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Increasing Local People Engagement to Statistics in the Era of the COVID-19 Pandemic Through Social Media

Study Case: Statistics of Bone Regency, Indonesia

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Building statistical literacy in the community within the regency is a big responsibility for the Local Statistical Office in Indonesia such as the Statistics of Bone Regency (BPS Bone). However, the Covid-19 pandemic has hampered many statistical activities, especially dissemination and communication in building statistical literacy in the community. As a result, the role of statistical data in decision-making in society is reduced. Statistics of Bone regency took a strategy by utilizing various social media platforms that focus on social media provided by META, namely Facebook, Instagram, and Whatsapp. Our strategy is not limited to the use of social media, but also a content design strategy that is able to increase engagement with the community. In this study, we will explain best practices in the use of social media META and how to design content that can increase engagement with the social media user community. With our strategy, we were able to reach more than 21 thousand social media accounts even though the number of followers of BPS Bone is still around two thousand followers. That means we were able to achieve more than ten times the engagement of the number of our account followers. We managed to maintain public interest in statistics at the local national office level with a strategy of utilizing meta social media during the COVID-19 pandemic. We have also succeeded in providing various services to the community's needs for data through social media.

Keywords: *Local Statistical Office, Statistical Literacy, Social Media*

topics: S3 Statistics Made Easy

Introduction

The Covid-19 pandemic has changed many aspects of life. Health protocols had to be applied to all levels of society, resulting in the shutdown of several government public services. Statistics Indonesia (BPS) was one of the government sectors affected by this policy, considering its position in the government that was in the non-essential sector. However, the position of BPS in Indonesia as a data provider required BPS to continue to provide high quality data even in the midst of a pandemic.

Statistics of Bone Regency, known as BPS Bone, as part of the National Statistical Office at the regency level has the same concern. In its implementation, BPS Bone is responsible for providing data in Bone Regency, which is located in South Sulawesi Province. Working under the Statistics of South Sulawesi Province (BPS South Sulawesi Province) command, BPS Bone oversees 27 districts and 372 village level areas. BPS Bone is one of the regency in South Sulawesi with the widest area of 4,559 km² and the largest population of 801 thousand people (BPS Bone, 2022).

The pandemic forced BPS Bone to find a solution to build communication upon statistical data to local communities. This is necessary since the public should know the benefits of statistical data for development so that they are willing to actively participate if a survey or census is conducted in their community. Luckily, we live in an era of digitalization where technology provides many conveniences in our daily life.

The internet nowadays has become one of the primary needs for the people of Indonesia, not least in Bone Regency. It appears that there's a potential to present statistics with the help of the internet. Statistics show that half of the population aged 5 years and over in Bone Regency access the internet, where 86,87 percent of them use the internet for social media such as WhatsApp, Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, etc. (BPS Bone, 2021). Social media, defined as "a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), can be the right tool to build statistical literacy in the community within the regency.

In previous research, research on the use of social media to communicate statistics was carried out with the scope of the National Statistical Office. Like what Faris and Pramana (2021) did who communicated big data with a national scope. Faris (2019) also conducts research on the use of social media to build statistical literacy on a national scale. Research on the Local Statistical Office was conducted by Afrizal et al (2021) at BPS Pulang Pisau Regency, but the research was limited to the use of infographic publications. In this study, the author wants to see how the influence of the use of social media on local statistical offices in disseminating statistical information.

Research question: What are the best practices in the use of social media and how to design content that can increase engagement with the social media user community?

Practical Use of Social Media in BPS Bone

Before Covid-19 pandemic, BPS Bone's public services were centered on the Integrated Statistical Service at the BPS Bone's library and on BPS Bone's official website. The media varied from printed publications, digital publications, and dynamic/static tables. BPS Bone provided an Integrated Statistical Service officer during working hours for data users who had difficulties in using the data.



Figure 1. Data user visiting Integrated Statistical Service at the BPS Bone's library before pandemic

The Covid-19 pandemic hit Indonesia in March 2020, resulting in the shutdown of government public services that are considered non-essential sectors, including BPS Bone's library services. However, several surveys at BPS Bone still continued since BPS data is still needed even in the midst of Covid-19 Pandemic. Therefore, information regarding how to access data online and what surveys were being held by BPS Bone needed to be socialized so that the response rate remained high. Seeing these conditions, the delivery of statistical dissemination and socialization needed to be simplified and convenient. Therefore, social media was the suitable solution since it could reach anyone, anytime, anywhere. Social media at BPS Bone mainly consists of Instagram, Facebook, YouTube, and WhatsApp, each with different target markets and contents.

1. Instagram and Facebook

Instagram and Facebook targets young people with an age range of 15-40 years, so contents for these two social media are designed to be interesting and following current trends. In this case, BPS Bone uses infographics and videographics to visualize information regarding ongoing/upcoming surveys and their dissemination. An infographic (which is short for information graphic) is a visual representation of information, which reveals the hidden, explains the complex, and illuminates the obscure through illustrations, some short written explanations and data visualization through charts or graphs (Yuvaraj, 2017).

Contents on BPS Bone's Instagram and Facebook are identical and consist of infographics, videographics, and posters. In displaying content, BPS Bone takes advantage of national and

international holiday moments by bringing up related data. For example, during international labor day, BPS Bone created content related to employment figures in Bone Regency as shown in figure 2. Thus, the public became interested and aware that employment figures are available at BPS. Sharing information on ongoing and upcoming surveys is also important to raise awareness about statistical events that are being held by BPS Bone. Hence, BPS Bone shares the information creatively by following viral trends, for example videos about the socialization of the 2020 Population Census and 2022 Susenas as shown in figure 3.



Figure 2. Infographic on International Labor Day



Figure 3. Videographic about 2020 Population Census and 2022 Susenas

BPS Bone uses Instagram and Facebook to share posters of newly released publications and monthly press releases of Bone Regency's inflation rate. BPS Bone also makes tutorials on how

to access BPS data either through WhatsApp or the official website as shown in figure 4. Moreover, BPS Bone's instagram and facebook facilitate data consultation via private messages served by admins as shown in figure 5. Thus, options for access to consulting services at BPS Bone are open wide.



Figure 4. Tutorial on how to download Bone in Figures publication and Bone Regency's inflation rate press release poster

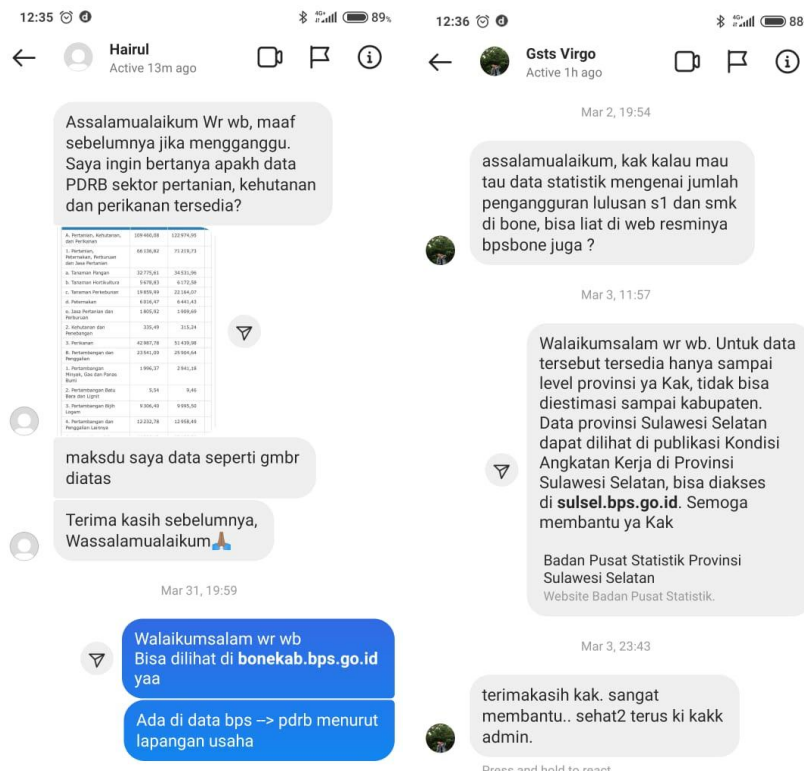


Figure 5. WhatsApp chat screenshots showing data consultation

Figure 5. Data consultation via instagram private message

2. Youtube

BPS Bone's Youtube channel contains BPS Bone's company profile and Bone Regency's strategic data press release. The use of the youtube channel is intended to socialize BPS activities and data more comprehensively than other social media channels. In the long term, BPS Bone is developing a podcast program. BPS Bone collaborated with a local sign language translator in several series of Bone Regency's inflation rate monthly press release to increase engagement among data users with disabilities.

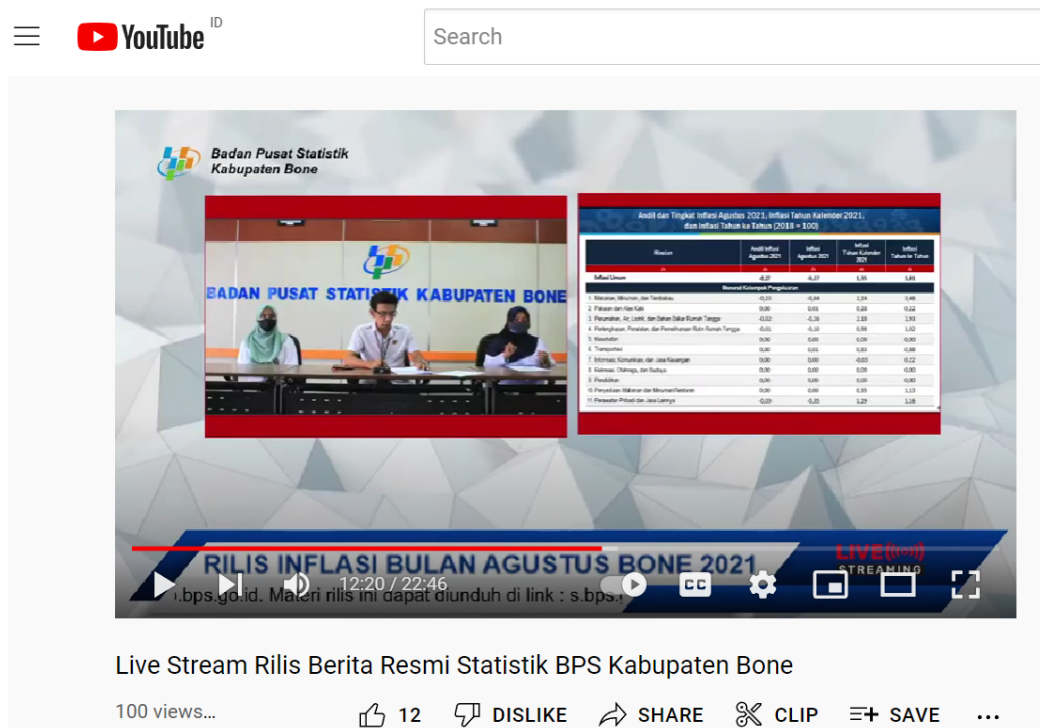


Figure 6. Bone Regency's inflation rate monthly press release streaming live on Youtube collaborating with disability translator

3. WhatsApp

BPS Bone data users vary, ranging from young to old age. Because of Covid-19 Pandemic, older generation data users are prevented from accessing Integrated Statistics Service offline. The problem is, most of them are not familiar with BPS Bone's official website interface, so it's necessary to make an alternative for easier data access.

On this basis, BPS Bone builds a chatbot called "PuWAng Data" which can be accessed via WhatsApp. Strategic data of Bone Regency can be accessed for 24 hours only by sending text to PuWAng Data's WhatsApp phone number (+62812 4171 1071). They can also consult with the Integrated Statistics Service officer via chat during working hours.

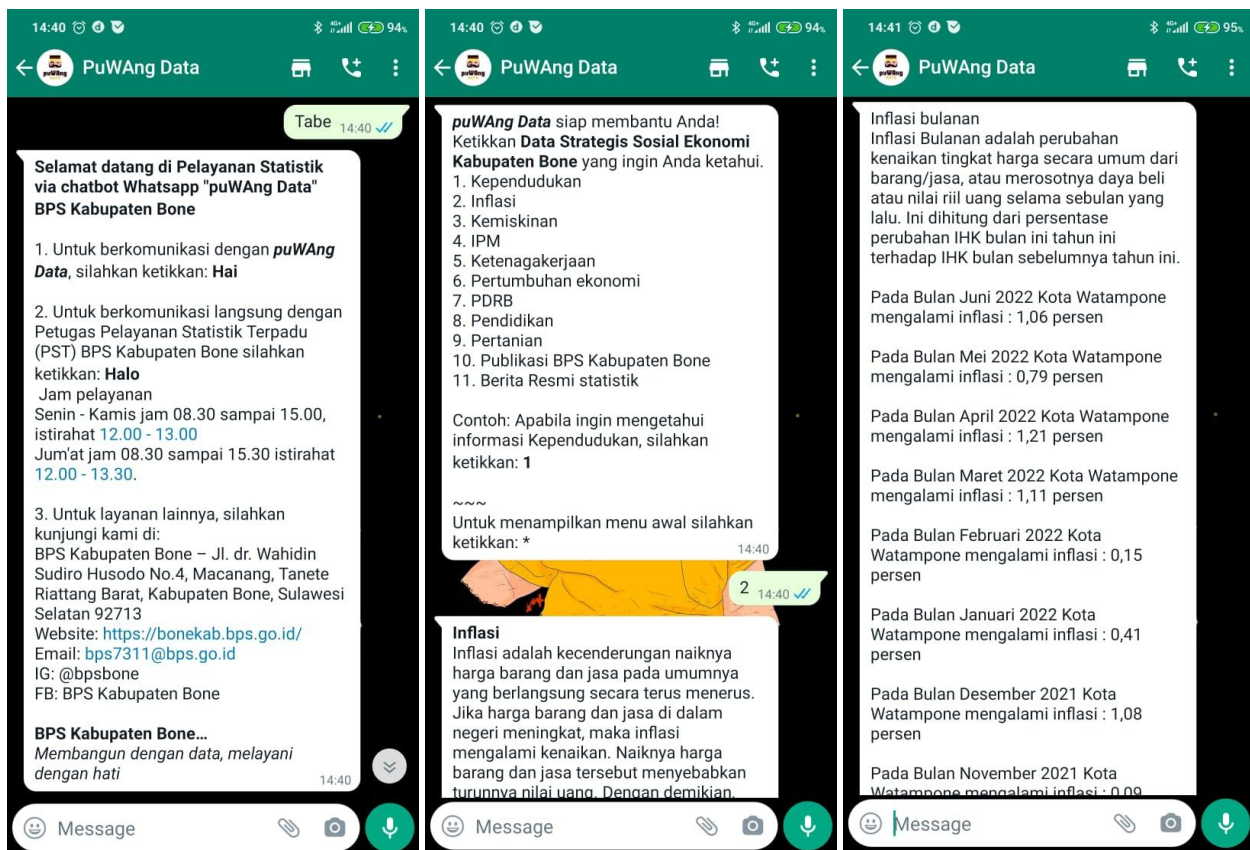


Figure 7. PuWAng Data interface

Success measurements

BPS Bone social media received quite encouraging statistical data. As of September 4th 2022 BPS Bone's Instagram has successfully attracted 2,345 followers with 2,3 percent growth compared to June 4th. Accounts reached are 21,7 thousands, of which 20,2 thousands are non-followers. Meanwhile, BPS Bone's Facebook has gained 2,7 thousands followers with posts reach of 1,668 and Youtube BPS Bone has 265 subscribers. As for Whatsapp PuWAng Data,

the number of messages received was 2.507 messages and the number of messages sent was 2.462 messages. Every message received on whatsapp is a request for data from the user which is answered automatically by the chatbot.

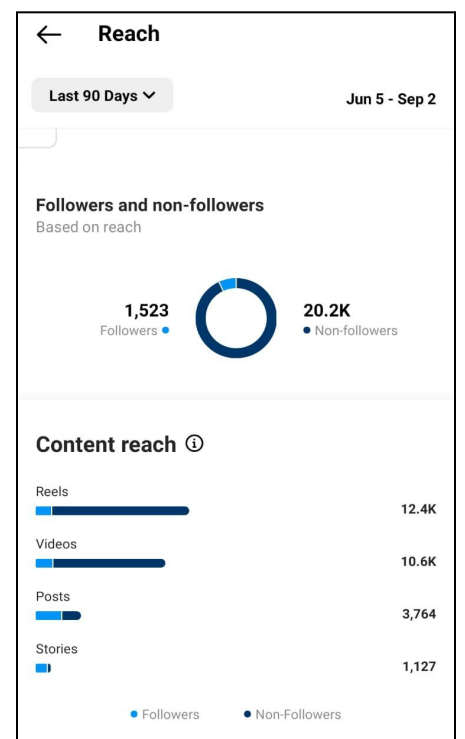
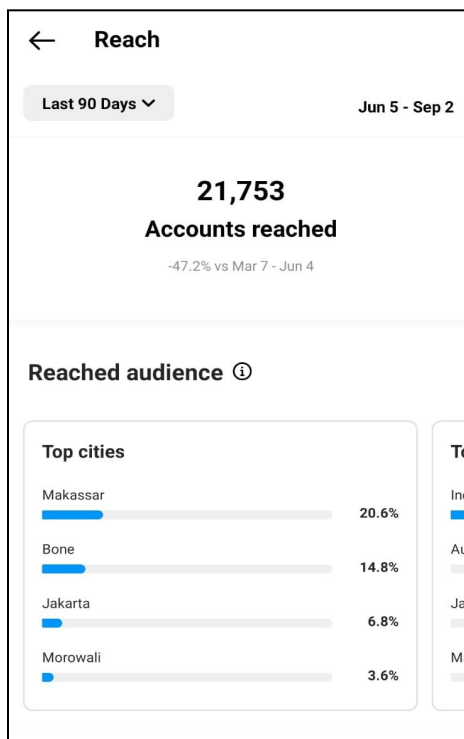


Figure 8. Insights from instagram (June 5th-September 2nd vs March 7th-June 4th)

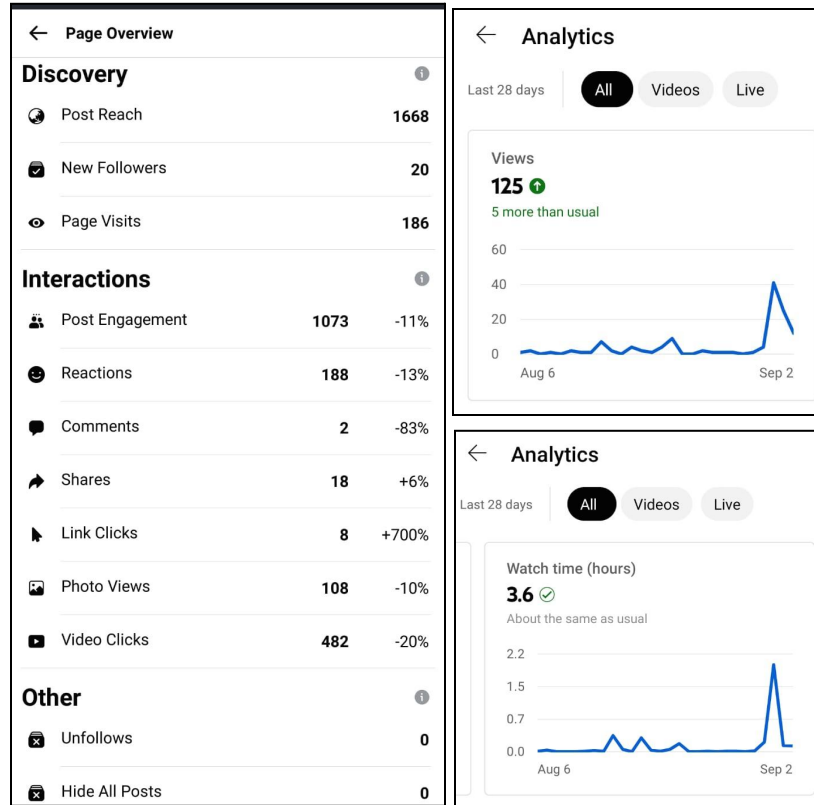


Figure 9. Insights from facebook and youtube in the last 28 days

BPS Bone's top post up to this day is a reel that explained that BPS would still record anyone even though their names were hard to spell, following a TikTok trend that used Celine Dion's song (It's All Coming Back To Me). The reel successfully reached 11.847 accounts and was shared by 105 accounts. It was also reposted by Statistics Indonesia's official instagram account, becoming one of their most played reels in their instagram feed.

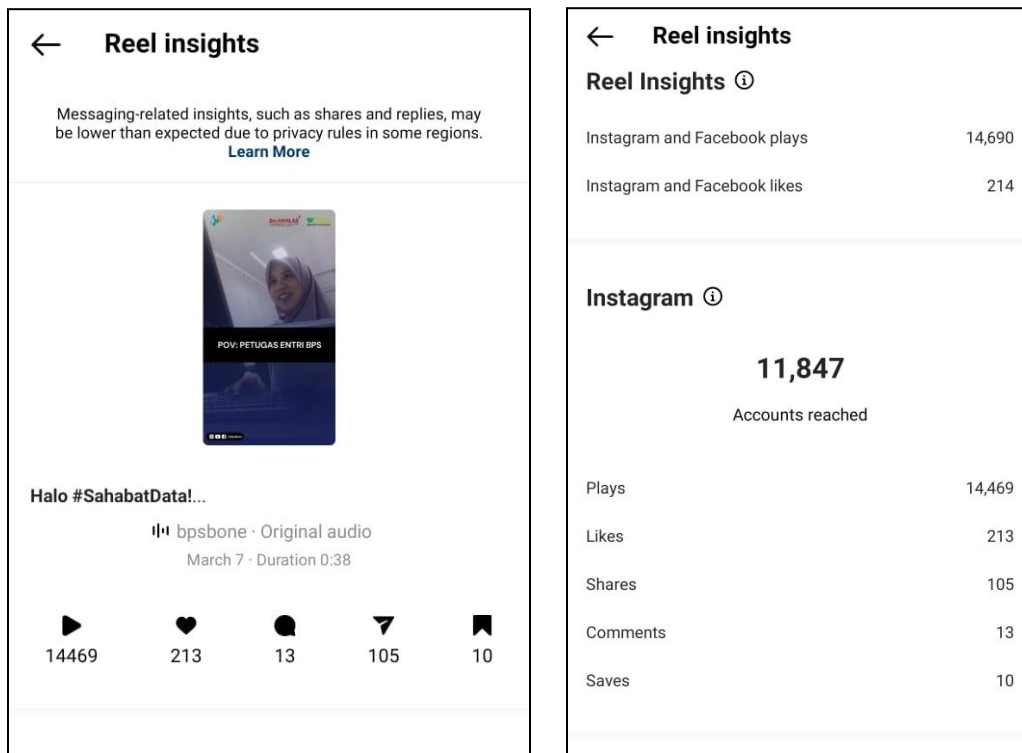


Figure 9. Insights from instagram's top post

Prior to the pandemic, the average number of visitors to the BPS Bone's library per month was 15 visitors, while the number of visitors on the BPS Bone's official website hit 1,6 thousand visitors. Ever since BPS Bone created content through social media, the number of visitors on BPS Bone's official website has also skyrocketed. The average visitor in the January-August 2022 period doubles the average visitor in the same period in 2019.

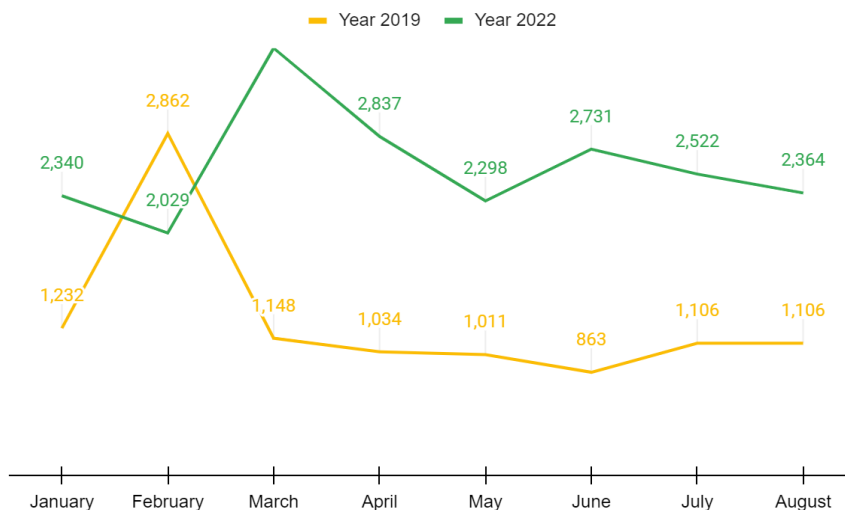


Figure 10. Total visitors of BPS Bone's official website in 2019 and 2022

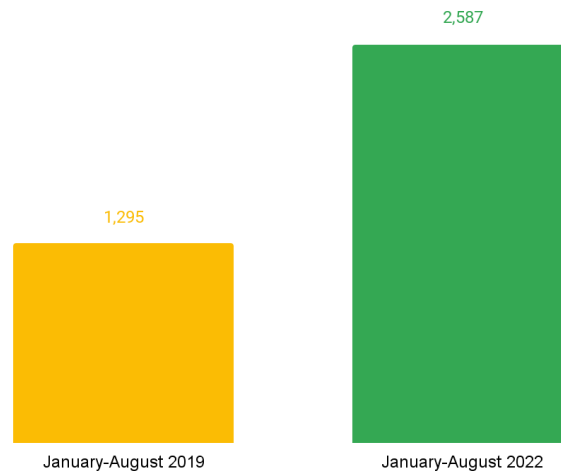


Figure 11. Average visitors per month of BPS Bone's official website January-August period in 2019 and 2022

Our Strategy

BPS Bone's strategy to increase local people's engagement on social media, BPS Bone implements several strategies:

- a. Forming a public relations team which is not included in the organizational structure of BPS Bone, proven by letter of statement validated by Chief of BPS Bone
- b. Inter-institutional socialization among stakeholders in Bone Regency encouraged by the Chief of BPS Bone
- c. Choosing team members who are adaptive to changes and progress
- d. Monitoring evaluation and distributing roles among team members routinely.

Lesson and Discussion

Our research question is "What are the best practices in the use of social media and how to design content that can increase engagement with the social media user community?". We found that social media can successfully increase local people's awareness of statistics, either data or information regarding surveys held by BPS by following current trends and adjusting social media's type to data user's age, for example funny and engaging contents on Instagram and Facebook to target young generation, but simple and straightforward messages platform on WhatsApp for older generation. Social media also helps BPS Bone to reach data users without having to meet them in person, so press releases on several strategic data may be held on Youtube.

Quantitatively, it appears that there is an increase in visitors and data users in BPS Bone. However, further research is needed to see how effective social media is in increasing data awareness of data users.

Conclusion

The study shows that improving local people's statistical literacy through social media is a noteworthy approach and it has been accepted widely using social media.

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