

SOCIAL TRUST THROUGH LOCAL GOVERNMENT WEBSITE IN INDONESIA AS A PART OF GOVERNMENT PUBLIC RELATIONS PRACTICE

Gita Aprinta EB

Universitas Semarang, Indonesia

Abstract: In the developing country of Indonesia, considerable emphasis is placed on the role of government Public Relations in helping to the nation of 246 million people to transition to a system of increased democratic, participatory and transparent governance. One of the Indonesian President's programs 'Nawacita' (Nine Goals) includes a goal that governments should overcome problems that currently limit their engagement in effective, democratic and trustworthy governance. Indonesia has 500 city and regency governments, and priority is placed on restoring social trust in public institution in these local government bodies. This research will study district government websites in Java, Kalimantan and Papua. Although Indonesia's local governments currently use their websites primarily for simple dissemination of information, this research demonstrates how and why they would adopt more sophisticated and extensive uses of their sites to develop as two-way communication tools to facilitate citizen engagement. Study of the websites of three local governments—the Surabaya, Palangkaraya and Jayapura on the island of Java—found no public discussion nor interactivity that was designed to improve social trust. The focus was on using the sites as a mouthpiece to circulate information rather than as a form of public participation or social trust in local development processes. Using data mining from the websites and in-depth interviews with local government public relations officers and citizen opinion leaders to gain holistic perspectives, this research found the initial result from the short observation that local government website usage only for transferring information. The two-way symmetrical model of communication only applied on Surabaya in early level.

Keywords: social trust, Indonesian local government, public relations, government websites, government-citizen communications, e-government

Introduction

Electronic government or better known as e-government is one example of the development of information and communication technology, combining electronic devices such as computers and internet networks, e-government provides public services to citizens and other stakeholders in a country or region. West (West D., 2000) defines e-government as a form of delivering government information and services online via the Internet or other digital means that have the potential to improve relationships with citizens, businesses and other governments. While other arguments say that the terminology of e-government involves digital interaction between citizens and government, between government and other government agencies, between government and citizens, between government and government officials, between government and business (Jeong, 2007), and it occurs at various levels, from national to local government level.

As an innovation, e-government concepts are widely developed in many countries, for example is in United States. In US, e-government is one of the fastest growing online activities. According to the Pew Internet and American Life Project (2006) more than half of Americans (54%) accessed and used government sites (Tolbert, Mossberger & McNeal, 2008). The data shows that almost 50 states in the United States implement some type of e-government and 80% of local governments manage their own sites. The e-government services used range

from providing information to online transactions with the government. Those services are available on every government website (McNeal, Hale, & Dotterweich, Citizen-Government Interaction and the Internet: Expectations and Accomplishments in Contact, Quality and Trust, 2008)

Meanwhile in Indonesia, the implementation of e-government is one of President Joko Widodo programs called 'Nawacita' which one of its stated, making governments less absent in effective, democratic and trustworthy governance by giving priority to restoring social trust in public institution such as local government. The e-government concepts apply in almost cities and regency in Indonesia, such as Sragen regency with OSS (One Stop Serving) for any kind of citizen license needs, Surabaya city with interactive government website and Bojonegoro that claimed as one of the best e-government in Indonesia implemented e-procurement for transparency information regarding government projects and tender with private corporate as their stakeholders. Basically, the implementation of e-government addresses the various demands of the community, among others, the availability of reliable, effective and accessible public services; facilitate community aspirations in the form of public dialogue and participation in government policy formulation (Edwi, 2008).

The implementation of e-government's divided into several stages. First stage is government's website. The communication process between government and citizens occurs through many channels, one of them is government's website which facilitating information, covering limitations of information dissemination and reducing information gaps. However, e-government implementation in Indonesia faces so many challenges, not only about the infrastructures but also geographic and economics challenge. There are some areas where government's website were developed quite advanced such as Bandung and Surabaya and there are also areas that government's website are still lagging behind. (Kumorotomo, 2009). The survey conducted by Rokhman (2008) on 30 regencies and 6 cities in Central Java, stated that municipal government website are well accessible, but mostly only at the informative stage, which is simply publishing information about the cities profile. Another finding is, only around 40% government website's are interactive enough to communicate with the public.

As part of e-government development, government websites should be used to develop relationships between government and citizens and serve as a two-way communication channel. Thus, at the same time, playing as government's public relations role. Government public relations (GPR) is always on two democratic terms, that is, the responsibility of the government to report on its activities to citizens and the need for support as well as public participation as part of the effectiveness of governance. Lee (2012) stresses that the goal of GPR is to fulfill government responsibility by providing service information for citizens by responding to their needs.

Another issue arises is a matter of trust. With all the potential, government website's has not been fully able to gain citizen's trust in government transparency that affected to citizen participation. When we talked about trust, we talked about government and citizen strong relationship. Based on survey conducted by the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) in 2013, actually Indonesia ranks first in government public confidence. The confidence increased about 28% than before (Purwanto, 2017), but with so many corruption cases nowadays, trust became another challenge in Indonesia government.

Trust is understood as a property of a collective unit (dyadic, group, and an ongoing form of collectivity) rather than as an isolated individual. Hence, as a collective attribute, trust is in a social system as long as the members of the system act accordingly and in the corridor for the sake of future survival formed by the presence of each other and / or the symbolic representation of members (Barber 1983). So it can be said that trust is a means or tool to build and maintain social relationships. That's why this study will focus on local government website are used as public relations functions to serve democratic, participatory and transparency governance as a result of social trust. By using quick observation to local government website, this study tries to identified how's the government website reach social trust among the citizens. Those government website are www.surabaya.go.id, www.palangkaraya.go.id, and www.jayapurakota.go.id

E-Government in Computer Mediated Communication (CMC) Perspective

Computer Mediated Communication is defined as:

Broadly, CMC can cover almost all computer usage including diverse applications such as statistical analysis programs, remote sensing systems, and financial modeling programs, all in accordance with the concept of human communication. (Santoro 1995)

While John December defines CMC is a process of human communication through a computer that involves people, being in a certain context, engaging in the process of shaping the media for various purposes.

Susan Herring, defines CMC in the classical perspective of CMC is the communication that occurs between manusa through the mediation of the computer.

CMCs are usually linked specifically to human interpersonal communication via internet and websites. To better understand the CMC framework, it is necessary to look at the three main concepts of CMC itself, namely:

1. Communication, there are basic principles of communication in CMC, such as:
 - a. First, communication must be understood as a much more dynamic process. The meaning of the message lies not in words, but is much more fluid and context-dependent, shifting constantly from place to place, from person to person, and time to time.
 - b. Second, although communication is often seen as an exchange of information between communicators and communicants, communication is essentially about negotiating messages between people. Individuals have two roles at the same time that as speakers and listeners in turn, therefore communication is called a transaction because there is a change as an interpreter and infleuncer.
 - c. Third, consciously or uncommonly serves different functions and usually more than one function. These three things then form what is called multimodal in communication.
2. Mediated, basically all forms of communication are mediated through our interactions with humans in verbal form non verbal maunpn because communication will never exist in a vacuum. Mediation means to transmit something or act as a medium for something. In the CMC concept, the intermediary was technology as a means to disseminate information and news. CMCs usually limit what is meant by technology for machines designed, built and used for the purposes of information and communication exchange. This is what is commonly referred to as 'Information and Communication Technology (or ICT) and brings us well to the core concept of CMC.
3. Almost everything in life nowadays involves the computers in some way, so that this causes almost everything we do is also mediated by the computer, especially the technology of communication, the internet. (Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic 2004)

E-government adopts a CMC system that is expected to facilitate interactive exchange between government and citizens. Interactive is simply a two-way action where it becomes a form of expression of the communication exchanges over the reconciled message. Ha and James define interactivity as a form of expansion in which communicators and communicants respond to each other, and have a desire to facilitate communication needs (Lievrouw and Livingstone 2006) .CMC 'gives us the means to examine, modify and expand our understanding of social interaction human'.

It was mentioned before that new media technology essentially gave a change to human communication. CMC provides a medium to test, modify and expand the understanding of human interaction. In the CMC tradition, the most basic assumption is the medium is functioning as a two-way communication channel between participants. Meanwhile, according to Pavlik writes that 'interactivity means two-way communication between source and receiver, or, wider multi-way communication between a number of sources and receivers'. In some literatures, two-way communication is characterized by an egalitarian notion of mutual discourse and mutual reciprocity. (Thurlow, Lengel and Tomic; 2004).

The Social Trust, Two Way Communication ad Citizen Participation

Trust is a major component of social capital, and social capital is a necessary condition for social integration, economic efficiency, and democratic stability (Fukuyama, 1995). In a broader view, social integration is a dynamic and structured process in which all members participate in dialogue to achieve and maintain peaceful social relationships. Social integration does not mean forced assimilation. Social integration focuses on the need to move towards a safe, stable and fair society by improving the conditions of social disintegration and social fragmentation, fragmentation and social polarization, and by extending and strengthening the conditions of social integration towards peaceful social relations, coexistence, collaboration and cohesion

In other word, trust is an important assumption that allows for a fiduciary relationship in the pursuit of common goals (Lewis & Weigert, 1985). While (Luhman, 1979) defines trust as a reduction in complexity and uncertainty. Some studies of social trust are usually associated with beliefs of government and institutions such as media, judicial systems, etc., where such beliefs have consequences in the course of democratic practice in society. (Welch, Rivera, Yankoski, Lupton, & Giancola, 2001). Eventhough, trust is common considered as a political support, but in reality it also affected in various aspect of the government. Such as, trust is lead into strong and harminous relationship between government and society, though it does not diminish the possibility of problems arising among them.

Social trust is a cognitive process through individual relationships to government institutions and contributes benefits such as information, material resources, social support, flowing through networks connecting actors (Coleman J., 1988), ie government and society through the local government website . Social trust also referred as a mediation of relationships both face-to-face and through other media that's why social trust also provide two way communication.

Initial Result of The Study

Actually, this study is planning to conduct in 1-2 years research to complete and finding the whole reality about social trust and government public relations. That's why this paper provide the initial result of this study according to short observation. Ideally, e-government, in this case is local government website is not only about Information technology usage to transfer information and email. The website supposed to be effective, interactive and facilitate public discussion. The interaction consist of citizens communicating with the government and facilitating citizen involvement using ICT such as local government website.

Though those three local government websites is in interactive categories among others government website in Indonesia, but in fact, those websites is only serve information dissemination instead of using the website to communicate in two way model. Other results shows that, too many application in the website that actually not utilized by the citizen or the government itself. The government tend to treat the citizen as a customer that's why only information nad there is no feed back or interaction rather the partner, that's why the participation or the citizen engagement is on low level.

Website as a mean of government communication is considered to have potential in building and maintains relations between citizens and governments.. In addition to having the accessibility and capacity to provide information, e-government is also considered to make governments more transparent and efficient (Ho, 2002),

e-government also makes governments more responsive to public opinion and needs through faster and more convenient communication options for users (Thomas & Streib, 2003). The most important is, e-government in this case local government website has the potential to create more democratic participation, on other than, that through the website actually opens more opportunities for public participation in government, thus encouraging democracy practice.

Discussion and Conclusion

Since this research is conducting for 1-2 years forward, the initial result was founded as a preliminary observation, stated that local government was using the website as information dissemination. From those two local government website of Palangkaraya and Jayapura, informative dissemination message strategy was the most frequently showed up on the observation. The two-way model communication only appeared on Surabaya's website on the early level. The using of a website at the local government level offer promise of increasing citizen engagement and allowing them to evaluate, commenting, even participating in government policymaking. The local government should see the opportunity through the website as social capital to lead the transparency in reaching good governance.

The use of the Internet by governments to communicate with citizens is certainly not new; often referred to as "e-government," these initiatives include all online communications and activities by governments (Dixon, 2010). The government website is a part of the e-government system is well suited to communicate the government program to their citizen and having direct interaction in order to gain social trust which will be affected to citizen's participation. Thus, the local government website not solely as a government program, but it can run as a public relations instrument that can perform two-way communication function as proposed by Grunig, which has a goal to embraces negotiation between the organization and its publics, and one that also fosters mutual understanding (Grunig, 1992). It is important for both government and citizen to communicate their ideas and behavior to make a two-way symmetrical model more reliable to implement on the local government website. That is the reason why in the digital era, the government must understand how the platform work and utilize the website as an instrument of Government Public Relations practice.

Still, there are so many weakness and lack in this study. It takes a long time to collect the documents from those three websites, that's why this research will conduct more than 1 year. In the future, in addition, analyzing how the local government website can initiate social trust as a part of government public relations, an in-depth interview will conduct is another data collection. This research will interview a government officer or the authorized one who responded to provide and manage the local government website. Thus the problems can be seen as answer holistically.

References

- Barber, B., 1983, *The Logic and Limits of Trust*. New Brunswick, New Jersey. (USA: Rutgers University Press)
- Coleman, J., 1998, Social capital in the creation of human capital. *American Journal of Sociology* , 94, 95-120
- Dixon, B. (2010). Towards e-government 2.0: An assessment of where e-government 2.0 is and where it is headed. *Public Administration and Management*, 15, 418-454.
- Edwi, A. S., 2008. Tantangan dan Hambatan dalam Implementasi E-government di Indonesia. *Seminar Nasional Informatika*. (Yogyakarta: UPN Press Yogyakarta)
- Fukuyama, F., 1995, *Trust: the social cirtues and the creation of prosperity*. (New York, NY, USA: New York Press)
- Grunig, James E. and Larissa A. Grunig. (1992). *Models of Public Relations and Communication*. Edited by J. E. Grunig. Excellence in Public Relations and Communication Management. Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Publishers.
- Jeong, Chun Hai., 2007, *Fundamental of Development Adminsitration*. (Selangor: Scholar Press. ISBN 978-967-5-04508-0

- Kumorotomo, W. (2009, Januari 12). *Kegagalan Penerapan E-Government dan Kegiatan Tidak Produktif dengan Internet.*, from Wahyudi Kumorotomo: <https://kumoro.staff.ugm.ac.id/wp-content/uploads/2009/01/kegagalan-penerapan-egov.pdf>. Date of Access: 19/04/2018
- Lee, J. H., & Kim, H., 2014, An Exploratory study on the digital identity formation of Korean University EFL learners. *English Teaching; Practice and Critique* , 13 (3), 149-172
- Lewis, J. D., & Weigert, A., 1985,. Trust as a Social Reality. *Social Forces* , 63 (4), 967-971
- Lievrouw, L. A., & Livingstone, S., 2006. Handbook of New Media. (London: Sage Publications Ltd)
- Luhman, N., 1979, *Trust and Power*. (London, England: Pitman)
- Purwanto, H., 2017, July 17, *Indonesia ranks first in public trust in government*. (Antara), from Antara News: <https://en.antaranews.com/news/111919/indonesia-ranks-first-in-public-trust-in-governmen>. Date of Access: 14/03/2018
- Santoro, G, 1995, *What is computer-mediated communication? In Z.L Berge and M.P Collins (eds) Computer mediated communication and the online classroom*. (Hampton, NJ: Cresskill)
- Tolbert, C. J., Mossberger, K., & McNeal, R., 2008, Institutions, Policy Innovation, and E-Government in the American State. *Public Administration Review*, 549-563.
- Thurlow, C., Lengel, L., & Tomic, A., 2004, *Computer Mediated Communication; Social Interaction and the Internet*. (London: Sage Publication Ltd)
- Welch, M. R., Rivera, R. E., Yankoski, J., Lupton, P. M., & Giancola, R., 2001. Determinants and Consequences of Social Trust. *SOC* , 476-176
- West, D. 2000. *Assesing E-Government: e Internet, Democracy, adn Servive by State and Federal Government*. (Washington, DC: World Bank)