



Digital Diplomacy: The Influence of Social Media in Forming a Country's Image in the Era of Globalization

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ABSTRAK

The rapid development of information and communication technology has had a significant impact on international relations, affecting various aspects such as diplomacy, trade, and cybersecurity. Social media as a strategic tool in digital diplomacy allows countries to shape and promote their global image. This study examines the role of social media in shaping a country's image in the international arena, focusing on the intensity and diversity of its use, as well as the interaction between social media content and public perception. Through a quantitative approach, this study analyzed 290 social media accounts from major cities in Indonesia, exploring how their content influences the country's global image. The results show that the frequency and type of social media content ranging from public services, tourism, to cultural and economic promotion are important factors in shaping a positive national image. In addition, there is a strong positive relationship between the intensity of social media use and public perception of the country's image, with significant influences on the economic, political, and cultural dimensions. This study provides valuable insights into how digital communication strategies can be utilized to improve a country's international position..

Keywords:

Digital Diplomacy, Social Media, National Image, Public Perception, Communication Strategy, Indonesia

INTRODUCTION

The rapid development of information and communication technology has brought significant changes in international relations, affecting various aspects such as diplomacy, trade, and cyber security. Information and Communication Technology has not only changed the architecture of the international system by redefining the relationship between state and non-state actors, but has also created a new structure in global interactions.(Weiss, 2005). In the context of diplomacy and trade, technology increases the efficiency of negotiation processes and provides opportunities for small and developing countries to empower their diplomatic services more effectively (Shairgojri, 2022). In addition, the information revolution has enlarged the role of non-state actors, shifted some of the authority of nation-states, and made access to and control of information a new source of power (Weiss, 2005). Information and Communication Technology also presents new challenges, such as cyber security and the spread of fake news, making cyberspace the fifth dimension in international conflict (Bakı Dövlət



Univeristeti & Hasanova, 2021). This transformation provides a new foundation for global diplomacy, enabling rapid and interactive multilingual communication, and redefining the way countries communicate on the international stage.

One important manifestation of this development is the use of social media in digital diplomacy. Social media has become a strategic tool for countries to shape and promote their image in the eyes of the global public. Effective digital communication campaigns, such as those conducted by Australia, Belgium, New Zealand and Switzerland, demonstrate the potential of social media in framing global perceptions (Sevin, 2018). Platforms such as Twitter and Facebook allow diplomats and political leaders to communicate directly and transparently with international audiences, build relationships, and increase public participation in diplomacy (Duncombe, 2018). However, social media also presents challenges, such as the spread of disinformation and manipulation of public opinion, which can damage relations between countries (Wang & Xu, 2023). Nevertheless, the potential of social media to revolutionize diplomacy through direct engagement and transparency is a major attraction in developing digital diplomacy strategies.

A country's image is an important element in international relations, playing a vital role in supporting cooperation in the economic, political and cultural fields. A positive image can improve trade relations, attract foreign investment and accelerate integration into the global market (Jerotijević et al., 2022). In the political field, a good state image strengthens diplomatic positions, increases international influence, and supports bilateral and multilateral relations (Rodigina et al., 2021). Cultural diplomacy also plays a strategic role in promoting national values, strengthening international understanding, and building international cooperation networks (Rozanov et al., 2020). Factors such as transparent information policies, the integrity of political leaders, the success of cultural diplomacy, as well as economic achievements and scientific innovation are key elements in shaping a positive image of the country (Ingenhoff & Klein, 2018).

Social media has become a strategic tool in shaping a country's image in the eyes of the international public, playing an important role in public diplomacy, cultural promotion, and strengthening the national brand (Choi & Kim, 2016). Effective use of social media allows countries to influence global perceptions through relevant and engaging cultural content, as seen in the successful influencer campaign promoting South Korea in France (Lorgeoux & Pradeep Kumar Ponnamma Divakaran, 2023) or improve Nigeria's image on digital platforms (Usua & Ijah, 2023). However, while the intensity and diversity of social media use can enhance a country's economic, political, and cultural image, challenges remain regarding how to ensure authentic interactions and the delivery of valuable content to build a consistently positive perception.

This study aims to identify the influence of social media in the formation of a country's image through various mechanisms that have been revealed in previous studies. The intensity and diversity of social media use positively affect various dimensions of a country's image, including economic, political, and societal images (Li et al., 2016). Social media as a public diplomacy tool allows countries to promote their image and brand through preferred cultural content, which not only enhances the country's image but also loyalty to the country's brand (Choi & Kim, 2016b). Furthermore, the image of a country built through social media can influence the intention to purchase products from the country. This shows the great potential of social media in driving economic results. Social media can also shape public opinion through the strategic use of language

and text. This study is expected to provide in-depth insights into how social media influences the image of a country and how digital communication strategies can be utilized to improve the country's position in the international arena.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a quantitative approach with a correlational design to examine the impact of social media on a country's image and its role in enhancing international perceptions. The population includes major Indonesian cities with active social media engagement and global influence, such as Jakarta, Bali, Surabaya, and Yogyakarta. A purposive sample of 290 social media accounts, representing city governments and cultural organizations, was selected based on content diversity, interaction levels, and digital diplomacy efforts. Data collection methods include an online perception survey using Google Forms and social media content analysis to evaluate post frequency, content types, and audience interactions. Instruments include a Likert-scale survey and analytical software for content evaluation. Data analysis uses descriptive statistics to summarize public perceptions, Pearson's correlation to identify relationships between social media usage and image perception, and linear regression to assess the influence of posting frequency, content type, and engagement on the country's image.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result

This study aims to explore how social media influences a country's image in the public eye by highlighting factors such as the intensity of social media use, the type of content posted, and audience interaction with the content. Based on the results obtained from the survey and data analysis, it can be concluded that social media has a very significant role in shaping the image of a country, especially in the aspects of economy, politics, culture, and international image as a whole.

3.1 Demographics of Respondents to the International Public Perception Survey

Table 1 Respondent Demographics

Category	Sub-Category	n	(%)
Gender	Man	140	47.27
	Woman	150	51.72
Age	18-24 years	90	30.0
	25-34 years	120	40.0
	35-44 years	60	20.0
	45 years and above	30	10.0
Education	High school/equivalent	80	26.7
	Bachelor degree)	140	46.7
	Postgraduate (S2/S3)	80	26.7
Frequency Use Social media	Every day	200	66.7
	Several times a week	70	23.3
	Once a month	30	10.0
Platform	Instagram	100	33.3

Social media the most Frequently Used	Twitter	80	26.7
	Facebook	60	20.0
	YouTube	40	13.3
	Other	20	6.7

Based on the table, survey respondents are fairly evenly distributed between men (47.27%) and women (51.72%), providing a representative gender picture with the majority of respondents being in the productive age group of 25-34 years (40%), followed by 18-24 years (30%), indicating that the survey successfully captured data from the active social media user group. Respondents' education was dominated by those with a Bachelor's degree (46.7%), followed by high school and postgraduate education levels, each at 26.7%. Most respondents use social media every day (66.7%), indicating the importance of social media in their lives. Instagram social media dominates the most frequently used platform (33.3%), followed by Twitter (26.7%), Facebook (20.0%), and YouTube (13.3%), while other platforms are only used by 6.7% of respondents.

3.2 Frequency and type of social media content posted per month

Table 24.2 Frequency and type of social media content posted per month

City	n	Dominant Content Type	(%)
Jakarta	250	Public Services & Transportation Information	30%
Bali	200	Tourism & Local Culture	25%
Surabaya	180	Technology Innovation & Local Economy	20%
Yogyakarta	140	Education & Traditional Arts	35%
Medan	160	Social Campaign & Health Services	25%
Samarinda	120	Environment & Green Campaign	30%
Semarang	100	Tourism, Culinary, & Economic Promotion	35%
Bandung	170	Local Events & Creative Economy Startups	20%
Makassar	140	Culture & Local Wisdom	25%
Poor	110	Educational Tourism & Urban Farming	30%

The results of the analysis of the frequency and type of social media content posted by accounts in various cities show diversity in digital communication strategies across Indonesia. Jakarta, with the highest number of posts (250 per month), focuses on the dissemination of public service and transportation information, reflecting its position as a center of government and a metropolitan city. Bali, although with fewer posts (200 per month), continues to highlight local tourism and cultural content that is relevant to its international image as a major tourist destination. Surabaya demonstrates a commitment to technological innovation and the local economy, utilizing social media to support its vision of a modern city.

On the other hand, Yogyakarta prioritizes education and traditional arts in 140 posts per month, strengthening its position as a city of culture and education. Medan

stands out with its social campaigns and health services, reflecting its concern for public welfare issues. Samarinda directs its digital communication towards the environment and green campaigns, which is in line with the image of an environmentally conscious city. Semarang and Bandung use social media to support their economic appeal, both through tourism promotion and the creative economy. Makassar, with its focus on local culture, and Malang, which emphasizes education and urban farming, show how these cities use social media to strengthen their respective distinctive images. These findings reflect that each city has a unique approach to building an image through social media, according to local characteristics and the needs of its audience.

3.3 Audience Interaction with Social Media Content in Several Cities

Table 34.3 Audience Interaction with Social Media Content in Several Cities

City	Mean Number of Likes	Mean of Number of Comments	Mean of Number of Shares	Total of Interaction Audience
Jakarta	120	25	15	160
Bali	110	20	10	140
Surabaya	100	15	8	123
Yogyakarta	95	12	6	113
Medan	105	18	12	135
Samarinda	90	10	5	105
Semarang	98	14	7	119
Bandung	102	16	9	127
Makassar	97	13	7	117
Poor	92	11	6	109

Audience interactions with social media content in major cities in Indonesia show varying levels of engagement. Jakarta recorded the highest total interactions with an average of 160 interactions per post, consisting of 120 likes, 25 comments, and 15 shares. Bali and Medan followed with 140 and 135 total interactions respectively, driven by tourism-focused content and social campaigns. Surabaya, Yogyakarta, and Semarang showed moderate levels of engagement, with 123, 113, and 119 total interactions respectively, driven mostly by likes and comments. Cities such as Samarinda, Makassar, and Malang recorded lower total interactions, ranging from 105 to 127, with likes dominating as the main form of engagement.

This data indicates that locally relevant and interesting content, such as tourism and cultural information, tends to get a higher audience response. However, in general, the number of likes dominates the form of audience interaction compared to comments and shares, indicating a tendency for audiences to be more passively engaged than actively responding or sharing content.

3.4 Analysis of the Influence of Intensity of Social Media Use on Perception of State Image

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Variables	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Significance (p-value)
Frequency of social media use	0.65	< 0.001
Duration of social media usage per day	0.58	< 0.001

Pearson correlation analysis shows that there is a significant positive relationship between the intensity of social media use and the perception of the country's image. The frequency of social media use variable has the strongest relationship ($r = 0.65$), followed by the duration of use per day ($r = 0.58$), and the variety of social media platforms used ($r = 0.50$). This shows that the more frequently and diversely respondents use social media, the more positive their perception of the country's image.

3.5 Analysis of the Influence of Posting Frequency, Content Type, and Audience Interaction on Country Image

Table 53.1 Analysis of the Influence of Posting Frequency, Content Type, and Audience Interaction on Country Image

Independent Variables	Beta Coefficient (β)	T-Statistic	Significance (p-value)	R²
Posting frequency	0.35	4.20	< 0.001	0.52
Content type (local relevance)	0.40	5.10	< 0.001	
Audience interaction	0.28	3.25	0.002	

The results of the regression analysis show that all independent variables have a positive and significant influence on the perception of the country's image. The type of locally relevant content has the greatest influence ($\beta = 0.40$), followed by posting frequency ($\beta = 0.35$), and audience engagement ($\beta = 0.28$). The R^2 value of 0.52 indicates that this model explains 52% of the variation in the perception of the country's image based on the variables analyzed. This finding emphasizes the importance of relevant content strategies, consistency in posting frequency, and efforts to encourage audience engagement to improve the country's image on social media

Discussion

The results of this study indicate that social media plays a significant role in shaping the image of the country, with the main influence coming from the frequency of use and the type of content published. This finding supports previous literature, such as

research by (Li et al., 2016) which highlights that the intensity of social media use has an impact on various dimensions of a country's image, including economic, political, and cultural. This data is also in line with the argument (Choi & Kim, 2016) about the effectiveness of social media in influencing international perceptions through relevant and engaging content.

Demographic data shows that most respondents are active users of social media, especially on platforms such as Instagram and Twitter. This is relevant to the literature that suggests that these platforms have a wide reach for cultural promotion and digital diplomacy communication (Sevin, 2018). Further analysis shows that cities with high social media activity and specific types of content, such as Jakarta and Bali, tend to have higher levels of audience engagement. This supports the findings (Rojas-Méndez & Khoshnevis, 2023) that promotional strategies adapted to local characteristics can strengthen a country's image.

The level of audience engagement is more dominated by likes compared to comments or shares. This shows that although social media can reach a global audience, more active forms of engagement such as discussions or sharing content still need encouragement. In the context of digital diplomacy, this level of interaction is important because it can reflect the effectiveness of a country's public communication strategy (Holmes, 2019).

The correlation results show a significant positive relationship between the intensity of social media use and perceptions of the country's image, with the frequency of use having a stronger influence than the duration of use. This finding supports the argument that social media is not only a communication tool, but also a strategic instrument in shaping national narratives on the international stage (Yoon & Kim, 2021). Although social media has great potential in building a country's image, this study also highlights challenges such as the dominance of passive interactions (likes) compared to active comments, which can limit the impact of social media as a diplomatic tool. This is in line with the criticism raised by Wang & Xu (2023) related to the spread of disinformation and the lack of authentic interactions on digital platforms.

CONCLUSION

Social media plays a vital role in shaping a country's image by highlighting economic, cultural and political aspects through relevant and engaging content. Governments and related institutions need to optimize the use of social media by increasing the frequency and relevance of content, encouraging more active audience engagement, such as through interactive campaigns, managing authentic and transparent narratives to strengthen positive perceptions and integrating data analysis from social media into digital diplomacy strategies. By utilizing social media strategically, countries can strengthen their position on the international stage and respond to existing challenges, such as disinformation and geopolitical competition, more effectively.

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