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Storytelling as a Digital Communication Strategy to Increase Brand Trust on the @Berbuatbaikofficial Instagram Account

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ABSTRACT: The rapid development of digital media has encouraged organizations to adopt effective communication strategies to build trust, particularly through social media platforms. One strategy that has gained prominence is storytelling, which emphasizes emotional engagement and narrative authenticity. This study aims to analyze how storytelling is utilized as a digital communication strategy to increase brand trust on the Instagram account @berbuatbaikofficial. Using a qualitative research approach, data were collected through content analysis of Instagram posts, in-depth observation, and documentation. The analysis focuses on narrative structure, message framing, visual elements, and audience interaction. The findings indicate that storytelling content presented through real-life stories, emotional narratives, and consistent moral values successfully fosters audience empathy, credibility, and trust toward the brand. Storytelling not only strengthens the emotional connection between the brand and its audience but also enhances brand identity and perceived authenticity. This study concludes that storytelling is an effective digital communication strategy in building and maintining brand trust on social media platforms, particularly Instagram

KEYWORDS : storytelling, digital communication strategy, brand trust, social media, Instagram

I. INTRODUCTION

Communication is a fundamental element in building relationships between individuals and organizations. Conceptually, communication can be understood as the process of conveying messages aimed at building shared understanding and meaning (Robbins & Judge, 2018). With the advancement of digital technology, communication is no longer limited to face-to-face interactions but has expanded into the realm of social media, which offers interactive, flexible, and real-time features (Flew, 2021).

The advent of social media has revolutionized the way organizations communicate with the public. In Indonesia, the number of social media users reached 143 million as of January 2025, or approximately 50.2% of the total population (Hootsuite, 2025). This figure indicates that social media has become a primary communication channel, not only for entertainment but also for social, business, and humanitarian activities.

In the context of digital philanthropy, social media plays a significant role as a platform for fundraising, information dissemination, and institutional image building. The Global Giving Index (2024) recorded Indonesia as the 10th most generous country in the world. This phenomenon demonstrates the significant potential of utilizing digital platforms for social sharing and caring activities.

However, online donation practices also face serious challenges related to public trust. The misuse of funds by the philanthropic organization Aksi Cepat Tanggap (ACT) is one example that has eroded public trust in digital social institutions (Kompas.com, 2022; BBC News Indonesia, 2023). This situation underscores the importance of brand trust as a key factor influencing the public's decision to donate online (Setiawan & Prayogo, 2017).

One approach widely used by organizations to build brand trust is storytelling. Storytelling is understood as a communication strategy that conveys messages through narratives that are emotional, memorable, and close to the audience's experiences (Lindsay, 2015). According to Walter Fisher's (1987) narrative paradigm, humans are homo narrans—creatures who understand the world through stories. Coherent and authentic stories have great power in building trust.

In digital communication practices, storytelling serves not only as a means of conveying information but also as a tool to create emotional closeness between brands and audiences. Nielsen research (2022) shows that over 60% of social media users trust brands that convey messages through authentic narratives more than those with manipulative advertising.

The Instagram account @berbuatbaikofficial, managed by the donation platform melakukanbaik.id, is an example of a philanthropic organization that consistently uses storytelling in its communication content. Through posts consisting of photos, videos, and inspirational narratives, this account strives to foster public empathy and trust in its social programs. This is

interesting to study, given that public trust is a key asset for the sustainability of online donation platforms. Based on the description above, this study focuses on analyzing the role of storytelling in digital communication strategies to increase brand trust, by taking a case study on the Instagram account @bebuatbaikofficial.

II. RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with a case study method. This qualitative approach was chosen because this research focuses on understanding communication phenomena in depth, particularly how storytelling is used as a communication strategy to build brand trust (Creswell, 2018).

The object of this research is the storytelling-based communication strategy implemented by the Instagram account @berbuatbaikofficial.

Research subjects include:

1. Instagram content (photos, videos, captions, hashtags) published during the research period.
2. The account management team (social media admin, content creator or representative from melakukanbaik.id) as key informant.
3. Followers of accounts who are actively involved in digital interactions, as additional informants to provide audience perspective.

The research object is the Instagram account **@berbuatbaikofficial**, while the unit of analysis focuses on storytelling content, including captions, visual narratives, videos, and audience interactions such as likes and comments. Instagram is positioned not merely as a communication channel but as a narrative space where meanings, emotions, and brand values are constructed and interpreted by audiences.

Data were collected through **content analysis**, **non-participant observation**, and **documentation**. Content analysis was conducted on selected Instagram posts that contained storytelling elements, such as personal stories, emotional narratives, and value-driven messages. Observation was used to examine posting patterns, narrative consistency, and audience engagement. Documentation included screenshots of posts, captions, visual materials, and audience responses that supported the analysis.

Conceptual definitions were formulated to clarify key terms used in this study. Storytelling is defined as a communication strategy that delivers messages through narrative structures to evoke emotional engagement. Brand trust refers to audience confidence in the credibility, integrity, and consistency of a brand. Instagram is defined as a visual-based social media platform that enables narrative communication through images, videos, and text.

Data analysis was conducted using **thematic analysis** combined with **Miles and Huberman's interactive model**, which includes data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. These processes were carried out cyclically to identify storytelling patterns and their contribution to the formation of brand trust. To ensure data validity, the study applied **source triangulation** by comparing visual content, captions, and audience responses, thereby enhancing the credibility and reliability of the research findings.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study analyzes storytelling practices on the Instagram account **@berbuatbaikofficial** to understand how narrative-based digital communication contributes to the formation of brand trust. Data were obtained through qualitative content analysis, non-participant observation, and documentation of selected Instagram posts that contained storytelling elements. The analysis focuses on narrative structure, visual presentation, emotional appeal, audience interaction, and consistency of brand values.

A. Storytelling Content Characteristics

The results indicate that storytelling is the dominant communication approach used by @berbuatbaikofficial. Most posts are constructed using narrative formats that emphasize real-life social experiences, humanitarian actions, and moral values. These narratives often highlight personal stories of beneficiaries, volunteers, or communities receiving assistance. The stories are framed to present a clear narrative flow, beginning with a contextual background, followed by a social problem or emotional challenge, and concluding with hope, resolution, or collective action.

Visual elements play a crucial role in supporting storytelling. Photographs and videos commonly depict emotional expressions, social interaction, and moments of empathy, such as direct eye contact, physical closeness, or symbolic gestures of care. These visuals are not merely illustrative but function as narrative devices that reinforce the emotional message conveyed in captions.

B. Narrative Structure and Message Framing

The storytelling narratives observed in @berbuatbaikofficial posts demonstrate consistent framing strategies. Captions frequently use emotive language, reflective tones, and moral appeals that invite audiences to empathize with the individuals featured in the content. The framing emphasizes sincerity, transparency, and collective responsibility, positioning the brand as a facilitator of kindness rather than a self-promoting organization.

The narratives avoid overly technical or promotional language. Instead, they prioritize human-centered storytelling that foregrounds lived experiences. This framing strategy allows the audience to perceive the brand as authentic and socially engaged. The use of simple, relatable language also enhances accessibility and emotional connection, enabling audiences from diverse backgrounds to interpret the message meaningfully.

C. Audience Interaction and Engagement Patterns

Audience interaction data reveal that storytelling posts generate substantial engagement. Posts containing emotional narratives tend to receive higher levels of likes, comments, and shares compared to purely informational content. Comments often include expressions of empathy, prayers, appreciation, and trust toward the brand. Many audience responses reflect moral alignment with the values promoted by @berbuatbaikofficial, suggesting that storytelling successfully fosters emotional involvement and relational closeness.

The interaction patterns indicate that audiences do not merely consume the content passively but actively participate in the narrative process. Through comments and reactions, followers contribute their own interpretations, emotional responses, and affirmations, reinforcing the brand's credibility and trustworthiness. This participatory engagement suggests that storytelling functions as a dialogical communication strategy rather than a one-way message delivery.

D. Consistency of Brand Values and Identity

Another significant finding is the consistency of storytelling themes across posts. The account consistently emphasizes values such as compassion, sincerity, social responsibility, and transparency. This thematic consistency contributes to a coherent brand identity that audiences can recognize and trust. Repetition of similar moral narratives reinforces the perception that the brand's actions align with its stated values.

The results also show that @berbuatbaikofficial avoids contradictory messaging. Storytelling content consistently aligns with the brand's social mission, reducing cognitive dissonance and enhancing perceived reliability. This consistency strengthens audience confidence and supports the long-term development of brand trust.

E. Humanization of Brand Communication

The findings further reveal that storytelling serves as a humanization strategy. Rather than highlighting organizational achievements or metrics, the narratives prioritize human experiences and emotional journeys. This approach positions the brand as empathetic and relatable, reducing psychological distance between the organization and its audience.

By foregrounding human stories, @berbuatbaikofficial creates a sense of shared humanity that encourages trust and emotional identification. The brand is perceived not as an abstract institution but as a socially embedded actor engaged in meaningful relationships with communities and individuals.

II. DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrate that storytelling functions as a central digital communication strategy in building brand trust on Instagram. Through emotionally driven narratives, visual storytelling, and consistent value framing, @berbuatbaikofficial constructs a trustworthy brand image that resonates with its audience. These findings align with contemporary communication theories that emphasize the role of narrative and emotional engagement in digital trust formation.

A. Storytelling and Emotional Engagement

The strong audience engagement observed in storytelling posts supports the notion that emotional resonance is a key determinant of trust in digital communication. By presenting real-life stories and emotional experiences, the brand facilitates empathetic responses that deepen audience involvement. This finding is consistent with narrative communication theories, which argue that stories are powerful tools for meaning-making and emotional connection.

Storytelling enables audiences to interpret brand messages within familiar social and emotional contexts. Rather than processing information cognitively alone, audiences engage affectively, allowing trust to emerge through emotional alignment. This process reinforces the idea that brand trust in social media environments is relational and experiential rather than purely informational.

B. Narrative Authenticity and Brand Credibility

The authenticity of storytelling content plays a significant role in shaping brand credibility. The avoidance of overt promotional language and the emphasis on genuine human experiences contribute to the perception of sincerity. Audiences are more likely to trust brands that present themselves transparently and prioritize social values over self-interest.

This finding supports the argument that authenticity is a critical component of digital trust. In an environment saturated with promotional content, authentic storytelling differentiates brands and fosters credibility. The consistent use of moral narratives reinforces the perception that the brand's actions align with its values, strengthening trust over time.

C. Audience Participation and Relational Communication

The interactive nature of audience engagement highlights the relational dimension of storytelling. Comments and reactions serve as spaces for emotional exchange and collective interpretation. This participatory process transforms storytelling into a shared narrative experience, where trust is co-constructed between the brand and its audience.

From a digital communication perspective, this interaction underscores the importance of dialogical engagement. Trust is not imposed by the brand but emerges through continuous interaction and mutual recognition. Storytelling thus functions as a relational communication practice that sustains long-term audience relationships.

D. Consistency, Identity, and Trust Formation

The consistency of storytelling themes observed in the results reinforces the theoretical understanding that trust develops through repeated and coherent messaging. Consistent narratives reduce uncertainty and enable audiences to form stable expectations about the brand's behavior. This stability is essential for trust formation in digital contexts, where information overload and message fragmentation are common.

The coherent brand identity constructed through storytelling also supports the notion that identity clarity enhances trust. When audiences can easily recognize and predict a brand's values, they are more likely to develop confidence in its intentions and actions.

E. Humanization and Reduction of Psychological Distance

The human-centered approach adopted by @berbuatbaikofficial contributes to the reduction of psychological distance between the brand and its audience. By focusing on individual stories and emotional experiences, the brand becomes more relatable and approachable. This humanization process facilitates emotional closeness, a key factor in trust development.

In digital environments, where physical interaction is absent, humanization through storytelling compensates for the lack of face-to-face communication. Visual narratives and emotional language function as substitutes for nonverbal cues, enabling audiences to perceive warmth, empathy, and sincerity.

F. Implications for Digital Communication Strategy

The findings of this study highlight the strategic value of storytelling in digital communication. Storytelling is not merely a content format but a relational strategy that integrates narrative, emotion, and interaction to build trust. For organizations operating in social media environments, adopting storytelling practices that emphasize authenticity, consistency, and human values can enhance audience trust and engagement.

Academically, this study contributes to the discourse on digital communication and brand trust by demonstrating how narrative practices operate within social media platforms. It reinforces the relevance of qualitative approaches in capturing the nuanced processes through which trust is constructed in digital spaces.

CONCLUSIONS

This study aims to analyze the role of storytelling in digital communication strategies to increase brand trust, using the Instagram account @berbuatbaikofficial as a case study. Based on content observations, interviews with the management team and audience, and literature analysis, the following conclusions were drawn:

1. **Storytelling as a primary strategy for digital communication**
   The @berbutabaikofficial account consistently uses a storytelling approach to convey social messages. The narratives presented emphasize real-life stories of beneficiaries, community action, and the tangible impact of donations. This storytelling is designed to create emotional connection, not simply convey information.
2. **Storytelling contributes to building brand trust**
   Storytelling strengthens brand trust through three dimensions: reliability (the reliability of information and consistency of content), benevolence (the organization's good intentions in helping beneficiaries), and integrity (the transparency of donation distribution). Authentic narratives accompanied by visual documentation make audiences feel more confident about donating.
3. **Communication elements that strengthen audience engagement.**
   Narrative elements such as character, conflict, resolution, and moral are crucial factors in fostering audience engagement. Interview respondents emphasized that real-life stories are more engaging than formal invitations. This demonstrates that storytelling is not only a means of persuasion but also a mechanism for fostering active public participation.
4. **Storytelling as a long-term instrument**
   Storytelling not only builds immediate brand trust but also strengthens the long-term reputation of digital philanthropy organizations. With authentic and consistent narratives, organizations can maintain audience loyalty while expanding their donor network.

   Thus, this study confirms that storytelling is an effective digital communication strategy in building brand trust, especially in the context of digital philanthropy.

Overall, this research provides evidence that storytelling plays a strategic role in building brand trust in the digital age, particularly in the context of philanthropy. Consistent, authentic narratives not only build public trust but also encourage social engagement and community participation in online donation activities.

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With the growing social media ecosystem, storytelling has the potential to become one of the main foundations of a sustainable digital communications strategy, both for non-profit organizations and other sectors.

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