

# Content Analysis: Kasepuhan Palace's Instagram as a Counter to Online Mass Media News

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## ABSTRACT

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*Keywords:*

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Kasepuhan Palace,  
counter media,  
mainstream online media,  
media representation.

The development of internet technology and social media has changed how people receive and consume information, leading to the convergence of traditional media to online/digital media. Mass media such as newspapers, television and other, now exist in digital forms through websites and social media, reflecting significant changes in communication patterns, allowing information distribution to be faster with a wider audience reach. News from online media often attracts more attention, as it is designed to provoke responses, with comment sections allowing netizens to share their opinions. As is the case, the polemic surrounding the coronation of Sultan Sepuh XV of Kasepuhan Palace, which involved the royal family and other parties, became viral. This research aims to find out how Kasepuhan's Instagram is utilized to counteract mainstream online media coverage of the Cirebon Palace conflict. Using a qualitative content analysis method, the study examines Instagram posts, captions, and comments during a specific period, considering the context of media coverage. Stuart Hall's (1997) media representation theory is used in this research, emphasizing that media doesn't merely reflect reality but constructs meanings that shape public understanding. The findings reveal that Kasepuhan's Instagram works as an important tool to counter negative narratives, helping to maintain a positive image, legitimacy and relationships with public.

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## INTRODUCTION

The existence of palaces in Indonesia as guardians of local traditions and culture is often tarnished by negative news, both internal (inter-family) and external conflicts that can disrepute the image of the palace in the public's eyes. This also happened to the Kasepuhan Palace, one of the palaces in Cirebon. The Cirebon Palace is one of the important cultural and historical heritages that was formerly an Islamic kingdom on the island of Java. It is known that Cirebon has 3 palaces and 1 peguron, namely the Kasepuhan Sultanate, the Kanoman Sultanate, the Kacirebonan Palace, and the Kaprabonan Peguron. In their journey until now, both within each palace and between the Cirebon Palaces, there have often been conflicts, both involving power struggles/succession disputes, claims of inheritance rights and various asset ownership disputes rooted in interests between the parties. These conflicts often result in social and political tensions that are not only felt within the palace environment but also have an impact on the wider community. Likewise, what happened to the Kasepuhan Palace conflict in the middle of 2020 that was caused by the rejection of the Jumenengan procession of Sultan Sepuh XV PRA Luqman Zulkaedin. This conflict may not be the first dispute that has occurred in the Kasepuhan Palace, but the conflict in 2020 can be said to be quite large and has an impact because it affects the life of the Cirebon Palace. In this conflict, the term 'petheng' history is something that is often mentioned by various parties, both from the extended family of Cirebon Sultanate and other parties who claim to be the legitimate heirs of the Kasepuhan Palace and their supporters. The background to the Kasepuhan Palace conflict is not only about the prestige and genealogical truth of the ruler but also other interests related to material (Tendi, 2023: 187).

The conflict involving the name of the Kasepuhan palace has become a lot of news in various mainstream print, electronic and online media. Representatives of the Cirebon Sultanate family strongly rejected the appointment of PRA Lukman Zulkaedin as Sultan Sepuh XV because it was considered to have deviated from the customary and traditional rules. The Cirebon Sultanate family told the media that the Sultan at the Kasepuhan Palace in Cirebon was not a direct descendant of Sunan Gunung Jati. Therefore, the Cirebon Sultanate Family believes that the throne should be returned to the original descendants/dzuriyyah of Sunan Gunung Jati. In the report by liputan6.com, the Patih of the Kanoman Sultanate also spoke out about the polemic. His statement to the online mass media seemed to confirm that the Cirebon Sultanate family has a responsibility to straighten out history, especially families who are direct descendants of Sunan Gunung Jati. Patih Kanoman also said that the Kasepuhan lineage was a 'branch' not straight from the 'trunk' or in other words it had been cut off (Prayitno, 2021)<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See more on <https://www.liputan6.com/regional/read/4650445/menjaga-kemuliaan-sunan-gunung-jati-dari-sekretariat-2-kasultanan-kanoman-cirebon>

The presence of online mass media, both through websites and journalist editorial accounts on social media, has played a major role in expanding the coverage of the conflict regarding the Kasepuhan Palace. According to McNair (2017), the characteristics of online mass media allow for democratization in the dissemination of information. The interactivity and flexibility offered by online media have also influenced journalism practices and the way mass media carry out their social function as a monitor of power (McNair, 2017: 45). In addition, online mass media has become a fertile arena for the spread of misinformation and disinformation as well as partisanship, especially in crisis situations or major events that attract widespread public attention (Wardle & Derakhshan, 2017: 34). The presence of online mass media not only influences the distribution of information, but also shapes social and political discourse. With its speed and wide reach, online media allows news related to the Kasepuhan Palace conflict to be more easily accessed by the public, resulting in more and more people knowing and following developments in the palace's internal problems which in previous conflicts may have only been known to a limited number of certain groups. Digital news platforms, where journalists and editorial media often publish news in real-time, offer an interactive space for readers to share, comment, and discuss these issues. The news became a hot issue, inviting various interpretations from the public that are not always beneficial to the palace because they can damage their image. Widespread information can even cause different public reactions and perceptions. Polarization of opinion can also trigger debate and trigger divisions between individuals and groups. In addition, negative news can also disrupt efforts to preserve the culture and customs inherited from the Kasepuhan Palace.



**Figure 1. One of Kasepuhan's Instagram posts as a counter and controlling information for maintaining their positive image among the polemics**

**Source: IG @keraton\_kasepuhancirebon**

In the midst of this dynamic, Keraton Kasepuhan utilizes their Instagram as an alternative media to counter the narratives developing in online mainstream media, while also controlling information related to the palace's image. As one of them in the following post where it is said

that the Kasepuhan speaks about the polemics that have been circulating in the Cirebon society and in essence seeks to maintain the image of the Kasepuhan Palace and the Sultan Sepuh XV in maintaining customs and traditions pepakem in the Kasepuhan Palace environment as they should.

Castell (2013) in his book entitled *Communication Power* explains how digital media allows actors/institutions to utilize their digital platforms to counter narratives formed by mainstream media, providing alternative space for actors/institutions to create their own narratives and influence public narratives outside of the narratives built by mainstream media (Castell, 2013: 45-67). Likewise, Papacharissi (2010) expressed that individuals and institutions are able to manage and control their representation in public spaces through social media. A more targeted and personal narrative can be formed by its users through social media platforms that are used to manage their narratives and images in the midst of certain controversial issues or conflicts that are currently occurring. Control over how individuals, groups, or institutions are viewed by the public can also be maintained through social media because users can choose or select what information they want to convey (Papacharissi, 2010: 44-46). In the case of the conflict in the Cirebon Palace, news about the Kasepuhan Palace conflict displayed on online news sites on websites or on social media can worsen the conflict if the information spread is hoax, biased, or manipulates facts. On the other hand, the social media of the Kasepuhan Palace has the potential as a counter or balancing tool in the dissemination of information from the side of the Kasepuhan Palace.

The aims of this study to understand how Keraton Kasepuhan utilizes their Instagram platform as a tool to respond to or counter news about its institution. This study aims to analyze the communication strategies used, how content is presented and the impact of social media use on public perception and their representation in the context of digital media. Instagram media was chosen not only based on considerations of the intensity of the palace in distributing their content, but Instagram provides deeper access to analyze their visual and non-visual content. Instagram has characteristics that emphasize visual content but can be accompanied by captions, text, audio, hashtags and so on. These characteristics are able to present stories, narratives, visual and non-visual understandings comprehensively related to the representation of the power of the Cirebon Palace on Instagram social media.

So far, studies on the Cirebon Sultanate palace have been more researched from historical issues, be it the historical events of the founding of the Cirebon Sultanate palace, the Cirebon Sultanate conflict within the family or with the VOC and other kingdoms in the past, as well as studies related to the meaning of cultural acculturation symbols in the cultural products it produces. Meanwhile, studies on the conflict in the Cirebon palace environment today are still around the land dispute conflict between Kasepuhan and the city government or studies on the

history of the Kasepuhan Cirebon palace. Therefore, this study offers a new contribution by highlighting the use of Instagram by the Cirebon Sultanate Palace as a counter narrative tool to online mass media coverage. The reason is that there has been no research that specifically examines how the palace uses their social media, such as Instagram, to deal with online mass media narratives related to their internal conflicts. Therefore, this study is significant in bridging the research gap by focusing on how Instagram is used as a means of communication to form, counter, or strengthen its narrative amidst the narratives circulating in online mainstream media. Stuart Hall's theory of representation, which focuses on the construction of meaning through the media, is a relevant basis for understanding this phenomenon, where the palace is not only an object of news reporting, but also an active subject that produces counter-narratives.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

The main theory used in this study is Stuart Hall's representation theory. Stuart Hall (1997) argues that representation is a process in which meaning is produced, exchanged or communicated and maintained through the use of language, signs, images, symbols, images, and other forms to represent something, express ideas, thoughts, feelings, expressions, emotions to ideologies which are then interpreted by the audience (Encoding-Decoding process). The meaning of this representation works through two important components, namely in the concept of mind and language that are interrelated. According to him, representation does not merely re-display or reflect a certain reality, but is an active process in creating and constructing meaning to influence understanding of reality (Hall, 1997: 15-20). Hall (1997) argues that representation has an important role in cultural studies because through representation, perception, identity, ideology and social relations are formed and represented. As Hall expressed in his book *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, "Representation connects meaning and language to culture". This means that representation works as a link between meaning and language in a cultural context (Ibid.: 15-17). In other words, representation is interpreted as a bridge between humans and the world. With representation, one can see how the world is displayed, both in terms of politics, economy, social, culture and ideology. Barker (2004) argues that most cultural studies focus on the issue of representation, namely how the world is constructed and represented socially to and by society, the main focus of cultural studies is on the practice of interpreting representation (Barker, 2004: 15).

The concept of representation theory is very important to understand how media narratives and various other communication practices are constructed. In his theoretical concept, the audience is not only passive in receiving messages conveyed by the media, but also has the ability to reinterpret or reproduce the message. Unlike the traditional (linear) communication model

which only consists of three stages, namely sender-message-receiver, Hall describes the stages in his circular communication model and how the process of producing and receiving messages can affect the meaning it produces. In this case, Hall divides the Encoding-Decoding model (circuit model) into four stages: production, circulation, use (distribution or consumption), and reproduction. Encoding refers to the process of creating or producing a code by the sender of the message, while decoding is the process by which the recipient of the message breaks/interprets the code to understand its meaning (Hall, 1973: 4-8).

Social media in this case is not only a communication tool but also an economic, social and cultural system that can regulate how identity, social relations and self-representation are formed and exchanged in virtual space. According to Van Dijck (2013) social media in this case plays a role in forming social and cultural connectivity by constructing the digital identity of their users through a structured platform that has a strong influence on how people interact, manage identity, and view themselves and others. (Van Dijck 2013: 48-67). By understanding the theory of representation, researchers can explore the ways in which social media such as Keraton Kasepuhan Instagram build narratives, influence public perception, and produce meanings that play a role in creating social realities that are accepted by society. In the concept of representation, Hall (1997) explains that existing meanings emerge naturally, but are constructed by the media through a coding process. The media has the power to form representations of reality through the selection and presentation of information and content, while the meanings displayed are then interpreted by the audience based on their social and cultural experiences (decoding). This process shows how symbols and signs presented on social media can communicate different messages, depending on the context of the audience receiving the message (Hall, 1997: 15-20).

Stuart Hall (1997) understands that communication cannot be separated from the issue of power, especially in the context of media, because media is never neutral, but is always influenced by dominant forces that determine what will be represented and how the representation is conveyed to the public. In his view, representation is an active process that involves the production of meaning where the process of formation and distribution is influenced by power. Media communication in this case is not only the transmission of messages, but also an arena where meaning, ideology, and power interact with each other (Hall, 1997: 259-264).

## **METHOD**

The research method used in this study uses qualitative research with the content analysis method. In the book *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*, Klaus Krippendorff (2018) discusses content analysis as a method used to identify communication patterns in various types of media, including social media. There are several basic procedures in content analysis,

the first of which is the importance of identifying the unit of analysis, determining the context of communication, and developing a clear and structured coding scheme to classify and interpret data (Krippendorf, 2018: 27-58). Krippendorf also provides a more in-depth guide on how to code content, with an emphasis on coding as a key process in content analysis. Coding involves transforming raw data into meaningful units which are then analyzed to find certain patterns, themes, or tendencies. It also emphasizes the importance of reliability in coding, namely agreement between coders, to ensure that the results of the analysis remain consistent and reproducible (*ibid.*, 147-186).

The content analysis method is a research technique used to analyze communication systematically and objectively, especially in the form of text, images, videos, or other media. In the context of discussing the Cirebon Palace conflict, this method allows us to explore how Kasepuhan represents themselves on Instagram—either through visual uploads, captions, or cultural symbols—to create a counter-narrative. This analysis also helps identify how Keraton Kasepuhan tries to emphasize the legitimacy of tradition and the maintenance of cultural heritage, which is positioned as a response to negative news in online media. Through content analysis, researchers can explore important aspects, such as seeing and identifying communication patterns and strategies to direct public perception and manage discourse about their role and authority amidst the reported conflict. Thus, through the content analysis method, researchers can see how Keraton Kasepuhan not only produces content on Instagram but also uses it as a strategic communication tool to form a narrative that strengthens their position as an institution that adheres to tradition and the legitimacy of leadership amidst the flow of conflict news in online media.

The period of uploaded posts analysed was from mid-2020 to 2023. The mid-2020 period was taken after the Jumenengan process of Sultan Sepuh XV in August 2020, which was the beginning of the polemics that began to emerge and received attention from online mass media. Meanwhile, the 2023 posting limit was taken so that it was not too wide and the data taken was sufficiently representative.

Here are some important steps and aspects that are carried out: 1) Determining the purpose of the research, the initial step is to determine the purpose of the content analysis research is to understand how the conflict involving Kasepuhan Palace and other parties is represented in online mainstream media. In addition, it is important to know how the public responds to Instagram uploads related to this conflict (does the public response tend to support, oppose, or be neutral?) and analyze whether the content published on Instagram by Kasepuhan Palace is effective in building a counter-narrative to strengthen their image and counter the negative discourse in online media. 2) Data collection (sampling), first by determining the relevant time period for data collection, in this context the period was taken in 2020-2023 when the conflict increased. After that, the collection of relevant content, can be in the form of photos/videos and other visual

symbols, captions, or public responses in the form of likes, shares or comments so that the narrative pattern that is built can be seen. 3) Code category, after the next data collection stage, code the upload content. This coding includes identifying the main themes or issues that emerge in each post, such as the theme of authority, legitimacy of tradition, or support for the Sultan, as well as the affirmation of the role of the Palace in preserving cultural heritage. Additional codes can include how the Palace positions themselves in responding to criticism/news related to the conflict, as well as the use of cultural or religious symbols to strengthen the narrative. 4) Coding process, after the code category is determined, each unit of content, whether text, image/video is analyzed and categorized according to the predetermined code. This coding process is important to ensure that each part of the content is mapped according to the narrative to be analyzed, so that the representation pattern can be seen in a more structured and systematic way. 5) Analysis and interpretation of results, At the analysis stage, the focus is on interpreting the meaning of the content uploaded by the Kasepuhan Palace on Instagram. This involves analyzing the narrative built through the text and visuals, they published. Meanwhile, from the public response side, researchers can interpret how the public responds to online news articles and at the same time interpret the public response in the Palace's Instagram posts. For example, does the public support the narrative conveyed by Kasepuhan Palace, or does it criticize the uploaded content? Analysis of these comments can help assess whether Instagram uploads have succeeded in building support for the Palace, or on the contrary, triggering negative responses. Thus, the interactions that occur on the social media platform are important indicators in measuring the effectiveness of the narrative built by Kasepuhan Palace. 6) Conclusion of the analysis results, the results of the analysis conducted are expected to provide in-depth insight into how Kasepuhan Palace uses its social media, especially Instagram, to form a narrative around internal conflict and how the public responds to the narrative. This analysis also provides an understanding of the extent to which Instagram can function as a tool to fight for peace or vice versa, as a tool that deepens conflict in the digital space.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

From the various news reports that researchers have identified, in addition to the issue of lineage and non-lineage, there are several other issues that hinder the Kasepuhan Palace, including the issue of the legality of the enthronement process of Sultan Sepuh XV, the issue of the rejection of the Cirebon Sultanate family towards the figure of PRA Luqman Zulkaedin, the issue of the fading of the pepakem tradition in the Kasepuhan Palace, the issue of the environment and the poorly maintained Kasepuhan Palace heritage, and the issue of the Kasepuhan Palace prioritizing commercialization rather than preserving their customs and traditions. These reports received

various different responses from the public in the virtual space. Some supported the narrative carried by the online mainstream media, where the public demanded clarity regarding the history of the Cirebon 'petheng' by openly demanding that Sultan Sepuh XV leave his throne. Meanwhile, there were also those who understood why this narrative had only just emerged and what the underlying motives were. In the context of representation theory, these diverse reactions illustrate the decoding process, where audiences do not always receive messages from the media in the same way. On the contrary, the audience interprets the meaning according to their respective backgrounds, interests, and socio-cultural experiences (Hall, 1997: 263). This shows that representation in the media, especially those related to sensitive issues such as history and legitimacy of leadership, is always dynamic and can be understood differently by various groups in society.



**Figure 2. One of the news reports on the Kasepuhan Palace Conflict in Cirebon**

**Source: IG @radarcirebon**

In the midst of the heated conflict, the Kasepuhan Palace reactivated their social media, especially Instagram, to produce their content. The Kasepuhan Palace has 2 official Instagram accounts, namely @keratonkasepuhan with 1,298 followers and @keraton\_kasepuhancirebon with 2,617 followers, with slightly different content needs.

The content generally includes documentation of activities (traditional rituals and other events) and content related to the palace, the presence of the sultan at Keraton Nusantara events, content about the beauty of the palace's architecture and the sites/places it manages, heirlooms, official event visits (with officials and community leaders), activities in the wewengkon area, and various congratulatory content. The @keratonkasepuhan account is directly held by Sultan Sepuh XV so that their contents are more related to the Sultan's personal activities or content that focuses more on spreading da'wah, while the @keraton\_kasepuhancirebon account is managed by the Keraton Kasepuhan media admin, where the content posts not only feature the figure of Sultan Sepuh XV but also feature Gusti Patih Sepuh and Patih Sepuh Anom when representing Sultan

Sepuh XV in various events or guest visits. In carrying out their communication strategy on Instagram, Kasepuhan Palace takes the following steps/strategies:

**Intense use of attractive and symbolic visuals.** Intense use of attractive and symbolic visuals. As explained by Stuart Hall, the basics of representation theory are how symbols and language are used to build meaning. (Hall, 1997:10-11). In their Instagram communication strategy, Kasepuhan effectively uses attractive visuals that are full of symbolic meaning to strengthen the narrative they want to build. The photos/videos they upload often display elements of tradition, culture, and the identity of the Palace, such as traditional ceremonies, palace buildings, and traditional clothing worn by Sultan Sepuh XV. These visuals not only function as visual attractions for his followers on Instagram, but also contain deep messages about the authority and legitimacy of the Palace. The symbols of custom and culture that appear in the uploads are specifically used to emphasize the position of Sultan Sepuh XV as a legitimate leader. Through this symbol, Kasepuhan communicates their historical and spiritual values, emphasizes the continuity of tradition, and shows that their institution is a legitimate guardian of cultural heritage. This indirectly strengthens the authority of the palace amidst internal conflicts or rivalries that emerge in online media coverage. In this way, the Kasepuhan Palace is able to use visuals as a strategic medium to influence public perception. These symbol-rich posts help create a strong impression of the legitimacy of the Sultan's leadership and show that the palace remains relevant and plays an important role in modern society, while also answering the challenges of narratives that emerge in online media.

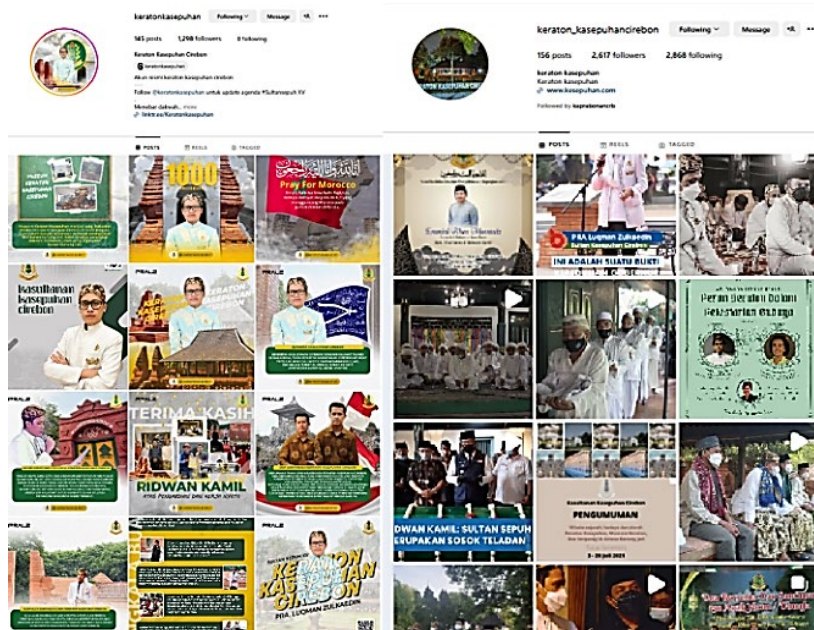


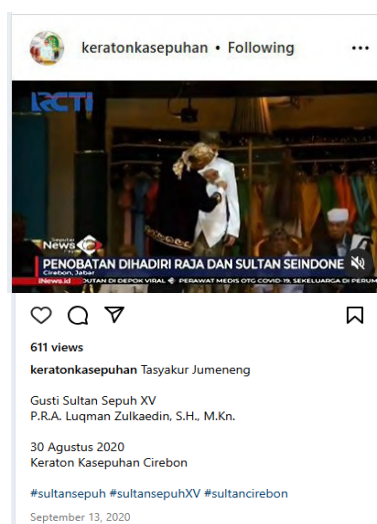
Figure 3. Instagram of Kasepuhan Palace

Source: IG @keratonkasepuhan dan @keraton\_kasepuhancirebon

### Selection of relevant content and use of strong narratives that convince the audience.

Kasepuhan Palace directly or indirectly selects their Instagram content, including images/videos and texts, to respond to various issues that appear in the media, especially those that have the potential to discredit the institution or leadership of Sultan Sepuh XV PRA Luqman Zulkaedin. These contents do not only function as passive means of communication, but are actively designed to provide clarification, build new narratives, and direct public perception. In the context of the legitimacy of Sultan Sepuh XV's leadership, Kasepuhan uses content that highlights support from various important levels of society and institutions. Kasepuhan, through their Instagram account, attempts to respond to the issue of the legality of the coronation of Sultan Sepuh XV PRA Luqman Zulkaedin by building a strong narrative and highlighting broad support for the Sultan's leadership. The uploads on their account are produced to display various important elements that show that Sultan Sepuh XV's leadership is not only legitimate, but also recognized by various influential parties. Here are some aspects of how Kasepuhan uses their Instagram to oppose the issue of the legality of the Sultan's coronation:

- Showing support from the Sultan and King of Nusantara; Kasepuhan Palace displays documentation in the form of photos/videos showing Sultan Sepuh XV in the formal Jumenengan/Coronation event attended by other sultans and kings from the Nusantara Kingdom. This meeting shows that Sultan Sepuh XV has widespread recognition from fellow kingdom leaders in Indonesia.



**Figure 4. Support form Sultan dan King of Nusantara**

**Source: IG @keratonkasepuhan**

- Support from Ulama and Religious Figures; One of the main strategies in Instagram posts is to show the Sultan's closeness to religious figures, especially ulama and elders, which emphasizes that Sultan Sepuh XV is not only recognized traditionally, but also has spiritual support from

Islamic religious leaders. This helps strengthen the narrative that the Sultan's leadership has a strong moral and spiritual foundation. In addition to support from the ulama, Sultan Sepuh XV also received congratulations from the At-Taqwa Center Mosque Council of Cirebon City for his coronation as Sultan Kasepuhan.



**Figure 5. Support from Ulama dan Mosque Council**

**Source: IG @keratonkasepuhan dan @keraton\_kasepuhancirebon**

- Support from Government Officials and the Governor of West Java; Keraton Kasepuhan also shows the Sultan's good relationship with government officials, including the Governor of West Java. In these uploads, there are often photos/showing Sultan Sepuh XV at official events attended by government officials. Explicit support from government officials, such as the Governor, provides formal legitimacy to the Sultan's position, reminding the public that his leadership is supported not only by tradition but also by state institutions.



**Figure 6. Support from Government**

**Source: IG @keratonkasepuhan**

- Support from the Community. In addition to support from important figures, Keraton Kasepuhan's Instagram also often contains content that displays support from the community. This is important because it shows that Sultan Sepuh XV is not only recognized by the elite, but also by the general public. By showing this support, Keraton Kasepuhan wants to show that Sultan Sepuh XV's leadership is accepted by the community and has a strong social base.
- Use of Traditional and Cultural Symbols: Traditional symbols are also often used in Instagram posts to emphasize the continuity of tradition. By presenting the Sultan in the context of traditional rituals that are widely recognized by the people of Cirebon and the Nusantara, Keraton Kasepuhan seeks to show that the leadership of Sultan Sepuh XV is part of a continuing cultural heritage. The use of symbolic elements is designed to show that Sultan Sepuh XV is the rightful heir to ancestral traditions.

When the issue of the legality of the Sultan's coronation emerged in online media, the Kasepuhan palace responded with a post clarifying the situation. The caption and text on the Instagram post were used to provide the perspective of the Kasepuhan Palace, while also opposing claims that challenged or doubted the authority and legitimacy of Sultan Sepuh XV. In their post, the Kasepuhan palace presented evidence of support from various important parties, and also featured direct quotes from influential figures who expressed support for Sultan Sepuh XV. Overall, the Kasepuhan Palace used a combination of visuals, cultural symbols, and their narrative to challenge the issue of the legality of Sultan Sepuh XV's coronation. Through posts that highlighted broad support from various elements of society, the Kasepuhan palace attempted to build a narrative that affirmed the legitimacy of their Sultan's leadership.

Kaplan in his article published in *Business Horizons* 53, no. 1, 2010, explains the role of social media as a mass communication tool and how platforms such as Instagram can influence public opinion and their impact on building public perception (Kaplan, 2010:61-62), then Kasepuhan also counteracts the polemic issues that are developing in society by utilizing Instagram to display posts featuring Patih Kasepuhan during a press conference with the media crew.

In his press conference, Patih Kasepuhan provided clarification regarding the circulating issues, providing information to straighten out information that corners Keraton Kasepuhan. This post functions as a form of communication that emphasizes Kasepuhan's openness in the polemics that arise. In addition, by publishing the press conference moment, Kasepuhan seeks to ensure that the public gets information directly from official sources, so negative narratives that develop in society or online mainstream media can be suppressed. This strategy shows that Keraton Kasepuhan not only responds to issues through internal actions, but also uses their social media.

The next counter strategy is that Kasepuhan uses their Instagram account to counter the issue of the rejection of the Cirebon Sultanate family towards PRA Luqman Zulkaedin in a strategic way. Through their posts, Kasepuhan builds an image that their relationship with the

Cirebon Sultanate family, including other palaces in Cirebon, remains harmonious and unlike online media reports that focus on conflict. In their Instagram posts, Kasepuhan often displays documentation of traditional events involving various palaces in Cirebon. Photos and videos showing interactions between Sultan Sepuh XV PRA Luqman Zulkaedin and figures from other palaces are visual evidence for Kasepuhan to show that relations between Cirebon palaces are still going well. This togetherness is emphasized to form public opinion that the palaces in Cirebon remain united. This strategy allows Kasepuhan to maintain a positive image and legitimacy of Sultan Sepuh XV in the public.



Figure 7. Clarification from Kasepuhan regarding the polemic that occurred

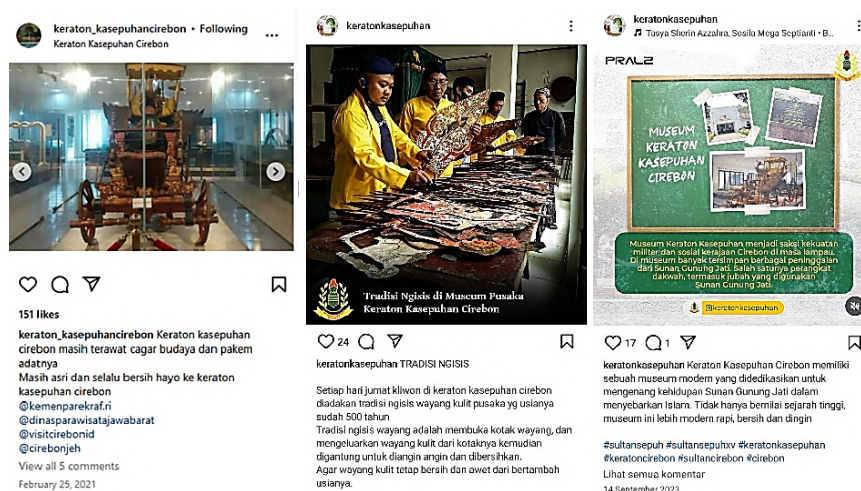
Source: IG @keraton\_kasepuhancirebon



Figure 8. The closeness of the Kasepuhan with other Cirebon palace figures

Source: IG @keraton\_kasepuhancirebon

Meanwhile, regarding the issue of the fading pepakem tradition and issues related to the environment and heirlooms belonging to the Kasepuhan Palace which are considered poorly maintained, Kasepuhan has made counter efforts through their posts which emphasize that the pepakem customs and traditions of the Kasepuhan Palace are still well maintained. In addition, Kasepuhan also showed that the historical heirlooms owned by the palace are very well maintained and stored neatly in the Kasepuhan Palace Heritage Museum. Kasepuhan clarified that the maintenance of heirlooms and the preservation of the pepakem tradition are the main priorities of the Palace. Kasepuhan is trying to build a positive image that the Kasepuhan Palace remains the guardian of traditions and cultural heritage that are well maintained, while at the same time countering negative perceptions that arise in society.



**Figure 9. Claims the traditional customs of Kasepuhan Palace have been maintained**

**Source: IG @keraton\_kasepuhancirebon, @keratonkasepuhan**

Next, Kasepuhan used their Instagram account to counter issues related to the debate about lineage (trah) and non-trah, with a focus on emphasizing that the Kasepuhan family lineage remains intact and has never been broken, especially referring to the Sunan Gunung Jati lineage. Through various likes posts that strengthen this narrative, Keraton Kasepuhan tries to clarify that their leadership has historical and cultural legitimacy. By emphasizing historical continuity, Kasepuhan tries to strengthen the legitimacy of Sultan Sepuh XV as the legitimate successor to the Sunan Gunung Jati lineage. This strategy helps shape the public perception that the issues related to the lineage debate are baseless and that Sultan Sepuh XV's leadership remains intact.

The last counter issue is to respond to the issue of the assumption that they focuses more on commercialization than on preserving customs and traditions. In this case, Kasepuhan tries to show that even though their institution is a tourist destination, but their institution still maintains and preserves the customs that have been passed down from generation to generation since the

time of Sunan Gunung Jati. In their posts, to emphasize the focus on preserving customs and traditions, Kasepuhan consistently uploads documentation of traditional ceremonies, religious rituals, and other cultural events. Through photos and videos, Kasepuhan displays various traditional ritual events that emphasize that the pepakem custom is still carried out solemnly and with full respect.



**Figure 10. One of the posts that claims to maintain the lineage of the Kasepuhan Palace**  
 Source: IG @keratonkasepuhan



**Figure 11. Religious events held by the Kasepuhan Palace**  
 Source: IG @keratonkasepuhan

Kasepuhan also displays content that shows their role as a guardian of cultural heritage. These posts often feature images or videos of Sultan Sepuh XV PRA Luqman Zulkaedin directly involved in cultural and religious activities, emphasizing that the role of the Palace is not only as a tourist attraction, but also as a center for preserving living traditions. To clarify their message, Kasepuhan uses captions that directly counter provocative issues related to the focus on commercialization. The captions emphasize that Keraton Kasepuhan is always committed to preserving customs and traditions, and asks the public not to be easily provoked by narratives that can be divisive. Posts that display historical heirlooms/sacred objects are a way to show that the Palace remains serious about preserving their historical and cultural values. By displaying cultural

symbols, Keraton Kasepuhan emphasizes that their institution is not only a tourist attraction, but also a keeper of priceless heritage that continues to be preserved as a legacy from Sunan Gunung Jati. In addition, Kasepuhan also uses narratives to invite the public to participate in preserving traditions.



**Figure 12. Ritual Panjang Jimat in Kasepuhan Palace**

**source: IG @keratonkasepuhan**

From the posts that have been analyzed, it shows the importance of the Kasepuhan's counter media strategy through their Instagram account. First, the counter media strategy implemented by Kasepuhan through their Instagram account allows it to manage and maintain their reputation by quickly responding to negative impressions that can damage the image of their institution as a guardian of tradition and customs. In the digital world, reputation is very vulnerable to changes in public perception, so the ability to respond in real time through social media is very crucial. Second, preventing the spread of misinformation. The spread of incorrect information or misinformation can cause major damage to the image of an institution. With an effective counter media strategy, Kasepuhan can correct incorrect information or misinformation before it spreads further. Instagram allows the palace to respond to sensitive issues directly to their followers. Third, controlling the narrative. With the counter media strategy, Kasepuhan has full control over the narrative conveyed to the public. This is important because the narrative that develops on social media has the power to influence public opinion widely. By releasing the right content, the Palace can ensure that the perspective and story they want to convey remain a major part of the public dialogue. Fourth, maintaining public trust. One of the most important benefits of a counter media strategy is their ability to maintain and build public trust. Through Instagram posts that promote clarity, openness, and respect for tradition, Kasepuhan can strengthen the bond of trust

with the community. This is very important to ensure the sustainability of the Palace's role as a guardian of cultural heritage and traditional leader in Cirebon. With a targeted counter media strategy, Kasepuhan can utilize Instagram as an effective communication tool to respond to, correct, and control narratives circulating in the community, as well as maintain public trust amidst various challenges of developing information. Based on observations of comments on the Keraton Kasepuhan Instagram account, it appears that the audience actually supports the leadership of Sultan Sepuh XV and believes that the lineage in the Kasepuhan Sultanate is unbroken. This is different from the narrative carried by online mainstream media which often gives rise to comments in the form of insults or criticism of the Sultan. The supportive comments show that although online mass media depicts a heated conflict, the audience on the Kasepuhan Instagram social media has a different perception and attitude.

In the context of Stuart Hall's theory of representation, Kasepuhan's efforts to "fight" negative news can be understood as an attempt to re-encode or change the meaning that has been encoded in the news. As Hall explains, representation is a process in which meaning is produced and exchanged through various media, but the meaning produced is always bound by power and interests that influence how an event or reality is constructed (Hall, 1997: 259). Kasepuhan Palace then tries to change the meaning that has been encoded in negative news by offering an alternative narrative. Instead of simply accepting the representation spread by online mainstream media, the palace actively builds their own version of the narrative, or re-encodes the message. Kasepuhan tries to provide a new meaning that challenges and improves the image displayed by the media (Ibid., 260). In this way, the palace tries to replace the negative meaning that may have been spread by online mass media with a positive meaning that is more in line with the interests of their institution. Kasepuhan's actions illustrate the dynamics between encoding and decoding in communication.

## **CONCLUSION**

By combining representation theory and content analysis, researchers can see how Instagram can function as a counter to online mainstream media coverage of the Cirebon Palace conflict. Through visual representation, the use of cultural symbols, peace-focused framing, and active community participation, Instagram becomes an important tool in changing the conflict narrative. With this approach, the public can receive a more balanced and richer view of the Cirebon Palace conflict that may be distorted by online mainstream media coverage that prioritizes conflict over resolution. In this case, the Kasepuhan Palace made various efforts to

"counteract" the negative news representation that existed. The Kasepuhan Palace tried to change the meaning encoded in the news by offering an alternative narrative (Re-encoding Meaning). The Kasepuhan Palace used their Instagram social media to control their own narrative, encoding messages that emphasized their superiority and relevance. The results of the study show that the Kasepuhan Palace Instagram is an important platform to counter negative news or narratives built by mainstream online media that can damage the image and reputation of the Kasepuhan Palace. Kasepuhan's Instagram content attempts to build their own narrative from their perspective which helps the palace institution maintain a positive image and strengthen their legitimacy and relationship with the public.

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