

DIGITAL PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY OF ASTON SIDOARJO HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER IN BUILDING BRAND AWARENESS THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

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ABSTRACT

Article history

Received : May 20, 2026

Revised : June 20, 2026

Accepted : June 28, 2026

Keywords

Digital Public Relations

Brand Awareness

Social Media

Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel

The development of digital media has transformed marketing communication and public relations patterns in the hospitality sector. Social media has become an effective platform for building relationships with consumers while also increasing brand awareness. This study aims to determine the Digital Public Relations strategy implemented by Aston Sidoarjo Hotel & Conference Center in building brand awareness through social media. The research employed a descriptive qualitative method with a case study approach. Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews, social media observations, and documentation. The research informants consisted of parties from Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel who actively use social media as a promotional and communication tool with consumers.

The results showed that the Digital Public Relations strategy implemented by Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel includes the utilization of Instagram and TikTok as digital promotional media, the use of attractive visual content, active interaction with consumers through comments and direct messages, the use of customer testimonials, and product storytelling to enhance emotional closeness with audiences. These strategies were considered effective in increasing the brand awareness of Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel among the public, especially digital consumers. This study demonstrates that social media plays an important role in building the image and brand awareness of hotels in the digital era.

This study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on a company in the private hospitality sector. It applies Digital Public Relations theory to examine the impact of storytelling and interactive communication on brand awareness within the hotel industry.

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1. Introduction

Communication is an important matter in the interaction of institutions/agencies and even individuals related to other individuals. Communication does not merely involve the communicant and the communicator alone, but there are also various obstacles present in the message delivery process. (Rulli N. 2012)

In the context of the relationship between institutions and the public, communication can also be understood as the delivery of messages from institutions to the public, or in today's internet era, communication between institutions and the public can occur in both directions and reciprocally.

The development of digital technology has significantly changed the communication patterns of society. Social media has now become one of the main means for companies to build relationships with the public. The hospitality industry is one of the sectors that utilizes digital developments to enhance its image and expand market reach. In today's digital era, corporate communication strategies no longer rely solely on conventional media but also use social media as a means of promotion and interaction with consumers.

Content is one of the ways of applying how a hospitality company can introduce a brand through social media. This method can be described as how a hospitality brand provides information and various experiences in a context that allows it to deliver value to the audience. Broadly speaking, content has indeed become a business commodity on social media; content is a product that is produced, distributed, and simultaneously consumed by the audience itself. The development of content on social media can serve as a support for the hospitality information for the wider community, considering that the internet today can be accessed by a broad audience. (Rulli N. 2012)

Digital Public Relations is a form of Public Relations development that utilizes internet technology and digital media to build communication with the public. Social media such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and YouTube become the main platforms used by companies to introduce products, build image, and increase brand awareness.

Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center is the only 4 star hotel in Sidoarjo Regency that actively utilizes social media in its marketing communication and public relations activities. This hotel has a strategic location in the Kahuripan Raya area of Sidoarjo and is known as a hotel that prioritizes modern services and boldly offers facilities like those of a star-rated hotel without fear of competing with other hotels in the vicinity.

Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel is the only 4-star hotel situated in a high-traffic transit corridor—an area typically connecting two or more major cities. Travelers in this region are generally not there for leisure; instead, they are merely passing through, making brief stopovers, or traveling for business. This context makes for an interesting case study: specifically, how Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel has managed to build brand awareness within Sidoarjo Regency.

Through its official social media accounts, the hotel actively uploads various content about hotel facilities, room promotions, events, culinary offerings, and collaborations with influencers and local media. One form of Digital PR activity carried out by the hotel is holding a regular weekly event (Relaxing Sunday Breakfast) that involves the community and several sponsors such as Kokola Biscuits and Fithub Sidoarjo.

The activity serves to attract public attention to the existence of Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center, which aims to build a positive image in society. This regular

activity is introduced through consistent and creative content; they strive to instill identity and increase brand awareness in the minds of consumers.

2024 marks the beginning of the Casual Sunday Breakfast, which is held regularly every Sunday from 06:00 to 09:00 WIB. Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center provides food menus ranging from bread, desserts, and drinks to main dishes such as nasi pecel and soto. This activity not only facilitates hotel guests who want breakfast but also the general public who are exercising in the Car Free Day area at Kahuripan Nirwana. Therefore, this program has its own appeal, as Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center organizes group exercise that can be participated in by hotel guests and the general public.

This activity is in collaboration with FitHub Sidoarjo so that it can present talented aerobics instructors every Sunday. Not only with FitHub Sidoarjo, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center also collaborates with Kokola biscuits as prizes for on-the-spot quizzes.

To support this program, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center uses public media facilities aimed at making people outside more aware of the Relaxing Sunday Breakfast program, not just the local community or hotel guests. Media publication is also one way to gain interest from the wider public, which can create a positive image among the community and increase brand awareness of Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center itself.

Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center uses Instagram and TikTok as the main media to introduce branding in order to gain a reputation from the public based on experience and service consistency. In addition to maintaining service consistency, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center utilizes the social media platform Instagram by creating content that can directly engage the audience.

Based on global data up to early 2026, TikTok leads in global active usage (1.88 billion) compared to Instagram (1.63 billion). Instagram is often a favorite among Gen Z, and TikTok dominates in download growth. The latest survey places TikTok (76%) and Instagram at the top of the most used social media by Gen Z in Indonesia. TikTok's data collection is reported to be more aggressive, including monitoring clipboard data, compared to Instagram (Robert A. Lee, 2025).

The phenomenon is interesting to study because it shows how Digital Public Relations strategies can be used to build brand awareness amid the increasingly tight competition in the hotel industry.

2. Method

This study employs a descriptive qualitative research method with a case study approach. The qualitative method was selected because the study aims to gain an in-depth understanding of the Digital Public Relations strategies implemented by Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center to build brand awareness via social media. A descriptive approach is used to systematically describe the digital communication phenomena undertaken by the hotel, based on facts gathered in the field. The research focuses on the hotel's social media activities—such as on Instagram and other digital platforms—as a means of communicating with the public.

The research was conducted at Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center, involving an informant from the marketing communications division. The location was chosen due to the hotel's active digital presence, specifically its use of social media for promotion and public communication. The research subjects consist of individuals involved

in managing the hotel's social media, including personnel from the Public Relations and Digital Marketing departments, as well as management staff familiar with the company's digital communication strategies.

Data collection techniques included in-depth interviews (lasting approximately one hour), observation, documentation, and a literature review. In-depth interviews were conducted to obtain firsthand information regarding the Digital Public Relations strategies implemented by the hotel. Observations involved monitoring the hotel's social media activities, such as content types, audience interactions, and the forms of digital communication employed. Documentation involved gathering data such as social media screenshots, event photos, and other supporting documents. Meanwhile, the literature review entailed studying journals, books, and previous research related to Digital Public Relations, social media, and brand awareness.

Data analysis utilized the Miles and Huberman model, which comprises data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. Data reduction involved selecting and simplifying data relevant to the research focus. Subsequently, the data were presented in a descriptive narrative format to facilitate understanding. The final stage involved drawing conclusions based on the results of the data analysis conducted during the study. To ensure data validity, this study employs a source triangulation technique by comparing the results of interviews, observations, and documentation, thereby rendering the obtained data more valid and reliable.

3. Results and Discussion

Since the emergence of the internet, social media has become a target for promotional purposes or achieving the goals of Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center. This is because social media accounts have a very wide reach to support branding and also to reach the desired target market. In developing digital public relations through social media, consistency is required to maintain the brand's existence, which is also what Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center.

Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center has its own way of building brand awareness through social media by designing content with a storytelling concept. Storytelling itself is a way of conveying messages through a flow of connection, persuasion, and narrative. It not only introduces the products being marketed, but also has a structured sequence, making the content more interesting and becoming a hallmark of Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center. This is what is still being carried out and will be maintained by Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center.

As a guideline or regulation for content creation, this concept requires every promotional material to have a narrative, characters, and light conflicts that are relevant to the target audience. The goal is to make the audience feel personally connected, so that the name Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center sticks in their minds as a place that offers an experience, not just a building to stay in.

By making storytelling a mandatory rule in content creation, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center no longer competes solely on price, but rather on the value of the experience that is successfully planted in the minds of the audience.

As an innovative step to reach a wider audience, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center is optimizing its marketing strategy through close collaboration with

influencers and sponsorship partners. By partnering with public figures who have strong bonds with their followers, the hotel is able to convey stories and lodging experiences more authentically, trigger emotional interactions, and build direct trust from potential guests.

In order to strengthen relationships with the digital community, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center integrates the power of influencers with special promo code offers for their followers. This step is taken as the main attraction to build greater public awareness, while also inviting the audience to directly engage in various innovative programs offered by Aston Sidoarjo.

Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center consistently builds a positive image in the community through proactive communication management. Warm two-way communication on the Instagram platform is the key to maintaining closeness with the audience and preserving the hotel's reputation in the public sphere.

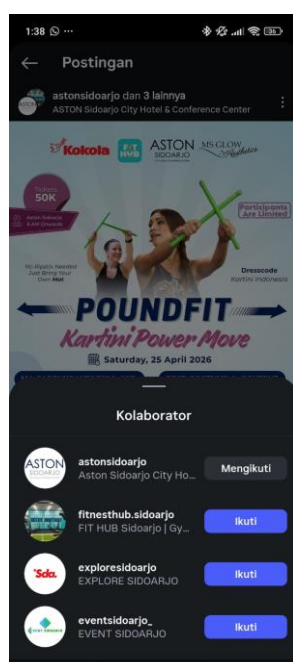


Figure 1 : Example of Instagram Feeds Collaboration
source : Instagram Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center, 2026

In creating content, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center also pays great attention to how Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center can get closer to its target market/audience by making content that can directly engage the audience. The Kartini Day moment is used by Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center to create communication with its social media followers. One example of this is by making a mini quiz with prizes on social media titled "Who is your version of Kartini?". In this way, it can be considered as one of the ways Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center maintains a positive image and well-preserved communication. Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center believes that direct interaction through social media can increase content engagement involving the audience.

Beyond the level of content publication, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center proactively builds two-way interaction through Instagram comment column

management. This responsive approach is a crucial strategy in strengthening brand awareness, where each response is designed to create a deep impression and organically expand the hotel's digital reach.

Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center believes that every comment is the beginning of a story. By actively engaging in warm conversations with the audience, the hotel not only provides information but also builds an emotional closeness that is effective in increasing brand awareness through a more personal digital experience.



Figure 2 : Example of interaction through Instagram comments
Source : Instagram Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center, 2026

From the research, it shows how Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center builds closeness with the audience in order to maintain the brand image of Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center itself.

In addition to determining the Digital Public Relations and Brand Awareness that suit the brand, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center has specific provisions for building its own digital public relations, such as looking at the market scheme, trends, and also adjusting to demographics.

Content consistency is not only through Instagram feeds; Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center also consistently uploads 4-6 different Instagram Story contents every day. This aims to ensure that social media followers understand promotions or what is available at Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center.

Relaxing Sunday Breakfast has become a regular weekly program and content that Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center wants to highlight. Just like other programs, to achieve brand awareness, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center also opens a collaboration concept, including being open to tenants and inviting influencers to support promotional media through social media. Fithub is one example of a collaboration that has been realized, by providing professional instructors, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center can hold exercise sessions together every Sunday. This program has become a distinctive feature of Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center compared to several other hotels in the same Regency.

As part of its Sunday Leisure Breakfast program, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center organized a series of community-oriented events designed to promote public health and social awareness. In celebration of Kartini Day, the hotel partnered with Surabaya Oncology Hospital to conduct a breast cancer awareness campaign. The initiative integrated recreational physical activities with educational health seminars to increase public knowledge regarding breast cancer prevention and emphasize the importance of early detection. This collaborative program reflects the hotel's commitment to corporate social responsibility by fostering community well-being through health promotion and preventive education.



Figure 3 : Example of a Relaxed Sunday Breakfast Collaboration Program
Source : Instagram Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center, 2025

Activities at Relaxed Sunday Breakfast are evidence that Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center has successfully opened collaborations with any parties and fields, which have generated many positive responses from the broader community both through social media and directly.



Figure 4 : Example of a Relaxed Sunday Breakfast Collaboration Program
Source: Instagram Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center, 2025

Thus, Relaxed Sunday Breakfast has become one of the weekly programs that successfully uphold the brand awareness of Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center and has a positive image.

4. Conclusion

Storytelling has become the main concept of Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center in creating Instagram reels content. Storytelling itself is a way to convey messages through a flow of connection, persuasion, and narrative. It not only introduces the products being marketed, but also has a coherent sequence, making the content more interesting and becoming a characteristic of Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center.

Additionally, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center uses another method, which is by collaborating Instagram feeds with sponsors/influencers who have strong relations and wide reach. The hope is that by collaborating, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center can be known/recognized by the general public beyond the Sidoarjo area.

Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center also receives a lot of positive responses from most hotel guests through comments on social media. This can be responded

to very well by the staff of Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center itself. This shows that the impact of social media is very significant for a brand in terms of public perception. In order to achieve branding awareness, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center also opened a collaboration concept, which includes being open for tenants and inviting influencers as a support for promotional media through social media.

Consistency is closely maintained by the Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center team, through feed posts and Instagram stories. This is done to ensure that information continues to be conveyed to the public even if only through social media content. Brand awareness is an important aspect in the development of the hospitality business. With good brand awareness, a brand can become a destination for people to fulfill their needs without any worry or distrust towards a brand. This is what Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center implements. So far, Aston Sidoarjo City Hotel & Conference Center remains the choice for guests from both outside and within the city as the best and most trusted hotel option when staying in Sidoarjo, or for those who simply want to experience the facilities and sensation of staying in a 4-star hotel without any concern about unsatisfactory service.

Acknowledgment

The author expresses gratitude to Aston Sidoarjo Hotel & Conference Center for the permission, openness, and support provided throughout the research process, particularly in providing data and access to activities related to the study. The author also thanks all the research informants who took the time to share their experiences and perspectives, thereby making an important contribution to the completeness and depth of this research. In addition, the author expresses appreciation to colleagues at STIKOSA-AWS who have provided input and support so that this article could be completed and published.

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