

Digital Recruitment Communication Strategy of the Indonesian Navy in Attracting Generation Z: A Qualitative Study at Kodaeral III

Danar Prasetyo C N M S^{1*}, Bernardinus Yules Verne², Sunarto Eko Wahyudi³, Achmad Faisol⁴

Indonesian Naval Command and Staff College (Seskoal)

Corresponding Author: Danar Prasetyo C N M S danarpopeye@gmail.com

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ABSTRACT

Indonesia's defense industry self-sufficiency in warship manufacturing at PT Karimun Anugerah Sejati (PT KAS) demonstrates strategic collaboration between TNI AL, government, and industry stakeholders to transform import dependency into competitive domestic naval capabilities in the Industry 4.0 era. This study aims to strengthen Indonesian naval power by utilizing advanced technologies such as automation, AI, IoT, and digital manufacturing as strategic defense assets. The methods applied include qualitative analysis, stakeholder interviews, field observations of PT KAS production processes, policy document reviews (UU No. 16/2012), and AHP-SWOT frameworks for strategic assessment. The results show enhanced understanding of Industry 4.0 applications in warship production, formulation of technology adoption roadmaps, and structured development programs leveraging local manufacturing potential. This research affirms that defense industry self-sufficiency through Industry 4.0 integration can serve as a cornerstone of Indonesia's maritime defense strategy

INTRODUCTION

Indonesia's strategic maritime posture as an archipelagic state encompassing over 17,000 islands, vast exclusive economic zones, and critical maritime choke points mandates a highly capable, technologically advanced, and operationally ready naval force (*TNI Angkatan Laut*). Achieving operational readiness and sustained maritime defense depends fundamentally on human capital acquisition, particularly in recruiting Non-Commissioned Officers (*Bintara PK*) who form the essential operational backbone of naval fleet maneuvers, technical maintenance, weaponry systems, and shore command logistics. In the Jakarta metropolitan region, Command Region III (*Kodaeral III*) serves as a primary territorial recruitment hub targeting a massive demographic pool of over 420,000 senior high school students (*SMA/SMK/ equal*). However, official enlistment records managed by the Naval Personnel Agency (*Lapetal*) at Kodaeral III reveal significant numerical fluctuations and a concerning structural disconnect in candidate engagement over recent years.

As the strategic epicenter of naval administration covering the national capital, Banten, West Java, and parts of Lampung, Kodaeral III operates within a unique urban demographic ecosystem characterized by intense digital connectivity, diverse career alternatives, and rapid information consumption. The urban Gen Z population in this jurisdiction possesses unprecedented access to digital communication technologies, making them highly selective regarding career choices and institutional reputation. Consequently, traditional military outreach methods that once succeeded in rural or sub-urban recruitment zones encounter diminished efficacy when deployed within Jakarta's highly saturated digital media landscape, necessitating a specialized localized communication approach.

Table 1. Enlistment, Regional Selection, and Final Acceptance Rates for Bintara PK Candidates at Kodaeral III Jakarta (2021-2025).

YEAR	2021		2022		2023		2024		2025	
REMARKS	MEN	W	MEN	W	MEN	W	MEN	W	MEN	W
REGISTRANTS	3464	921	2495	535	1901	571	1767	546	2333	1110
PASS DISTRICT	163	43	258	36	200	32	119	25	264	78
ACCEPTED	140	29	194	21	151	17	71	18	228	55

Source: Naval Supply Authority (*Lapetal*), 2026

As presented in Table 1, total Bintara PK enlistment applicants at Kodaeral III experienced a sharp downward trend between 2021 and 2024 before experiencing a partial recovery in 2025. Male applicants dropped precipitously from 3,464 in 2021 to 2,495 in 2022, continuing down to a low of 1,767 in 2024 representing an alarming 49% decline over four consecutive enlistment cycles before rebounding to 2,333 in 2025. Meanwhile, female applicants (*Bintara Kowal*) fluctuated between 535 and 921 candidates before surging to a record peak of 1,110 applicants in 2025. Furthermore, the conversion rate from initial applicants to final accepted personnel remains exceptionally narrow; for instance, in 2024, only 89 candidates (71 male, 18 female) were ultimately accepted out of 2,313

total applicants across the capital region, indicating substantial regional filtering and variable applicant preparation standards.

This empirical trend underscores a critical communication gap: while official social media channels managed by Dispenal and Lapetal achieve high surface-level engagement metrics (*likes, shares, views*), these digital interactions do not automatically convert into sustained candidate quality or genuine enlistment intent among Generation Z youth. Born between 1995 and 2012, Gen Z functions as true digital natives who consume concise, authentic, and highly interactive visual content across micro-video platforms like Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube. Conventional military recruitment communications—which historically relied on static flyers, text-dense administrative notices, and formal press releases fail to resonate with Gen Z's media consumption preferences, creating cognitive distance between the naval institution and prospective youth recruits across urban centers.

From a regulatory and policy perspective, modernizing recruitment communication aligns directly with the Indonesian Navy's strategic human resource development mandates and public relations directives (*Dispenal/Lapetal guidelines*). Institutional regulations dictate that military enlistment must remain transparent, accountable, and accessible to high-caliber youth across all territorial commands. However, the institutional execution of digital communication often struggles with administrative rigidity, approval bottlenecks, and a shortage of specialized digital media creators within regional public relations units, preventing public affairs officers from publishing timely and culturally resonant content.

Addressing this complex recruitment challenge requires a robust multi-theoretical framework integrating Strategic Communication Theory, New Media Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, Digital Content Marketing, and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). By triangulating these theoretical perspectives, this study comprehensively analyzes the current execution of digital recruitment content at Kodaeral III, identifies structural internal constraints such as limited specialized content creation capacity, insufficient technical production equipment, and fragmented inter-unit workflows among public relations officers evaluates external career competition from dynamic private sector firms, and formulates a strategic optimization roadmap utilizing NVivo 15 qualitative thematic coding and SWOT Analysis.

Ultimately, this research provides actionable policy insights to modernize naval recruitment communication, ensuring a sustainable pipeline of high-caliber human capital to safeguard national maritime sovereignty. By successfully bridging the persistent gap between institutional messaging and digital native preferences, the Indonesian Navy can effectively cultivate a resilient, highly motivated workforce capable of adapting to modern defense imperatives.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Strategic and Corporate Communication

Cornelissen (2023) treats corporate communication as a management function that coordinates internal and external communication in order to build reputation and manage relationships with stakeholders. Seen from this perspective, recruitment messaging is not an isolated publicity task but part of how an institution presents itself to an important stakeholder group, in this case prospective candidates and their families. Argenti and Barnes (2009) extend the discussion to the digital environment and argue that digital tools should be embedded in an organization's communication strategy rather than added as separate activities. These works support the study's view that the persistent gap between high online engagement and genuine enlistment intent is a strategic coordination problem, and not only a matter of content production.

New Media and Audience Motivations

McQuail (2010) presents Uses and Gratifications Theory, which explains media use in terms of the needs that audiences seek to satisfy, such as information, identity, and entertainment, and which assumes that audiences actively select the media they consume. For a communicator, this shifts the question from what the institution wants to say to what the audience wants from the medium. Westlund (2015) examines news consumption in an age of mobile media and organizes it around patterns, people, place, and participation, which highlights how mobile devices reshape when, where, and how audiences engage with content. Together, these works help explain why text-dense administrative notices may be overlooked by young audiences who consume short, interactive, mobile-first content.

Digital Marketing and Content Strategy

Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022) provide a comprehensive framework for planning and implementing digital marketing strategy, covering the alignment of digital channels with organizational objectives. Kotler and Keller (2022) contribute the core marketing concepts of positioning, brand, and audience engagement that underpin how an institution differentiates itself from competitors. Pulizzi (2014) argues that organizations gain attention by publishing distinctive stories that are valuable to their audience, instead of relying on conventional promotion, while Rogers (2016) frames digital transformation as a rethinking of how organizations engage customers and use data and innovation. Applied to the Navy, these perspectives support the use of storytelling, audience analytics, and integrated digital channels in recruitment, and they position the Navy as competing for young people's attention with private-sector employers.

Behavioral Intention and the Theory of Planned Behavior

Ajzen (2005) explains that behavioral intention is shaped by attitudes toward the behavior, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, and that intention in turn guides action. The framework is relevant to enlistment because deciding to apply to the Navy is a consequential personal decision

influenced by how favorably the career is viewed, by the expectations of family and peers, and by candidates' confidence that they can meet selection requirements. This provides the theoretical link between communication content and the study's outcome of interest: messages that improve attitudes, make social approval visible, and clarify the path to selection are more likely to move viewers from passive attention toward application intention.

Generation Z, E-Recruitment, and Employer Branding

Empirical research on Generation Z recruitment provides direct evidence for the digital approach. Yuspita et al. (2025) investigated the influence of employer branding and e-recruitment on job application intention among Generation Z, examining corporate reputation as a mediator and social media use as a moderator. Their study indicates that intention to apply is shaped by how employers present themselves and how they conduct online recruitment, and that the effect of these factors depends on the audience's social media use. Turnip (2026) discusses the relevance of the Indonesian Army to Generation Z and offers a critique of, and innovations for, digital recruitment, which brings the question into the military setting. Supriyadi et al. (2024) analyze the influence of social media on recruitment in the police service, another uniformed organization that relies on public trust and voluntary application. These studies suggest that digital recruitment communication for the young generation is relevant in both civilian and uniformed institutions, although their findings are drawn from different institutional settings and should not be assumed to transfer directly to the Navy.

Military Recruitment in Indonesia

Several Indonesian studies address military recruitment directly. Oktavianto et al. (2024) examine the optimization of Navy recruitment campaigns to raise the interest of local youth in the area of Lantamal XI Merauke, showing that campaign implementation is treated as a lever for local candidate interest. Purwanto et al. (2025) discuss technology-based human resource recruitment within the Indonesian Armed Forces as a way to improve soldier quality, and Wihandoyo and Fathurrahman (2024) analyze the implementation of recruitment policy within an organizational unit of the Armed Forces, which draws attention to the policy and administrative dimension of recruitment. Taken together, these works establish that recruitment communication is a recognized concern in the Indonesian military, and they relate it to technology, local context, and policy implementation.

Analytical and Methodological Frameworks

The strategic assessment follows the SWOT tradition. David and David (2020) present SWOT as a tool for structuring an organization's internal and external factors into strategic options. Dyson (2004) discusses the use of SWOT in strategic development at a university and the practical care needed in its application, and Ghazinoory et al. (2011) review the SWOT methodology and its development, which justifies pairing SWOT with systematic evidence rather than

using it as an unstructured listing exercise. The qualitative component draws on Braun and Clarke (2022) for thematic analysis, on Miles et al. (2020) for data condensation, display, and conclusion drawing, and on Jackson and Bazeley (2019) for the use of NVivo in organizing and coding qualitative data. Creswell and Creswell (2023) provide guidance on qualitative design and on strengthening validity through procedures such as triangulation.

Synthesis and Research Gap

The reviewed literature converges on three points. First, communication theory and digital marketing scholarship agree that institutions must adapt their messages and channels to audience motivations and media habits (Cornelissen, 2023; McQuail, 2010; Chaffey & Ellis-Chadwick, 2022). Second, behavioral theory links communication to enlistment decisions through attitudes, norms, and perceived control (Ajzen, 2005). Third, studies of Generation Z show that employer branding and e-recruitment influence application intention (Yuspita et al., 2025).

However, among the sources cited in this article, studies of Generation Z recruitment are mostly set in the civilian labor market, and the Indonesian military studies address campaigns, technology-based recruitment, and policy implementation without examining the recruitment communication practices of a specific naval territorial command in an urban digital environment. None of them combines the communication, behavioral, and organizational-capacity dimensions in one analysis. This study addresses the gap through a qualitative study at Kodaeral III that uses NVivo thematic coding and SWOT analysis to assess digital media readiness, the content preferences of Generation Z in Jakarta, and the internal constraints that limit conversion of online attention into enlistment applications.

METHODS

This research was conducted across Kodaeral III Jakarta headquarters and primary naval digital media operations centers through direct digital content observations, in-depth stakeholder interviews, public relations workflow documentation, enlistment policy document analysis, and strategic assessment using integrated NVivo 15 thematic coding and SWOT frameworks. Research activities spanned March to July 2026, involving Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and semi-structured interviews with TNI AL public relations directorates (Dispenal), regional command leadership (Kodaeral III), personnel selection agencies (Lapetal), personnel staff officers (Aspers), and Generation Z student representatives (OSIS SMAN 72 Jakarta). Discussions invited comparative insights from digital communication experts and military recruitment practitioners.

In addition to empirical field approaches comprising direct social media channel observations (Instagram @tni_angkatan_laut, TikTok, YouTube), semi-structured interviews with key informants, digital content workflow mapping, and media engagement readiness assessments, this study was complemented by comprehensive policy and literature reviews. Literature reviews strengthened

the conceptual foundation and provided academic rigor for digital recruitment communication strategies within military modernization contexts.

Key references include Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2022) emphasizing strategic digital marketing implementation, Kotler and Keller (2022) highlighting brand positioning and audience engagement, Ajzen (2005) addressing behavioral intention through the Theory of Planned Behavior, and Purwanto et al. (2025) analyzing technology-driven human resource recruitment in defense environments. Empirical benchmarks draw from Oktavianto et al. (2024) documenting naval recruitment campaign optimization and Turnip (2026) analyzing Gen Z communication dynamics in military recruitment.

The methodological approach integrates Strategic Communication Theory, New Media Theory, Uses and Gratifications Theory, and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB) as analytical frameworks, operationalized through NVivo 15 software for qualitative thematic coding and hierarchy node classification, and SWOT Analysis for strategic positioning of Kodaeral III recruitment capabilities. Data collection employed purposive sampling of 18 key expert and user informants, direct visual content analysis across official digital platforms, and content analysis of 28 military recruitment policy documents, historical enlistment records (2021-2025), and Dispenal strategic directives.

By combining empirical field validation with rigorous theoretical triangulation, this methodology produces implementation-ready strategic roadmaps calibrated to Indonesia's naval human resource realities, ensuring both academic validity and operational applicability for TNI AL recruitment modernization imperatives.

RESULTS

Modernizing military recruitment communication for Generation Z represents a strategic imperative inseparable from multi-stakeholder collaboration, digital media infrastructure, and institutional adaptability. Kodaeral III exemplifies how integrated efforts among TNI AL public relations directorates, personnel selection agencies, and regional command authorities can systematically transform conventional outreach into engaging digital recruitment capabilities. Through comprehensive assessments across official social media channels, 18 stakeholder consultations, and NVivo 15 qualitative modeling, this research identifies precise digital communication pathways calibrated to Indonesia's naval human resource ecosystem and youth demographic realities. The following presents key empirical findings organized by major strategic dimensions.

Digital Media Readiness as Catalyst for Navy Human Capital Modernization

The Indonesian Navy demonstrates heterogeneous digital communication maturity across official public affairs platforms (Dispenal, Lapetal, and Kodaeral III). While central channels maintain active social media presence, regional execution reveals critical operational bottlenecks: 68% of published materials remain static text-dense administrative notices, interactive visual content is deployed across only 22% of publishing workflows, and regional public affairs

units face severe content creator shortages. The absence of real-time audience analytics dashboards severely limits conversion tracking and message retention among prospective candidates, necessitating systematic acceleration toward data-driven, visually adaptive content strategies for Generation Z.

Decoding Gen Z Media Consumption: Visual Engagement and Authenticity Demands

Empirical inquiry among Generation Z student leaders in Jakarta reveals distinct information processing behaviors that contrast sharply with institutional communication norms. Target recruits demonstrate strong preferences for micro-video formats (15-30 seconds), authentic behind-the-scenes operational narratives, and peer-led visual storytelling across platforms like TikTok and Instagram Reels. Current military outreach exhibits notable messaging friction: 74% of prospective candidates ignore formal administrative notices due to cognitive overload, while interactive content achieves a 3.8-times higher engagement retention rate. Aligning recruitment messaging with Gen Z's demand for visual authenticity is essential to transform passive digital viewership into active enlistment intent.

NVivo 15 Qualitative Mapping: Internal Capabilities and Structural Bottlenecks

NVivo 15 Qualitative Mapping: Internal Capabilities and Structural Bottlenecks Qualitative thematic coding via NVivo 15 across key stakeholder interview transcripts identifies fundamental internal organizational dynamics shaping naval recruitment communication. Kodaeral III benefits from strong institutional credibility, firm leadership endorsement for digital transformation, and rich visual assets featuring naval vessels and elite units. However, structural bottlenecks hinder execution efficiency: 62% of regional public affairs officers lack formal digital media production training, administrative approval chains average 4.5 days per post, and inter-agency coordination between Dispenal, Lapetal, and regional units remains fragmented. Overcoming these internal capacity constraints requires systematic organizational restructuring and streamlined visual content production workflows across commands.

Strategic SWOT Matrix: Prioritizing Digital Recruitment Content Pathways

Strategic SWOT Matrix: Prioritizing Digital Recruitment Content Pathways Synthesizing NVivo 15 thematic nodes into a comprehensive SWOT matrix yields clear strategic priorities for modernizing naval recruitment communications in urban areas. The primary SO strategy leverages high-definition warship and elite exercise footage to produce dynamic short-form video series targeting Gen Z on micro-video platforms. Concurrently, WO strategies focus on establishing specialized digital creator training programs for public affairs personnel to eliminate production quality gaps. Furthermore, ST strategies counter aggressive private-sector career competition by highlighting long-term career stability and national pride, while WT strategies streamline administrative notices into interactive QR-linked micro-sites and automated Q&A response chatbots across commands.

Dual Impacts of Strategic Recruitment Communication: Institutional Trust and Enlistment Quality

Modernizing military recruitment communication generates dual strategic benefits that reinforce both national security objectives and public relations imperatives. Domestically, adopting transparent, visually engaging, and accessible digital content enhances public perception, elevates institutional trust, and dismantles lingering societal misconceptions regarding military selection transparency among urban populations. Operationally, replacing static administrative announcements with interactive storytelling significantly expands the candidate pool while improving applicant quality, achieving higher regional selection pass rates and better candidate alignment with modern naval technical requirements across Kodaeral III territorial recruitment jurisdictions throughout the entire national capital area and surrounding strategic maritime territorial regions.

Spirit of Pengabdian: Cultural Foundation for Gen Z Maritime Patriotism

Spirit of Pengabdian: Cultural Foundation for Gen Z Maritime Patriotism
Sustaining long-term recruitment motivation among Generation Z requires grounding digital communication in a resonant cultural foundation of maritime patriotism and selfless service. While digital native youth prioritize career growth and authenticity, empirical findings confirm that patriotic duty remains a primary emotional trigger when framed through relatable human-interest narratives. Digital content campaigns must effectively communicate the spirit of pengabdian by showcasing the daily lives, camaraderie, and professional fulfillment of young naval officers. Modernizing maritime patriotism storytelling transforms abstract national defense concepts into meaningful personal aspirations for urban youth seeking purpose-driven career pathways in service to the nation.

From Formal Administrative Announcements to Interactive Digital Storytelling

Optimizing naval recruitment requires a fundamental paradigm shift from conventional text-dense announcements toward interactive digital storytelling ecosystems. Traditional static flyers fail to capture youth attention in saturated media environments, leading to low conversion rates despite high total digital views. Integrating gamification elements such as interactive physical fitness self-assessment filters, virtual warship tours, and live Q&A sessions with young Bintara officers transforms passive viewers into active participants. This narrative innovation directly influences behavioral attitudes under the Theory of Planned Behavior, bridging the cognitive gap between institutional messaging and youth enlistment decisions across modern digital communication channels in all Kodaeral III jurisdictions.

Institutionalizing Digital Content Governance and Regional Youth Engagement

Institutionalizing Digital Content Governance and Regional Youth Engagement Sustained recruitment success mandates institutionalizing digital content governance while expanding direct territorial youth engagement across Kodaeral III. Dispenal must establish standardized digital production SOPs, brand identity guidelines, and synchronized content distribution protocols across central and regional units. Simultaneously, digital campaigns must function as top of funnel triggers that cascade into direct offline interactions, such as school roadshows and OSIS network engagements in DKI Jakarta. Integrating digital outreach with regional territorial presence creates a seamless recruitment ecosystem that effectively converts digital interest into verified enlistment applications for long-term naval workforce sustainability, enhanced operational readiness, and enduring overall national maritime defense sovereignty

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This study examined how the Indonesian Navy communicates recruitment digitally at Kodaeral III and whether that communication attracts Generation Z candidates for Bintara PK enlistment. Enlistment records for 2021–2025 show that male applicants fell from 3,464 in 2021 to 1,767 in 2024, a decline of about 49%, before recovering to 2,333 in 2025. Female applicants reached a peak of 1,110 in 2025. The findings indicate that the main problem is not the reach of official channels but the design and production of their content. Static, text-dense administrative notices make up 68% of published materials. Interactive visual content appears in only 22% of publishing workflows, and 74% of prospective candidates ignore formal notices. Interactive content achieves a 3.8-times higher engagement retention rate. Internal constraints reinforce this gap: 62% of regional public affairs officers lack formal digital media production training, approval chains average 4.5 days per post, and coordination among Dispenal, Lapetal, and regional units remains fragmented.

The NVivo 15 thematic coding and SWOT analysis produced four strategic pathways:

- Using strengths: short-form videos built from warship and elite-unit footage.
- Overcoming weaknesses: digital creator training for public affairs personnel.
- Countering private-sector competition: messaging that stresses career stability and national pride.
- Reducing administrative rigidity: interactive QR-linked micro-sites and automated question-and-answer channels.

The study also found that the spirit of *pengabdian* remains a strong emotional trigger for Generation Z when it is told through relatable human stories. Interactive storytelling can therefore improve attitudes toward naval service, as the Theory of Planned Behavior predicts. Sustaining these gains requires institutional governance, meaning standardized production procedures, a consistent brand identity, and synchronized distribution across units. Digital

campaigns should also lead into direct engagement such as school visits and OSIS networks in DKI Jakarta. Modernizing recruitment communication in this way can strengthen public trust and support a sustainable supply of qualified personnel for naval readiness and maritime sovereignty.

FURTHER STUDY

This study is limited to one territorial command in an urban setting, and it uses a qualitative design with 18 informants collected between March and July 2026. Its findings should therefore be read as analytical insight rather than statistical generalization. Future research could test the proposed strategies through pilot campaigns that track conversion from content views to registration and final acceptance. Quantitative surveys of Generation Z applicants, using the Theory of Planned Behavior constructs of attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control, could measure how different content formats influence enlistment intention. Comparative studies between Kodaeral III and commands in non-urban or eastern regions would show whether youth media habits and connectivity require different approaches. Longitudinal designs across several recruitment cycles could assess applicant quality and cost-effectiveness. Finally, future work could examine how training for public affairs personnel and faster content approval procedures affect production capacity and message consistency.

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