

Research Article

Information Funnel"-Based Operational Management Managing Digital Perception and Field Problem Response in the Indonesian Capital

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Abstract

This research explores the control mechanisms in the development of Ibu Kota Nusantara (IKN), focusing on the contradiction between digital perception management strategies and operational responsiveness on the ground. Utilizing the "Information Distribution Funnel" visual modeling, this study dissects the phenomenon where positive narratives are massively produced on social media but face a bottleneck when dealing with the daily complaints of affected residents. This qualitative study employs an interpretivism paradigm involving 122 Multiple Helix informants. Primary data were collected through in-depth interviews and netnographic sentiment analysis using NVivo 14 software. Findings reveal a control hegemony that is proactive in visual branding but tends to be reactive and bureaucratic regarding construction impacts such as dust pollution and damaged access roads. The main recommendation is directed towards strengthening the integration of the Command Center for a rapid response system for local residents to close the credibility gap between digital promises and physical reality.

Keywords: Control Mechanism, Perception Management, Information Funnel, Crisis Communication, Multiple Helix.

INTRODUCTION

Capital relocation is a transformative development instrument (Ghalib et al., 2021) that represents national political power on the global stage (Al-Hagla, 2025). The branding

of the Nusantara Capital City (IKN) is depicted through the "Tree of Life" (*Pohon Hayat*) symbol as a representation of "New Majesty" (Hudalah, 2026) to encourage the equitable distribution of investment to the eastern regions (Siti et al., 2023). However, building a brand identity in a greenfield area requires strong public legitimacy (Afrilia et al., 2025) and a high-quality urban landscape (Al-Hagla, 2025) supported by strategic location determination (Head of the Nusantara Capital City Authority Regulation Number 3 of 2024, 2024). This vision demands synchronization between grand state narratives and public perception to prevent inertia in its development process.

Administratively, the IKN area is located in East Kalimantan Province, covering parts of North Penajam Paser Regency and Kutai Kartanegara Regency (Wicaksono et al., 2024; Sembiring et al., 2022; Suprayitno et al., 2024). This area is divided into hierarchical zoning, ranging from the Core Government Center Area (KIPP) spanning 6,671 hectares to the IKN Development Area covering 199,962 hectares (Sujatmiko et al., 2025; Tasya, 2024; Rinaldi, 2023). The distribution of functional activities within these zones is designed to create a "10-Minute City" ecosystem, yet this spatial reality harbors complex operational control challenges at the site level.

The realization of the "Smart Forest City" concept requires complex stakeholder collaboration (Sabrina et al., 2024) amidst the challenges of power asymmetry dominated by the central government (Ansell, 2008). Often, the voices of local communities and professional associations are marginalized in design decision-making (Hudalah, 2023). Collaboration dynamics are further complicated by land control by certain networks (Setiawan & Putri, 2025), overlapping policies (Hidayat et al., 2024), and rapid legislative processes that limit deliberative consultation (Althalets et al., 2025). Therefore, effective governance must balance industrial progress and emission control (Oceany, 2023) with the fundamental rights of citizens (Cancela-Outeda, 2024).

In the tourism sector, a disparity emerges between digital narratives and physical reality (Purba et al., 2023), triggering complaints regarding field conditions that contradict the "Forest City" promise (Prasanti et al., 2025). Destination brand equity relies on perceived quality (Shah et al., 2020) and public relations effectiveness (Listianto, 2025); however, current amenities remain fragmented (Tri Martial, 2024) with limited access (Mishra et al., 2015). This massive development also risks marginalizing local identity (Umasangaji, 2022) and triggering flood threats (Handyastono et al., 2025). Therefore, the research problem is formulated as follows: How does bureaucratic responsiveness in handling the daily complaints of affected residents compare to the speed of positive image management in the virtual realm?

IKN is currently portrayed as an inclusive future smart city, but there is a real gap between the brand promise and statistical data on the ground. The "Forest City" vision often contradicts the facts of deforestation and the risk of social marginalization of local residents due to an influx of migrants (Zentra, 2024; East Kalimantan BPS, 2026). The government's intense focus on physical achievements and investment (Siswantoro, 2022; Ismail et al., 2024) potentially sidelines substantive control functions regarding the daily socio-environmental impacts directly experienced by surrounding communities.

The novelty of this research lies in the formulation of the "Information Distribution Funnel" visual model to dissect control mechanisms in new city crisis management. Unlike

previous studies that focused on the technical aspects of infrastructure (Pashya et al., 2024), this research integrates collaboration and place branding theories to examine the power dimensions in operational control (Cancela-Outeda, 2024). Through multi-domain sentiment analysis (Prasastio, 2025) and qualitative methodology (Choudrie et al., 2018; Yin, 2018), this study maps the disparity in response speed between the virtual and real worlds, which triggers a credibility crisis risk for this national strategic project.

Control mechanisms are a crucial part of operations management to ensure that processes run according to established quality parameters through planning, procedures, and feedback (Slack & Brandon-Jones, 2010). From a group sociology perspective, control is related to the norms that bind members' behavior to maintain cohesion and prevent inertia (Benedict, 1934; Lewin, 1947). The interaction dynamics between authorities and society significantly influence social stability, especially in large-scale projects involving asymmetric power relations (Cartwright & Zander, 1968; Rizki et al., 2026).

Perception management and crisis communication are key pillars for organizations to manage public opinion so that it remains aligned with strategic goals. The use of information technology in IKN's E-Government aims to evaluate public response quickly and objectively (Prastiawan & Yuniarto, 2025; Rinaldi et al., 2021). However, the success of branding control is not only determined by visual aesthetics but also by brand substance in handling real issues on the ground transparently and accountably (Anholt, 2008; Haroh et al., 2024).

Transformation activities in operating systems convert inputs into outputs that have utility value, where the existence of control elements accommodates the analysis of regulation and quality management (Skroder, 2007; Hammer & Champy, 1993). In the context of a smart city, data integration into a command center is a smart leap for bureaucratic efficiency (Berawi, 2022; Amri & Latif, 2025). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of this smart system is often hindered by the *Collaborative Inertia* phenomenon, where cross-sectoral coordination slows down due to rigid bureaucratic structures (Koiwanit & Filimonau, 2023).

Based on the synthesis of these theories, the researcher defines "Information Funnel Management" as a condition of systemic imbalance in the control function, where the digital input channel (the mouth of the funnel) is opened as widely as possible for the glorification of positive narratives through influencers and social media, while the problem-resolution output channel (the neck of the funnel) experiences bureaucratic bottlenecks when facing residents' technical complaints. This creates a distortion between the promise of inclusivity and the reality of field responsiveness, which in the long term can damage destination brand equity and trigger a sociological vote of no confidence (Umasangaji et al., 2023; Hudalah, 2024).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research is rooted in the interpretivism paradigm, which views reality as a subjective construction of social interactions (Decrop, 1999; Nascimento et al., 2016). The research design utilizes an explorative and instrumental single case study to dissect the uniqueness of the control phenomenon in IKN (Yin, 2018). Given that actor dynamics occur across geographical boundaries, the research adopts a multi-sited approach covering

institutional locations in Jakarta and the development site in East Kalimantan through virtual observation and hybrid digital tracking (Fitria & Rochim, 2025; Hilal & Alabri, 2013).

The data collection technique integrates netnographic sentiment analysis on social media X (formerly Twitter) with semi-structured in-depth interviews involving 122 Multiple Helix informants (Azeem & Salfi, 2012; Sinaga, 2021). The determination of informants was conducted through purposive sampling, including government elements (OIKN), MSME business actors, Paser indigenous communities, academics, and tourists (Nascimento et al., 2016). Data analysis was performed simultaneously through an interactive model (Miles et al., 2014) utilizing NVivo 14 software to cross-examine narratives and ensure the validity of findings through source triangulation (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Saldaña, 2018).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Narrative Glorification at the Mouth of the Funnel: Digital Perception Management Strategy

The research results show that the government is highly progressive in using digital channels to build public optimism. Through the use of influencers and content creators, OIKN has successfully created a wave of visual glorification regarding the infrastructure progress of the KIPP. This is reflected in the netnographic data where the government's positive sentiment reaches 75%, dominated by keywords such as "Masterpiece," "Future," and "Proud." Government Informant 3 (2025) explained: "We constantly strive to embrace influencer partners to build a sense of optimism and provide a bright picture of IKN's future through digital dialogue channels."

However, this control strategy at the "Mouth of the Funnel" is assessed by academic groups as an effort that focuses too heavily on image management rather than reality management. The use of overly perfect digital narratives creates extremely high public expectation standards. As noted in the sentiment analysis (Rizkia et al., 2025; Rhomaningtias et al., 2025), there is a risk of cognitive dissonance when visitors arrive at the location and find that the facilities are not as beautiful as displayed on their mobile screens. Relying too heavily on one-way promotional aspects (SA & Sunuantari, 2025) ignores the importance of balanced transitional information.

Bottlenecks at the Neck of the Funnel: Bureaucracy of Field Problem Response

In contrast to its digital agility, the operational control mechanism for handling residents' daily complaints shows symptoms of *collaborative inertia*. Local residents in Sepaku District and Pemaluan Village frequently complain about the impacts of construction dust entering residential areas and the damage to access roads caused by heavy logistics loads (Community Informant 21, 2026). These complaints often do not receive a response as quickly as government social media posts. An informant from the affected residents stated: "Often, what central officials see is only the beautiful end result to be reported, without truly caring about the daily impacts of dust and damaged roads that we experience on the ground" (Community 4, 2026).

This narrowing at the "Neck of the Funnel" is triggered by rigid administrative procedures within an authority structure that is still in a transitional phase. When technical

problems arise, their resolution must pass through long bureaucratic tiers even though Command Center technology is available. An informant from logistics players (Business 31, 2026) added that high development targets necessitate continuous distribution, yet the compensation mechanism or daily impact management for local residents is often reactive—occurring after the issue goes viral in mass media—rather than an integrated preventive SOP (Prasanti et al., 2025).

Control Mechanism Disparity: Impact on Long-Term Credibility

The imbalance between the speed of digital imaging and the slowness of field response creates a "Dualism of Performance" phenomenon. Analysis using NVivo 14 software reveals that the keyword "Local" closely intersects with "Complaint" and "Slow," contrary to the keyword "Government," which intersects with "Promotion" and "Success." This proves that the current control mechanism is still lopsided—proactive in imaging but passive in protecting the fundamental rights of local residents (Afifuddin et al., 2022; Umasangaji et al., 2023).

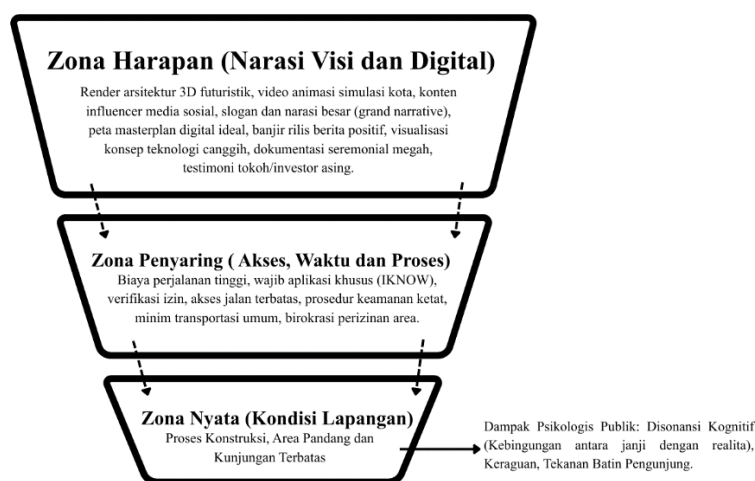


Figure 4.1 Visual Model of the IKN "Information Distribution Funnel"

Source: Research Document (2026)

The implication is that the credibility of the "World City for All" branding is threatened by an organic crisis of trust from the grassroots. The effectiveness of branding collaboration will only be achieved if there is congruence between digital promises and the reality of operational experience (Helmig et al., 2007). Without transforming the control mechanism from a bureaucratic one to a humanistic one, IKN's physical grandeur risks being perceived as a luxury isolated from the social welfare of surrounding communities (Asmar et al., 2025; Basalamah & Handayani, 2025).

CONCLUSION

This research concludes that the control mechanism in the development of IKN currently operates under the anomaly of the "Information Funnel," where there is extraordinary superiority in digital perception management, yet a bureaucratic blockage

occurs in responding to operational problems on the ground. Study findings indicate a sharp stratification of interests: the government focuses on image control as an instrument of political legitimacy and an investment magnet, while local residents demand control over the daily construction impacts that affect their quality of life. This gap proves that current Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have not fully touched upon the humanistic and spatial justice aspects for affected communities.

A strategic recommendation for the IKN Authority is to transform the function of the Command Center from merely a physical data monitoring center into an integrated rapid response hub directly connected to citizens via the IKNOW application. The government needs to formulate affirmative policies requiring that daily impacts (dust, roads, water) be resolved within less than 24 hours to restore public trust. Furthermore, the institutionalization of the Nusantara Collaborative DMO is needed as an independent mediator to oversee the accountability of brand promises against operational reality in a transparent and deliberative manner.

The limitation of this research lies in its reliance on fluctuating digital sentiment algorithms and political sensitivities that restrict access to internal OIKN SOP documents which are confidential. It is recommended that future researchers conduct an in-depth evaluative study on the effectiveness of government public relations units in handling crisis communication at the site level. Long-term longitudinal research is also needed to monitor whether the integration of smart technology will ultimately be able to serve the humanistic side of the city optimally or instead widen the gap of social segregation between the digital elite and marginalized local residents.

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