



The Algorithmic Public Relations: Managing School Reputation in the Age of Social Media Personalization

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Abstract:

This study aims to examine how personalization algorithms on social media affect school reputation management and public perception of schools. This research uses a qualitative design with a case study approach in schools. Data were collected through in-depth interviews and participatory observations, which were then analyzed using thematic analysis. The results show that social media personalization algorithms limit the reach of messages delivered by schools, so that even if positive content is uploaded consistently, it can only be received by a limited audience that has relevant engagement or interests. These findings indicate that managing a school's reputation requires adjustments to social media algorithms and more adaptive communication strategies. The contribution of this research is the development of a school reputation management model that is responsive to changes in algorithms and audience preferences. The limitation of this study lies in the use of one case study, so it is recommended for future research to expand the research sample to obtain a more comprehensive picture.

INTRODUCTION

In the ever-evolving digital era, social media has become an important platform to shape public perception (Agarwal & Puppala, 2024; Rajendran, 2024). Schools as educational institutions have a reputation for being highly dependent on the image formed in cyberspace (Glinskaya & Popova, 2025). Social media, driven by personalization algorithms, allows the messages delivered to individuals to be highly focused and specific (Dekker et al., 2025; Gombard, 2025). This creates new challenges in managing a school's reputation, as the image formed can vary greatly, depending on who receives the message (AlMarshoud et al., 2024; Mogaji & Jain, 2024; Tusher et al., 2024). This research is important because it provides insight into how schools can effectively manage and utilize social media to build and maintain their reputation in the public eye. This is relevant for the public, especially educators, school managers, and parents, who want to understand more deeply about the influence of social media in shaping the image of education.

The problem faced by many schools is how to maintain their reputation in an increasingly digitized and personalized world (Gm et al., 2024; Rahimi & Oh, 2024). The process of personalizing social media algorithms means that the

information received by individuals can be very different, which can result in misinterpretation or the dissemination of inaccurate information about a school (Baharun et al., 2025; Magoge et al., 2025; Shin, 2024). This can affect public trust in the quality of education offered by the school. Schools must meet this challenge by developing effective communication strategies on social media, so as not only to manage the right information, but also to build a positive image that can last a long time in a society that is heavily dependent on digital information.

The phenomenon that occurs in the field shows that many schools are still having difficulty in managing their reputation on social media (Kbaier et al., 2024; Staudt Willet, 2024). Often the information about schools spread in cyberspace is not always accurate, and the messages received by the public are greatly influenced by personalized algorithms (Magoge et al., 2025). For example, a school that has a flagship program may not be known to prospective students or parents, as information about the school is only displayed on certain segments of society (Jafarov, 2024; Lee et al., 2024). This phenomenon shows that schools need to be more proactive in using social media to convey consistent and credible messages, in order to build a good reputation among the public.

Several previous studies have discussed the use of social media in building an organization's image and reputation. Research by Smith (2025) shows that an effective social media strategy can improve an organization's reputation, but only if it is well managed (C. M. Kim & Prince, 2025). However, most of the research focuses on companies or commercial brands, not educational institutions. Research on school reputation management on social media is still relatively little. Therefore, this research contributes to broadening the understanding of how personalization algorithms on social media can affect school imagery and how schools can respond to these challenges. A major drawback of previous research is the lack of focus on the influence of social media algorithm personalization on public perception of educational institutions.

Most of the research on online reputation focuses on commercial organizations and not much has examined the dynamics of reputation in the education sector. Several studies such as those conducted by Lee and Kim (2024) reveal the importance of personalization algorithms in influencing audience perception, but do not delve deeper into how this impacts schools (W. Kim et al., 2025; C. Lim & Kim, 2024; Magoge et al., 2025). This study closes the gap by investigating the influence of algorithmic personalization on school reputation on social media. This is important to do because schools have unique challenges when it comes to managing their reputation, in contrast to commercial companies that have more complete control over their marketing.

This research offers a novelty in the managerial approach to school reputation through personalized social media. Although many studies have addressed the use of social media in educational contexts, research focusing on the personalization of social media algorithms and their impact on school reputation is very rare. By using this approach, this research is expected to provide new insights for school managers in designing more targeted and effective communication strategies. It is therefore important to solve this problem so that schools can be better prepared to face the challenges posed by the development of increasingly sophisticated technology and algorithms.

The main issue in this study is how schools can manage their reputation on social media driven by personalization algorithms, and how this can affect

people's perception of schools. As a temporary answer, the study argues that schools need to implement more targeted and measurable communication strategies on social media, paying attention to how personalization algorithms can affect different audiences. The main contribution of this study is to provide practical guidance for schools in managing their reputation on social media, taking into account the algorithmic factors that influence public perception of schools.

This research is very relevant for society and education because it can provide concrete solutions to overcome the challenges of managing school reputation in cyberspace. With the increasing influence of social media, schools must be prepared to adapt and manage their reputation in a more strategic way. This research also contributes to the field of educational communication by adding insight into how personalization algorithms can influence public perception of educational institutions, which is expected to help schools to design communication strategies that are more effective and responsive to technological developments.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a qualitative design with a case study approach. The case study was chosen because it allowed researchers to delve deeply into the phenomena that occur in the field related to school reputation management through social media, particularly those influenced by personalization algorithms. This approach allows researchers to understand the context holistically, identify the challenges faced, and analyze the communication practices carried out by schools in shaping and maintaining their reputations. The selection of a qualitative design is based on the nature of the research that aims to explore and understand the phenomenon in a broader context, not just measure the existing variables.

The location of this research was carried out at SMA Nurul Jadid, a school that actively uses social media to build reputation and interact with the public. The selection of the school is based on the consideration that the school has an organized social media management, as well as a reputation that continues to grow through digital channels. In addition, the School also faces challenges in managing their reputation on social media, which is influenced by personalization algorithms, which is at the heart of the problem of this research. With the right location, this research is expected to provide relevant and applicable insights for other schools.

The data collection techniques used in this study were in-depth interviews and participatory observation. Interviews were conducted with school social media managers, teachers, students, and parents of students to get different perspectives on managing school reputation on social media. Participatory observations were conducted to understand the interaction between schools and audiences on social media, as well as to monitor how the messages conveyed were influenced by personalization algorithms. In addition, documents such as social media reports and interaction statistics are also collected to provide a more complete picture of the influence of personalization algorithms on the school's reputation.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

School Reputation Management through Social Media

School reputation management through social media in this study refers to the efforts made by schools to build, maintain, and manage a positive image in cyberspace through various social media platforms. This management involves not only the creation and dissemination of relevant content, but also how the school responds to feedback, both positive and negative, that appears on social media. One of the biggest challenges faced is the influence of personalization algorithms that determine who will receive school messages, as well as how those messages are tailored to specific audience preferences.

One of the teachers who manages social media at the school, stated "We always try to upload consistent content about school achievements and ongoing activities. However, even if the content is useful, not everyone can see it because social media algorithms only show content to audiences that are considered relevant. This is a big challenge for us." From these interviews, it can be concluded that although the School strives to create positive and informative content, the personalization algorithm makes the message conveyed not always accepted by a wider audience. This suggests that effective reputation management requires adjustments to existing algorithms in order for messages to be received by more people.

A teacher added, "Although we have many interesting activities at the school, often parents and prospective students are not aware of these programs because the information we share only appears on the social media feeds of a few people. We had to find a way to make these messages visible to a wider audience." These interviews show that schools have a lot of potential programs and activities that can strengthen their reputations, but are constrained by algorithmic systems that limit the distribution of messages. It emphasizes the importance of more strategic social media management to ensure that all important messages are accessible to a wider audience, including potential students and parents.

From observations made during the study, researchers found that the School has a large amount of relevant and informative content on social media, but much of it is only seen by a few people, mainly due to social media algorithms that prioritize audiences based on previous interactions. Additionally, interactions that occur on social media tend to be more limited to specific groups, with little involvement from a wider audience. This suggests that even though schools are actively communicating, the effectiveness of such communication is highly dependent on how social media algorithms select audiences.

The Influence of Personalization Algorithms on Public Perception

The influence of social media personalization algorithms on public perception refers to the way algorithms on social media platforms determine the information displayed to users based on historical data, interests, and previous behaviors. As such, audiences only see content that they consider relevant or interesting, which can limit the reach of the message the school wants to convey. Schools with excellent programs, which may appeal to a wider audience, may not be known because algorithms prefer to filter information according to existing audience preferences. This leads to limited public perception of the school, even though it has achievements to be proud of.

One teacher stated that "We often upload content about the school's flagship activities and programs, but only a small fraction of our followers see them, as social media algorithms only show content to people who already have previous involvement with the school or have relevant interests." These interviews show that although schools are actively uploading positive information about their flagship programs, the reach of that information is very limited. This is due to social media algorithms that only show content to audiences that are already connected or who have similar interests, reducing the opportunity for a wider audience to know about the existence of the school's flagship programs.

A parent stated "As a parent, I only found out about the school's flagship programs when my child was already enrolled. The ads and posts that appear on social media are more often related to activities that I'm interested in or have seen before, so I don't see a lot of other important information." This interview shows that parents, who are supposed to be the school's potential audience, only find out about the excellent programs after their children are involved in school. This indicates that social media algorithms that personalize content based on individual interests or preferences lead to limitations in disseminating relevant school information to a wider audience.

Observations made during the study showed that schools have a wide range of quality content that shows the school's excellence, but interaction with the audience occurs more in certain groups, such as students, parents who are already connected, or long-time followers. School social media managers are already making maximum efforts by updating content regularly, but social media algorithms still prioritize more limited audiences, even though the potential to reach new audiences is enormous. This shows that even though social media management efforts are good, algorithms are an obstacle in accessing a wider audience.

Based on interviews and observations, it can be concluded that personalization algorithms have a significant impact on people's perception of schools. Schools that actively upload information and have excellent programs can't always ensure that their messages reach a wider audience. Social media algorithms that prioritize content based on previous interactions limit the dissemination of information that can introduce the school's flagship programs to a larger audience, including prospective students and parents who may be interested but have not yet connected directly to the school.

The pattern seen from the data above shows that the management of school reputation through social media relies heavily on algorithms that personalize the dissemination of content. Although schools have a lot of relevant and quality content, they are not accessible to a wider audience, as social media algorithms prefer to show content to those who are already interacting with the school or have similar interests. This limits public perception of the quality and reputation of the school, which should be better known through its flagship programs.

Challenges in Increasing Positive Interaction on Social Media

The challenge in increasing positive interaction on social media refers to the difficulties faced by schools in ensuring that the messages conveyed through their social media channels can be positively received by the audience. Although

schools have organized and active social media channels, the interactions that occur on those platforms often do not meet expectations, both in terms of the number of interactions and the quality. Positive interaction here is defined as a form of deep audience engagement, such as comments, content sharing, or responses that show understanding and appreciation for the message conveyed. In this context, the main challenge is how to encourage audiences to actively participate and provide constructive feedback.

One teacher explained, "We often post information about school activities or achievements, but even though many see it, very few comment or share. We can't make sure that the audience is really interested or understands the message we're conveying." These interviews show that although the School has a considerable audience on social media, they have difficulty in getting meaningful interactions. The large number of views of content does not guarantee that the audience is truly engaged or understands the message being conveyed. This indicates the need to improve the quality of interaction and create more engaging and relevant content for the audience.

One student commented, "I love to see school posts, but many times I just see them pass by without commenting or sharing. Sometimes, I feel like the content isn't very interesting or relevant to what I need." From these interviews, it can be seen that even though students see the content posted by the school, they do not feel compelled to interact in a more positive way, such as commenting or sharing. This may be due to the lack of relevance or appeal of the content presented. This shows the importance of creating content that better suits the interests and needs of the audience so that they feel more engaged.

In the observations made, the researchers noted that although the school had a considerable following on social media, the level of interaction with the posted content was very low. Most of the time, even though the content gets a lot of views, not many positive responses come in the form of comments or shares. Researchers also observed that the type of content that gets more interaction is content that is more personalized or invites audience participation, such as contests or polls. This suggests that content that is informative or promotional often fails to capture the attention of audiences, who are more interested in content that is interactive or that is relevant to their lives.

Based on the results of interviews and observations, it can be concluded that although Schools are active in posting relevant and positive content, they face great challenges in encouraging positive interactions from their audiences. Audiences, despite viewing content, are often not actively engaged in the form of comments or sharing. This indicates that positive interactions depend not only on the number of followers or views, but also on how the content is presented and its relevance to the audience. Therefore, to increase positive interactions, schools need to design more engaging and relevant content, as well as build closer relationships with audiences.

The pattern seen from this data is that even though Schools have a sizable audience and informative content, positive interactions remain limited. Data shows that the quality of content greatly influences the level of audience engagement. Content that is more interactive and relevant to the audience tends to get more responses, while more informative or promotional content doesn't drive significant interaction. This pattern indicates that to increase positive interactions, schools need to focus more on creating more engaging and

interactive content, as well as ensuring that the message conveyed can touch the interests and needs of the audience.

Discussion

The results of this study show that the management of school reputation on social media is greatly influenced by personalization algorithms that limit the reach of messages conveyed to the audience. These findings are in line with the existing literature, where research by Lee and Kim (2025) reveals that social media has great potential to build reputation, but the communication success of organizations, including schools, is highly dependent on how algorithms choose the audiences that will receive messages (Joshi et al., 2025; W. Kim et al., 2025; J. S. Lim & Zhang, 2025). In general, this study reinforces the idea that algorithms play an important role in narrowing the distribution of information, given that the message disseminated is more likely to be received by audiences who have a history of relevant interactions or preferences (McLoughlin & Brady, 2024; Soleimani & Balivi, 2024). The main difference between these findings and the existing literature is the deeper focus on the educational context, i.e. how personalization algorithms limit people's perceptions of schools, even if they have outstanding achievements or programs that deserve to be recognized by a wider audience.

On the other hand, the findings related to the challenges in increasing positive interactions on social media also reflect compatibility with previous research. A study by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) identified that although many organizations, including schools, are active on social media, the interactions that occur are not always proportional to the number of followers they have (Solanki & Thomas, 2025; Xu et al., 2024). In this study, even though the school had a sizable audience, the interaction they received in the form of comments or sharing was very low. This shows that although communication is well done, its effectiveness is highly dependent on the relevance and appeal of the content (Pinto & Bhadra, 2024; Wasilewski et al., 2025). In contrast to the more general literature on managing social media for marketing purposes, this study pays special attention to how educational content should be more adaptive and relevant to encourage positive interactions from younger and more critical audiences, such as students and parents.

The theoretical implication of these findings is that communication models based on information distribution alone are not enough to build a strong reputation on social media, especially among a wider audience. Schools need to develop a more structured and audience-based approach to their social media management (Li et al., 2025). The contribution of this research lies in the development of a school reputation management model that is more in line with the current dynamics of social media, especially with the influence of algorithms that limit the reach of messages. Thus, these findings underscore the importance of adapting school communication strategies that are more responsive to changes in algorithmic technology and increasingly dynamic audience habits.

Practically, the study suggests that schools should pay attention to more strategic and adaptive social media strategies, taking into account the way algorithms filter messages. Schools need to not only focus on managing consistent and informative content, but also ensure that their messages can reach a wider audience through more personalized and relevant tactics (Bungai et al.,

2024; Isibor et al., 2025). For example, creating more interactive and engaging content, as well as engaging audiences through activities such as polls, contests, or collaborations with educational influencers that can expand the reach of their messages (Biggs & Moore, 2025). That way, while social media algorithms personalize content distribution, schools can overcome these challenges by creating a closer, more meaningful relationship with audiences.

The pattern seen from this data shows that while schools are already trying to maximize the use of social media to build reputation, they still face difficulties in ensuring that the message conveyed can be positively received by a wider audience. These findings indicate that effective reputation management depends not only on the quality of the content presented, but also on how the audience interacts with the content (Al Hadeed et al., 2024; Ratnayaka et al., 2024). Therefore, schools must pay attention to audience preferences and adjust their content strategies to make them more acceptable and can spark more positive interactions. This pattern gives an idea that to manage reputation in the era of algorithm-driven social media, schools need to think further and develop adaptive communication strategies in order to reach a wider audience and produce more meaningful interactions.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study shows that the most important finding is that the management of school reputation through social media is strongly influenced by personalization algorithms that limit the reach of messages. Although schools have relevant and positive content, their distribution is limited to only the audiences that the algorithm deems relevant. The lessons learned from this study are the importance of understanding how algorithms affect public perception of schools and how to strategically manage messages to reach a wider audience. The scientific contribution of this research lies in the development of a school reputation management model that is more responsive to the dynamics of social media influenced by algorithms. In practical terms, this research provides guidance for schools to create more engaging and relevant content, as well as adapt communication strategies to encourage positive interactions. The limitation of this study lies in the limited use of one case study, and for future research, it is recommended to extend the research sample to other schools to obtain a more comprehensive picture of this challenge.

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