions. Patterns such as (A → D → I) illustrate the flow of message distribution from the algorithm to the public through the produced content, while the pattern (I → A → I) indicates that public interaction can trigger redistribution through the algorithm. In addition, the communication pattern (D ↔ I) reflects a process of meaning negotiation between the government and the public, whereas patterns such as (A ⊥ D) or (I ⊥ D) indicate a misalignment between the message and public responses. These patterns emphasize that development communication on social media is a dynamic, adaptive, and non-linear process.

From a methodological perspective, the integration of content analysis, engagement metrics, and qualitative interpretation of public interaction demonstrates the importance of multi-

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layered analytical approaches in studying digital communication. The findings show that quantitative indicators such as likes and comments must be interpreted alongside qualitative dimensions of meaning-making in order to fully capture the complexity of communication processes. This reinforces the need for methodological frameworks that combine data-driven analysis with interpretative approaches, particularly in the study of algorithmically mediated environments.

Practically, the implications of the ADI model suggest that government communication strategies must move beyond content production toward a more adaptive and interaction-oriented approach. Institutions need to consider not only what messages are communicated but also how those messages are likely to circulate within algorithmic systems and how they may be interpreted by diverse audiences. This requires a shift toward communication strategies that are responsive, dialogic, and aligned with the cultural dynamics of digital platforms. In this sense, successful development communication is not defined by message control but by the ability to engage with the fluid and participatory nature of digital publics.

In conclusion, this study contributes to the field of communication by offering a novel framework that captures the complexity of communication in algorithmically mediated environments. The ADI Communication Model provides both a theoretical and practical lens for understanding how development messages are produced, circulated, and interpreted in contemporary digital contexts. By situating communication within the intersection of algorithms, institutional narratives, and public interaction, this model extends existing theories of development communication and offers a foundation for future research in digital governance and platform-based communication.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that government development communication in digital environments is no longer governed by linear models of information transmission but is shaped by the dynamic interplay between institutional messaging, algorithmic systems, and public interaction. The case of @indonesiabaik.id illustrates that communication outcomes are contingent upon how messages circulate within platform ecosystems, where visibility is determined by algorithmic logics and meaning is continuously negotiated by digital publics. The findings reveal a persistent gap between top-down communication strategies and bottom-up audience responses, highlighting the limitations of conventional approaches that prioritize message delivery over engagement and interpretation.

By examining content patterns, interaction dynamics, and algorithmic influences, this study shows that algorithms function as critical mediators that structure attention and shape the reach of development narratives. At the same time, digital publics actively participate in redefining these narratives through interpretative and participatory practices, transforming communication into a co-creative process. These insights underscore the need to reconceptualize development communication as a recursive and relational process rather than a one-directional flow of information.

The proposed Algorithm–Development–Interaction (ADI) Communication Model provides a conceptual framework that integrates these dimensions into a unified analytical perspective. By positioning algorithmic mediation and public interaction as central components of communication processes, the model advances theoretical discussions in digital communication and development studies. It offers a more nuanced understanding of how communication operates in platformized societies, where institutional authority is continuously negotiated within technological and social systems.

Practically, this study suggests that government communication strategies must move beyond formal and instructional messaging toward more adaptive, dialogic, and platform-sensitive approaches. Engaging with algorithmic logics and fostering meaningful interaction with publics are essential for ensuring that development messages resonate within digital environments. Future research is encouraged to expand this framework across different platforms and socio-political contexts to further refine the understanding of communication in algorithmically mediated public spheres.

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