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Leveraging Instagram for Public Service Communication: A Case Study of LRT Jabodebek

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how Instagram serves as a public service communication tool for LRT Jabodebek, a new urban rail transit system in Greater Jakarta, Indonesia. The research aimed to analyze the platform's role in disseminating information, engaging users, and improving service delivery. Using a descriptive qualitative method, non-participant observation and documentation analysis were conducted on the official Instagram account @lrt_jabodebek between April and June 2025. From 461 posts, eight were selected based on engagement metrics, including schedule updates, safety campaigns, ridership milestones, and feedback responses. Findings reveal that Instagram enhanced service through real-time updates, transparency, and public education. The account frequently shared schedules, addressed complaints, and promoted commuter etiquette and safety systems. Increased engagement correlated with higher ridership from March to May 2025. The study concludes Instagram is now a central communication channel for urban transport, recommending content diversification, faster responses, and cross-platform integration for greater effectiveness.

Keywords: Public Service Communication, Urban Transportation, LRT Jabodebek, Social Media Engagement

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INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era of rapid digital transformation, the integration of information and communication technologies (ICT) has profoundly reshaped how public services are communicated and accessed. ICT encompasses two fundamental dimensions: information technology, which involves the manipulation and processing of data, and communication technology, which facilitates the transmission of information between senders and receivers (Rianto & Dozan, 2020). The advent of the digital era has rendered traditional communication channels—such as postal mail, telephone, and face-to-face interactions—less dominant, paving the way for more immediate, interactive, and internet-based methods of information dissemination. This paradigm shift has enabled organizations, including public service providers, to establish more efficient, accessible, and transparent communication with their audiences.

Among various platforms, social media has emerged as a powerful medium for information sharing, public engagement, and strategic communication. Social media is defined as a set of digital infrastructures and tools designed to produce and distribute content, encompassing private messages, news, ideas, and cultural products in digital form, consumed and produced by individuals, organizations, and industries (Howard & Parks, 2012, as cited in Shafira Putri et al., 2021). Instagram, in particular, has gained prominence as one of the most influential platforms for visual communication and interactive engagement, making it a preferred choice for organizations seeking to connect with diverse audiences.

Indonesia, as the world's largest archipelagic nation with a population of 281.6 million in 2024 (BPS, 2024), faces persistent challenges in urban transportation and public service delivery.

The high population density, particularly in metropolitan regions such as Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, and Bekasi (Jabodebek), necessitates the development of modern, sustainable, and integrated public transportation systems to alleviate congestion, reduce private vehicle dependency, and enhance mobility. In response, the Indonesian government introduced the Light Rail Transit (LRT) Jabodebek system as part of a broader urban mobility strategy. Since its inauguration in August 2023, LRT Jabodebek has shown remarkable growth in ridership, with passenger numbers increasing from 4.56 million in 2023 to over 21 million in 2024 (Instagram @lrt_jabodebek, 2024).

Amid this expansion, the need for effective communication between LRT Jabodebek and its users has become increasingly critical. Public transportation services are not only evaluated based on operational efficiency but also on their ability to deliver accurate, timely, and accessible information to users. Instagram, with more than 118,000 followers on the official LRT Jabodebek account (@lrt_jabodebek), has been strategically utilized as a communication channel to provide real-time updates, route information, service announcements, and promotional campaigns. With over 139 million active social media users in Indonesia—representing nearly 50% of the population—Instagram ranks among the top three most-used platforms in the country (We Are Social, 2024). Its visually driven and interactive features enable dynamic engagement with key demographic groups, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, who constitute the majority of urban public transport users.

Despite these developments, there remain critical gaps in understanding how effectively LRT Jabodebek leverages Instagram as a tool for public service communication. Previous studies have explored the use of social media in corporate branding (Regina et al., 2022), public relations in state-owned enterprises (Arum et al., 2020), and digital engagement in transportation services such as Jaklingko (Shinta et al., 2023) and LRT (Isnawijayani & Oktaviani, 2019). However, limited research has examined the strategic dimensions of content, interaction, and user engagement in the context of a newly implemented, large-scale public transportation service like LRT Jabodebek. Moreover, while studies have analysed Instagram as a marketing tool, fewer have investigated its role in enhancing public service delivery, trust-building, and user satisfaction.

This research addresses this gap by analysing how LRT Jabodebek utilizes Instagram to communicate with its public and improve service delivery. Specifically, it investigates the effectiveness of content strategies, user interaction, and real-time information dissemination in fostering public awareness, trust, and participation. The study is guided by the following research question: *How does the content and communication strategy of LRT Jabodebek's Instagram account contribute to the enhancement of public services?*

The theoretical framework underpinning this study combines Pierre Lévy's New Media Theory and Public Communication Theory. Lévy's conceptualization of new media emphasizes interactivity, convergence, digitization, and networked communication (Subria, 2020). His framework identifies four critical dimensions—Context, Connectivity, Community, and Content (4C)—that shape the dynamics of online communication.

These dimensions are particularly relevant for understanding how Instagram operates as an interactive public service platform: **Context** refers to the digital era and the characteristics of Generation Z and Millennials as primary users seeking fast, visual, and mobile-accessible information; **Connectivity** highlights Instagram's capacity to enable two-way interactions through features such as Reels, Stories, Direct Messages, and comments; **Community** emerges as users engage with the platform, share experiences, and provide feedback, fostering a participatory ecosystem; **Content** encompasses the visual, textual, and interactive materials disseminated by LRT Jabodebek, including schedules, routes, safety education, and promotional campaigns.

Public Communication Theory (Cangara, 2021) further provides a lens to analyze how messages are strategically designed, transmitted, and received in a public context. Public communication involves deliberate and planned efforts to inform, influence, and engage large audiences using appropriate channels and messages. In this study, LRT Jabodebek functions as the sender (source), Instagram serves as the medium, and passengers or potential users represent the receivers (audience). The interaction between these components determines the perceived reliability, responsiveness, and effectiveness of the service provider's communication.

The importance of this study lies in its potential contributions to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it enriches the discourse on digital public service communication by contextualizing new media theory within a real-world, large-scale urban transportation setting. Practically, it provides actionable insights for LRT Jabodebek and similar public service providers on how to optimize Instagram content for real-time information dissemination, enhance user engagement, and build public trust. By focusing on measurable indicators—such as response timeliness, message consistency, visual clarity, and public interaction—this research offers a comprehensive framework for evaluating social media's role in public service enhancement.

In summary, while social media platforms have been widely adopted in various sectors, the strategic use of Instagram for public service communication in emerging transportation systems remains underexplored. This study aims to fill this gap by providing an in-depth content analysis and theoretical evaluation of LRT Jabodebek's Instagram strategy, thereby contributing to the evolving field of digital communication and public administration.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design to analyse the use of Instagram as a medium for public service communication by LRT Jabodebek. A qualitative approach was selected because it allows for an in-depth exploration of phenomena, focusing on meanings, perceptions, and contextual understanding rather than numerical measurement (Sugiyono, 2023; Moleong, 2017). The research was conducted over a three-month period, from April to June 2025, encompassing stages of planning, observation, data collection, analysis, and reporting. The unit of analysis consisted of two primary elements: (1) the Instagram account @lrt_jabodebek as a digital communication platform, and (2) indicators of public service improvement, such as timeliness of responses, accuracy of information, and interaction with users (Nugraha, 2019).

Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Primary data were obtained through non-participant observation, in which the researcher analysed posts, captions, hashtags, stories, reels, and user interactions (likes, comments) without engaging in the account's activities (Auliya et al., 2020). Secondary data were gathered through documentation, including screenshots of posts, user comments, statistical engagement data, and relevant academic literature (Hardani et al., 2020).

Data processing applied a triangulation technique, integrating observation and documentation to enhance validity (Sugiyono, 2023). Analysis followed Miles and Huberman's model, which includes four stages: data collection, data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles & Huberman, as cited in Sugiyono, 2023). Collected content was categorized into themes such as service schedules, routes, tariffs, promotional campaigns, and user feedback responses. This approach enabled a systematic interpretation of how Instagram content contributes to user trust, real-time information dissemination, and improved public service delivery in urban transportation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study explored the role of Instagram as a public service communication medium for LRT Jabodebek. The findings are based on content analysis of the official Instagram account @lrt_jabodebek, which serves as the primary digital communication platform for disseminating service information, policies, promotions, and educational materials to the public (Instagram @lrt_jabodebek, 2025). As of June 3, 2025, the account had 119,000 followers and had posted 461 posts since its first upload on October 29, 2019.



Figure 1. @lrt_jabodebek Instagram Account

Instagram Content Categories

Eight representative contents from 2025 were analysed based on engagement metrics (likes and comments). These contents included as showed on Table 1.

Table 1. Representative LRT Jabodebek Contents (2025)

No	Content	Date	Likes	Comments	Summary
1	Train Schedule Updates	March 1, 2025	4,267	441	Provided travel schedule updates; reflected high demand for info.
2	Rising Ridership Achievements	March 6, 2025	984	99	Highlighted 2,147,665 users (Feb 2025) and 103,075 in one day.
3	Commuter Etiquette Education	March 19, 2025	695	51	Promoted safety and passenger comfort rules.
4	Lost and Found Service Information	April 8, 2025	571	11	Facilitated lost item recovery.
5	Ridership Record Celebration	April 26, 2025	839	69	Announced a record of 103,582 passengers in one day.
6	Safety Technology Education	May 17, 2025	1,023	43	Explained Automatic Train Protection (ATP) system.
7	Differences Between LRT Jabodebek and LRT Jakarta	May 21, 2025	2,527	122	Educated users on system differences between the two LRTs.
8	Route and Integration Map	May 2025	2,394	93	Visualized route and connectivity information.

Across these contents, LRT Jabodebek effectively utilized Instagram's feed, stories, reels, and highlight features to provide permanent, temporary, and interactive content. The account also incorporated a visual mascot named RAINA, representing a train attendant, to strengthen identity and foster engagement (LRT Jabodebek, 2025).



Figure 2. RAINA, Visual Mascot of LRT Jabodebek

Analysis based on Pierre Lévy's New Media Theory identified four dominant characteristics as showed on Table 2.

Table 2. Analysis of LRT Jabodebek Instagram Based on Pierre Lévy's New Media Theory

No	Characteristic	Description
1	Digitalization	All information (schedules, routes, safety tips) was delivered in visual and text-based digital formats for accessibility and efficiency.
2	Interactivity	The account engaged in two-way communication via comments and direct messages, responding to user inquiries and complaints.
3	Virtuality	Users accessed real-time information without visiting physical stations, reducing reliance on printed materials.
4	Networking	Hashtags (#LRTJabodebek, #NaikLRTJabodebekLebihBaik) amplified reach and connected with other public transport networks (KRL, MRT, TransJakarta).

Public Service Improvement Indicators

The findings revealed that Instagram played a significant role in enhancing public service delivery for LRT Jabodebek. One of its primary contributions was the facilitation of real-time communication**,** as the platform provided frequent updates on train schedules, service delays, and important ridership milestones (Hakim et al., 2024). This immediate dissemination of information enabled passengers to plan their journeys more efficiently and reduced uncertainty during daily commutes.

In addition, Instagram served as a medium to strengthen transparency and responsiveness. The LRT Jabodebek social media team actively responded to passenger complaints, particularly regarding escalator malfunctions and temporary service disruptions, thereby improving public trust and accountability (Nugraha, 2019). Moreover, the platform was utilized as a tool for public education, delivering campaigns on commuter etiquette, safety systems, and lost-and-found procedures (Maulidyanti & Suciati, 2020). These efforts successfully increased passenger awareness, encouraged responsible commuter behavior, and contributed to a more informed and cooperative transportation culture.

From March to May 2025, user interaction data showed an increasing trend in engagement in Table 3.

Table 3. Social Media Engagement

Month	Tone Comments		
	Positive	Negative	Neutral
March	20	14	3
April	13	12	12
May	33	11	25

Ridership data also reflected upward momentum: 2,056,756 (March), 8,434,674 (April), 10,727,798 (May)**.**

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that Instagram plays a crucial role in facilitating interactive, transparent, and accessible public service communication for urban mass transportation. This aligns with previous studies that highlight social media's ability to enhance service visibility and user engagement in public transportation contexts (Ferrari Lancia et al., 2024; Maulidyanti & Suciati, 2020).

Instagram as a Public Service Communication Tool

LRT Jabodebek's Instagram account functions as both an information hub and a public relations tool**,** effectively integrating service updates, promotions, and user feedback channels. Compared to traditional communication channels such as on-site announcements or printed brochures, Instagram allows real-time, wide-reaching, and cost-efficient dissemination (Darminto et al., 2023).

This aligns with Public Communication Theory, which explains the communication process through five key components. The sender in this context is LRT Jabodebek, delivering messages in the form of multimodal content combining visual and textual elements. The channel is Instagram's digital infrastructure, chosen for its accessibility and reach. The receivers are predominantly Millennials and Generation Z users who actively engage with the platform. The effect of this communication approach includes increased public awareness, higher ridership, and improved trust in the LRT Jabodebek service

Several content strategies were identified as effective in enhancing LRT Jabodebek's Instagram communication. Informative and educational posts, particularly those related to schedules, safety, and commuter etiquette, generated high engagement by meeting passengers' need for reliable information (Nurmuhammad & Pamungkas, 2020). Interactive engagement through active use of comments and direct messages fostered two-way communication and positively influenced public perception of the service. A timely posting schedule, with content shared during peak activity hours (08:00–12:00 WIB), maximized visibility and user interaction. Additionally, the use of a visual mascot, RAINA, helped humanize the brand and strengthen users' emotional connection. These findings corroborate with Pierre Lévy's (2001) perspective that new media thrive when platforms encourage participation, personalization, and networked interaction.

Despite the overall effectiveness of LRT Jabodebek's Instagram communication, several challenges were identified. Service quality gaps emerged as some users expressed dissatisfaction with malfunctioning escalators and frequent train halts. Limited content diversity was also observed, as promotional and celebratory posts tended to generate lower engagement compared to practical updates such as schedules. Additionally, audience segmentation remained narrow, with the majority of followers being urban young adults, potentially excluding older demographics who are less active on Instagram.

Implications for Urban Transportation Communication

The success of LRT Jabodebek's Instagram strategy reflects a significant paradigm shift in urban transportation communication. Social media is no longer merely a supplementary channel but has become central to delivering services and maintaining engagement with the public. Through digital platforms, transportation providers can disseminate real-time information, interact with passengers, and address service-related issues more efficiently than through traditional means. This transformation demonstrates how social media can serve as a vital tool for enhancing transparency, building trust, and fostering a stronger connection between operators and commuters.

Moreover, digital channels contribute to achieving sustainable urban mobility goals by encouraging greater public transport adoption (BPS, 2024). The findings of this study also provide valuable lessons for other urban transit systems, such as MRT Jakarta and TransJakarta, where similar social media campaigns have successfully driven ridership growth. For example, MRT Jakarta recorded 3.47 million passengers in June 2024, while TransJakarta reached 31.6 million passengers in the same period. By implementing integrated and interactive communication strategies, these systems—and others across Indonesia—can further optimize passenger engagement, improve service perception, and strengthen their role in shaping modern urban mobility culture.

CONCLUSIONS

This study analyzed the use of Instagram as a public service communication platform for LRT Jabodebek. Using a descriptive qualitative method with non-participant observation and documentation from April to June 2025, the study found that Instagram effectively supports real-time information dissemination, public engagement, and commuter education. Key strategies included informative content, active two-way communication, and the use of a visual mascot, RAINA. Ridership and engagement trends demonstrated a positive correlation with these efforts. However, challenges remain in content diversity, equitable audience reach, and service-related complaints.

Applying Pierre Lévy's New Media Theory and Public Communication Theory, this study highlights Instagram's role as more than just a promotional channel; it is an essential part of urban

mobility culture. Recommendations include diversifying content, enhancing response mechanisms, and integrating cross-platform strategies to improve trust, accessibility, and sustainable urban transportation communication.

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