

# Navigating the Architecture of Truth: Public Communication Strategies in the Era of Generative Engine Optimization

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The rapid expansion of generative artificial intelligence (AI) has fundamentally transformed the architecture of truth in digital public spaces, shifting informational legitimacy from institution-based authority toward algorithmically synthesized representation. This study examines how Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) reshapes public communication strategies and explores how public institutions adapt within AI-mediated ecosystems. Drawing on a qualitative critical case study of Indonesian public institutions, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, digital content observations, and policy document analysis. The findings reveal that GEO reconfigures representational power by privileging structured data, semantic interoperability, and machine readability, thereby reducing institutional control over message framing. Public communication now operates within a dual mediation system symbolic and computational where algorithmic synthesis influences the visibility, coherence, and perceived legitimacy of information. In response, this study proposes the “Navigating the Architecture of Truth” model, integrating three strategic dimensions: normative transparency, technological standardization, and public algorithmic literacy. The study extends social construction of reality and public sphere theory by positioning algorithmic systems as non-human agents of objectivation in the construction of public meaning. These findings offer both theoretical refinement and practical guidance for strengthening informational integrity in increasingly algorithm-mediated governance environments.

**Keywords:** Generative Engine Optimization; Architecture of Truth; Public Communication; Algorithmic Mediation; Digital Governance

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## 1. Introduction

The development of generative artificial intelligence has significantly transformed the global landscape of public communication ;(Lovari & De Rosa, 2025; Pandey et al., 2025). In earlier phases, digital content optimization primarily focused on search engine indexing mechanisms particularly through platforms such as Google using Search Engine Optimization (SEO) strategies (Tatikonda et al., 2024; Singh, 2024). Today, however, a new paradigm has emerged, known as Generative Engine Optimization (GEO), referring to strategies for structuring information so that it can be detected, summarized, and recommended by generative AI systems such as ChatGPT and Gemini (Rane et al., 2024). This transformation is not merely technological but also epistemological, as the production and distribution of public truth are increasingly mediated by algorithms operating through large language models (Shin, 2025). In this context, the architecture of truth is no longer determined solely by media institutions or formal authorities, but also by computational systems capable of synthesizing information automatically (Just & Latzer, 2017).

A growing body of scholarship emphasizes that generative AI has reshaped the production of public discourse. Algorithms no longer function merely as distribution tools but have become active agents in the construction of meaning and the framing of public issues (Klinger & Svensson, 2018; Caplan & Boyd, 2016). The integration of AI into information ecosystems can accelerate news dissemination. However, without

transparent governance mechanisms, it also risks generating bias and narrative distortion. In Indonesia, government public communication continues to face challenges related to digital literacy, fragmentation of information channels, and the limited adoption of data-driven strategies in responding to algorithmic dynamics (Mahmud, 2023; Aragani et al., 2025). These findings indicate that digital transformation has not yet been fully accompanied by a corresponding strategic transformation in public communication governance.

Theoretically, this phenomenon can be examined through the social construction of reality framework, which posits that social reality is constructed through the institutionalization of meaning (Krippendorff, 2016; Ramirez & Lepez, 2023; Fraser & Turcan, 2025). In the era of generative AI, such institutionalization is mediated not only by social structures but also by algorithms possessing predictive and synthetic capacities. Meanwhile, Jürgen Habermas's theory of the public sphere situates communicative rationality as the foundation of legitimacy in public discourse (Holub, 2013; Lubenow, 2012; De Angelis, 2021). In AI-mediated digital spaces, however, communicative rationality is frequently supplanted by computational logic driven by statistical relevance and linguistic probability.

Academic discourse has extensively examined the ethical implications of AI, digital literacy, and algorithmic governance, highlighting the importance of algorithmic accountability and system transparency as prerequisites for public legitimacy. Scholars have also stressed the urgency of adaptive digital communication strategies capable of responding to evolving audience behaviour and platform ecosystems. Nevertheless, much of the existing research remains focused either on the impacts of generative AI or on the technical dimensions of digital optimization, without explicitly integrating both within a strategic public communication framework.

Accordingly, a conceptual and strategic gap persists in the literature. First, there is no comprehensive formulation on how the concept of the "architecture of truth" can be operationalized in response to the dominance of Generative Engine Optimization. Second, prior studies tend to approach generative AI primarily as an ethical or technological object of inquiry, rather than as a strategic variable in public communication planning. Third, the governance of public communication in Indonesia has not been sufficiently examined through the lens of GEO, thereby necessitating a contextual and applicable model.

To address these gaps, this study introduces the novel concept of "Navigating the Architecture of Truth" as both an analytical and operational framework for developing GEO-based public communication strategies. This framework integrates three principal dimensions: (1) a normative dimension (transparency, accountability, and source verification); (2) a technological dimension (metadata optimization, semantic interoperability, and structured data architecture); and (3) a public literacy dimension (enhancing citizens' critical capacity to understand the logic of generative AI systems). This approach expands the discourse of public communication from message management to the governance of algorithmic representation.

The objectives of this study are threefold: to analyse the dynamics of Generative Engine Optimization in shaping the architecture of truth within digital public spaces; to identify the strategic challenges faced by public communication in generative AI ecosystems; and to formulate an adaptive, ethical, and governance-based model of public communication. The study aims to contribute theoretically to the advancement of digital communication and algorithmic governance scholarship, while also offering practical policy recommendations for public institutions in Indonesia to safeguard informational integrity amid the dominance of generative technologies. Ultimately, navigating the architecture of truth represents not merely a technical response to technological advancement, but a normative commitment to preserving the quality of public deliberation in the age of artificial intelligence.

## 2. Research Methods

This study employs a qualitative approach with a critical case study design to gain an in-depth understanding of public communication strategies in responding to the dominance of Generative Engine Optimization (GEO). A qualitative approach was selected because the research is oriented toward exploring meanings, processes, and social constructions emerging within the context of AI-driven digital communication transformation. As emphasized by Creswell & Poth (2018), qualitative research enables scholars to examine phenomena holistically within their natural settings. The case study design is adopted because, according to Yin (2019), it is particularly appropriate for investigating contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts where the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly delineated. In this research, the investigator serves as the primary instrument (human instrument), conducting observations, in-depth interviews, and document analysis of digital communication practices within public institutions interacting with generative AI systems such as ChatGPT.

The object of this study is the public communication strategy adopted by Indonesian public institutions in responding to the dominance of Generative Engine Optimization (GEO). The unit of analysis consists of selected public institutions actively producing official digital content. The research subjects (informants) include communication officers, digital media managers, and policy communication officials who are directly involved in managing institutional public communication. Informants were selected purposively based on their direct involvement in managing public communication and digital media. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, observation of digital content structures and representations, and analysis of communication policy documents.

Data analysis was conducted interactively through the stages of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2014). This cyclical process involved thematic coding to identify patterns of communication strategies, institutional adaptation to GEO, and emerging normative and technological challenges. The validity and trustworthiness of the data were ensured through source and method triangulation, member checking with informants, and the maintenance of an audit trail to strengthen credibility and dependability. Through these methodological procedures, the study seeks to generate a valid and contextually grounded conceptual model for navigating the architecture of truth within AI-mediated public communication ecosystems.

## 3. Results and Discussion

### The Shift in the Architecture of Truth within the Generative Engine Optimization Ecosystem

The findings indicate that the dominance of Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) has shifted the architecture of truth from an institutional authority-based model toward an algorithmic synthesis-based model. Empirical evidence demonstrates that when public institutional content is processed by generative AI systems such as ChatGPT, information is no longer presented in its original, fully structured form as designed by message producers. Instead, it appears as summaries, paraphrases, or synthesized outputs shaped by the probabilistic patterns of large language models. This transformation results in a reduction of message complexity, particularly in technically and normatively dense public policy issues. In several response tests involving specific policy matters, generative systems tended to produce concise, generic answers that merged multiple sources without clearly distinguishing the hierarchy of their legitimacy.

Research informants revealed that many institutions have yet to recognize that digital visibility is no longer determined solely by conventional search engine optimization mechanisms such as those associated with Google but also by the structural compatibility of their data with generative systems. In several observed cases, generative AI integrated official and unofficial sources within a single comprehensive response,

thereby blurring the boundary between institutional authority and opinion. This condition marks a significant transformation in the mechanisms through which informational legitimacy is produced. Whereas legitimacy was previously grounded in institutional credibility and editorial processes, it is now also shaped by how algorithms prioritize, synthesize, and present information according to statistical patterns and semantic relevance. These findings directly address the first research question by demonstrating that GEO plays a significant role in constructing a new, algorithmic, and synthetic architecture of truth.

Theoretically, this phenomenon can be interpreted through the social construction of reality, which posits that social reality is constructed through processes of externalization, objectivation, and internalization (Krippendorff, 2016; Fraser & Turcan, 2025; Ramirez & Lepez, 2023). Within the GEO context, objectivation is no longer mediated exclusively by social institutions but also by algorithmic systems capable of automated synthesis. Algorithms function as new agents of objectivation, transforming facts into structured representations based on linguistic probability (Kajava & Sawhney, 2023; Ruffini et al., 2025). In this sense, algorithms may be positioned as co-constructors of reality non-human actors that shape the form and structure of symbolic reality in digital public spaces.

These findings align with Gillespie (2014) argument that algorithms are not neutral entities but systems embedded with particular logics of selection in organizing information. Gillespie (2016) emphasizes that algorithms determine what is considered relevant, visible, and trustworthy in digital environments. In the GEO ecosystem, this logic of relevance extends beyond keyword-based retrieval toward the predictive and generative capacities of large language models to construct statistically coherent responses. Consequently, public truth is now subject to dual mediation: institutional mediation and algorithmic mediation.

Furthermore, the study finds that message complexity is frequently reduced when generative AI summarizes public policies characterized by technical terminology and strong regulatory foundations. Rather than elaborating on legal contexts or normative structures in detail, generative systems tend to simplify narratives for broader accessibility. This phenomenon can be understood through the concept of algorithmic governance as articulated by Rouvroy & Berns (2013), who explains that algorithmic governance operates through processes of classification and prediction rather than normative deliberation. As a result, complex legal and policy rationalities risk being condensed into generalized statements that lose contextual nuance.

This transformation may also be examined through theory of the public sphere (Holub, 2013). In its classical formulation, the public sphere is constituted through rational-critical discourse enabling argumentation and normative clarification. Within the GEO ecosystem, however, such deliberative processes are increasingly supplanted by instant algorithmic synthesis. Communicative rationality ideally grounded in dialogical reasoning now competes with computational rationality that prioritizes efficiency and statistical coherence. Thus, the digital public sphere appears to be shifting from a deliberative sphere toward what may be termed an algorithmic sphere.

Institutions integrating standardized data structures and clear metadata tend to achieve more consistent representation within generative AI responses. This indicates that the architecture of truth in the GEO context is significantly influenced by semantic interoperability and machine readability. Digital visibility is contingent not only upon message substance but also upon its technical form and structural compatibility with platform logics. Accordingly, public truth is shaped as much by informational design as by normative content.

Theoretically, these findings suggest the need to refine the social construction of reality framework by incorporating an algorithmic dimension as a mediator of objectivation. Whereas classical theory conceptualizes reality as institutionalized through social interaction, in the GEO era reality is also

institutionalized through automated and large-scale computational processes. Public meaning production has thus become hybrid in nature a combination of human communicative action and algorithmic data processing.

The shift in the architecture of truth within the Generative Engine Optimization ecosystem represents not merely a technical evolution in content optimization but a structural transformation in the mechanisms of informational legitimacy. Truth is no longer determined exclusively by normative institutional authority; it is also shaped by the capacity of messages to adapt to algorithmic logic. This study underscores that in responding to the dominance of GEO, public communication must integrate normative and computational dimensions simultaneously. Without such integration, public institutions risk losing control over the representation of their narratives in digital spaces increasingly structured by generative artificial intelligence systems.

Taken together, these findings confirm that Generative Engine Optimization does not merely affect information visibility, but fundamentally restructures the epistemic architecture of truth in digital public spaces. The authority of institutional sources is no longer sufficient to guarantee representational accuracy, as algorithmic synthesis introduces an additional layer of mediation. Thus, the first objective of this study is empirically addressed: GEO operates as a constitutive force in shaping a new, algorithmically mediated architecture of truth.

### **Strategic Challenges of Public Communication in the Algorithmic Sphere**

The empirical findings presented above are not merely descriptive but indicate a structural transformation in communicative power. To further interpret these dynamics, the following discussion situates the identified challenges within broader theoretical debates on algorithmic governance and the transformation of the public sphere. The study identifies three principal challenges confronting public communication in responding to the dominance of Generative Engine Optimization (GEO).

First, an epistemic challenge arises from the diminishing institutional control over message framing when information is summarized by generative AI systems such as ChatGPT. Informants acknowledged that although policy narratives are systematically designed, AI-generated syntheses frequently present more concise and neutral versions that occasionally omit crucial normative contexts. In several response simulations, legal arguments were reduced to generalized statements that failed to reflect regulatory complexity. This phenomenon indicates a shift in framing power from institutional communicators to algorithmic systems.

Second, a technological challenge concerns the limited use of structured metadata, semantic markup, and data interoperability across official institutional websites. Observational analysis of digital content reveals that many public institutions have not optimized standardized data structures such as schema markup or linked data frameworks. Consequently, generative systems tend to extract information more readily from sources with stronger semantic structures, even when such sources lack authoritative legitimacy. In this context, visibility is no longer determined solely by normative credibility but also by machine readability. This finding resonates with Gillespie (2014) argument that algorithms prioritize content aligned with the technical logic of platforms. Thus, weaknesses in technical architecture have direct implications for the representation of truth in digital spaces.

Third, a literacy challenge emerges from uneven public understanding of how generative AI systems operate. Interviews indicate that some users perceive AI-generated responses as final and objective representations, without considering potential data biases or the limitations of large language models. This condition heightens the risk of meaning simplification and passive information acceptance. Limited

algorithmic literacy may exacerbate epistemic asymmetries, as users lack the critical capacity to evaluate automated synthesis processes. Accordingly, the challenge of public communication lies not only in message production but also in strengthening audiences' interpretive capacities.

These findings may be interpreted through theory of the public sphere. In its classical formulation, the ideal public sphere is grounded in communicative rationality that enables argumentation, clarification, and normative accountability (Dahlberg, 2004; Dahlberg, 2005). Within the GEO ecosystem, however, public discourse increasingly shifts toward a probabilistic space in which statistical relevance and linguistic coherence replace deliberative processes (Lustick & Miodownik, 2000). Communicative rationality competes with computational rationality: responses that are statistically probable become the most visible, regardless of their normative depth (Mahoney, 2005).

Moreover, this phenomenon can be understood through the concept of algorithmic governance as articulated by Rouvroy & Berns (2013), who argues that algorithmic systems operate through data-driven prediction and classification rather than explicit normative reflection. In the GEO environment, generative systems construct responses based on historical data patterns, not through ethical or legal reasoning *per se*. As a result, normatively grounded public communication risks being reduced to descriptive information lacking argumentative depth (John, 2015; Bearth & Siegrist, 2022).

These findings suggest that public communication now operates within a dual arena: a symbolic arena and a computational arena. On one hand, institutions must continue to cultivate credibility, message consistency, and normative legitimacy. On the other hand, they must ensure that their messages are structurally compatible with algorithmic systems to prevent distortion during AI-driven synthesis. Public communication strategies, therefore, can no longer be oriented solely toward human audiences but must also account for non-human audiences namely, algorithmic systems themselves.

The implications of these three challenges underscore the necessity of redefining public communication strategies in the era of generative AI. Message framing must anticipate the possibility of automated summarization. Data structures must be strengthened to enhance representational accuracy within generative systems. Public literacy must be advanced to enable critical engagement with AI-generated responses. Without strategic responses to these interconnected challenges, public institutions risk losing control over the representation of their own narratives in digital spaces increasingly mediated by algorithmic infrastructures.

### **The Model of Navigating the Architecture of Truth**

Based on thematic analysis, this study formulates the "Navigating the Architecture of Truth" model, which consists of three strategic dimensions: normative, technological, and literacy-oriented.

The normative dimension emphasizes source transparency, message consistency, and the reinforcement of institutional legitimacy as the foundation of public credibility. This dimension rests on the assumption that within a digital ecosystem increasingly mediated by algorithms, legitimacy can no longer rely solely on historical reputation. Instead, it must be manifested through open data practices, clear references, and consistent policy framing.

The technological dimension underscores the importance of standardized data structures, semantic interoperability, and content optimization to ensure compatibility with generative systems such as ChatGPT. In this context, public communication can no longer be designed exclusively for human readability; it must also be structured for accurate processing by large language models.

Meanwhile, the literacy dimension focuses on enhancing the public's critical capacity to evaluate AI-generated information, ensuring that generative outputs are not positioned as final, bias-free truths.

Strengthening algorithmic literacy becomes essential to prevent passive acceptance of synthesized information and to foster reflective engagement with AI-mediated content.

This model was derived from the integration of interview findings, digital content observations, and analysis of communication policy documents across public institutions. The results indicate that institutions integrating structured data and consistent metadata tend to achieve more accurate representation within generative AI syntheses. Conversely, institutions lacking GEO-oriented strategies experience narrative reduction or distortion, particularly regarding complex policy issues. These findings reinforce the argument that visibility and accuracy within algorithmic environments depend significantly on technical compatibility. In line with Gillespie (2014), algorithms operate according to particular logics of selection that do not necessarily align with normative authority. Therefore, message quality and technical structure function as interdependent variables in shaping the architecture of truth.

Theoretically, this model both confirms and extends classical strategic communication theories. Within the traditional agenda-setting paradigm, media institutions play a central role in determining which issues are perceived as important by the public. In the GEO context, however, communication strategy must evolve toward what may be termed “algorithmic-setting” the effort to influence how generative systems represent and synthesize information (Achmad Syam et al., 2025). This concept suggests that framing power no longer resides solely with media or communicators but is also embedded within algorithmic architectures. Drawing upon theory of the public sphere, it can be argued that contemporary public space is shaped not only by discursive interaction but also by computational processes operating behind the interface (Brantner et al., 2021). Consequently, public communication strategies must integrate both deliberative and computational dimensions (Ercan et al., 2019).

The Navigating the Architecture of Truth model also expands the social construction of reality theory proposed by incorporating algorithms as non-human actors in the objectivation of meaning (Krippendorff, 2016; Fraser & Turcan, 2025; Ramirez & Lepez, 2023). Whereas classical theory conceptualizes reality as institutionalized through social interaction and institutional structures, within generative AI ecosystems reality is also institutionalized through data-driven synthesis. The externalization of messages by institutions now undergoes an additional stage of algorithmic mediation before being internalized by the public. Public communication thus operates within a hybrid system combining human communicative action and machine-based predictive logic.

Explicitly, the findings address the research questions by demonstrating that the dominance of Generative Engine Optimization constructs a new, synthetic, and algorithmic architecture of truth; that public communication faces epistemic, technological, and literacy challenges; and that an adaptive strategic model is necessary to preserve informational integrity. Control over public narratives is no longer determined solely by the substantive quality of messages but also by data structure, semantic interoperability, and machine readability. Informational legitimacy in the era of generative AI is therefore multidimensional.

Unlike prior studies that primarily examine generative AI from ethical, technological, or regulatory perspectives, this study positions Generative Engine Optimization as a strategic variable in public communication governance. The proposed model shifts the analytical focus from platform impact toward institutional adaptation, thereby offering a governance-oriented framework for managing algorithmic mediation in public discourse.

By integrating empirical findings with established theoretical frameworks, this study demonstrates that the social construction of reality now involves non-human actors (algorithms); that the public sphere is transforming from deliberative to computational; and that strategic communication must expand its orientation from human audiences to AI systems. Accordingly, this research not only affirms prior

scholarship on mediatization and algorithmic governance but also offers a conceptual refinement through the introduction of the Navigating the Architecture of Truth model as an adaptive framework for AI-mediated public communication governance. The model asserts that the integration of normative legitimacy and computational compatibility constitutes the two primary pillars for sustaining the integrity of public truth amid the dominance of generative technologies.

#### 4. Conclusion

Based on the analysis of the development and impact of Generative Engine Optimization (GEO) on the construction of truth in the public sphere, it can be concluded that this transformation has generated significant changes in the mechanisms of informational legitimacy and dissemination. The dominance of generative algorithms necessitates innovation in public communication strategies that move beyond conventional normative legitimacy and incorporate technical architecture and digital literacy considerations. The implementation of the Navigating the Architecture of Truth model demonstrates the importance of integrating transparency, data interoperability, and enhanced public literacy to preserve the quality of public discourse.

Theoretically, this study contributes to the refinement of social construction of reality by incorporating algorithmic systems as non-human agents of objectivation. It also extends public sphere theory by demonstrating how communicative rationality increasingly interacts with computational rationality. In doing so, the research advances the discourse on AI-mediated governance beyond impact analysis toward strategic institutional response.

From a practical perspective, public institutions should strengthen source transparency and standardized data structures to improve representational accuracy within generative systems. Equally important is the proactive development of algorithmic literacy initiatives to enable citizens to critically assess AI-generated information rather than accepting it as inherently objective or definitive. Furthermore, systematic training programs and comprehensive technology governance policies are required to anticipate and manage the influence of algorithms in shaping public narratives. Communication strategies in the era of artificial intelligence must be adaptive and multidimensional. Such an approach is essential to sustain democratic information ecosystems and to safeguard the integrity of truth within increasingly algorithm-mediated digital spaces.

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