

PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY OF COMPANY X INDONESIA IN ENHANCING A POSITIVE IMAGE

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Abstract. This study aims to examine the Public Relations strategy of Company X Indonesia in enhancing the company's positive image. The research employs a qualitative descriptive method, guided by the Two-Way Asymmetrical Model. The findings indicate that the Public Relations division acts as a mediator between the company and the public, through which implemented strategies generate responses and feedback from the audience. In practice, Company X Indonesia carries out systematic Public Relations programs, from planning to evaluation. These programs include various initiatives such as Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities, assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic, scholarships, educational programs for local communities particularly in exploration areas and collaborations with government authorities in Indonesia. These efforts collectively foster public trust and enhance the company's positive image.

Keywords: Public Relations Strategy, Company X Indonesia, Positive Image. CSR, Two-Way Asymmetrical Model

INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, digital technologies are essential to support communication and information dissemination, especially during the Covid-19 pandemic. Public Relations activities in an organization require communication strategies to maintain balanced company performance, particularly in PR processes. A good communication strategy includes team coordination, having a theme, identifying supporting factors in accordance with the principles of implementing ideas rationally, being efficient in funding, and having tactics to achieve goals effectively. Strategy differs from tactics in that tactics have a narrower scope and shorter duration. However, the two terms are often confused. While strategy is sometimes associated with the vision and mission of a company, it generally covers both short-term and long-term objectives.

Company X is a wholly owned subsidiary of X Development Company. The operations and assets of Company X are currently located in 12 countries, most of which are in the Middle East, Africa, Central and Southeast Asia. Company X Indonesia is a company included in KKKKS (K3S), which is a company that cooperates with the Republic of Indonesia (RI) and is a permanent business entity or a company that has the right to represent the Indonesian government to carry out oil and gas exploration activities in the territory of RI.

To maintain its image, Company X Indonesia implements several Public Relations strategies to foster a positive public opinion. Image is the perception or impression of an organization and is an important asset that must be developed and maintained.

Public perceptions of an organization are influenced by differences in knowledge, education, and economic background. The basics of Public Relations mention that image

is the impression or picture of individuals that arises about something as a result of knowledge and experience felt by themselves, based on those two foundations the image is formed, namely starting from what is seen and felt. Therefore, the importance of a positive image is not only in the process of formation but also must be maintained properly.

In Indonesia, Company X Indonesia carries out various activities to change the negative stigma that exists in the company, especially those operating in exploration areas, where the stigma is that oil and gas companies are destroyers of the environment and nature. This stigma especially exists among residents in the exploration areas where oil and gas drilling is carried out, most of which are located in remote areas.

Public Relations is able to provide direction in communication and is able to be a bridge between the internal and external public in a company. Public Relations (PR) is not an arbitrary activity, in fact this activity requires sustainable planning to benefit the growth of the company. This is based on the belief that the life of the company will depend on public opinion. Therefore, PR activities must be carried out to shape positive responses from public opinion. In a company, Public Relations manages systematic activities to support marketing and achieve organizational goals in order to achieve certain targets, which previously must have a clear and detailed work program, seeking facts, planning, communicating, evaluating the results achieved, and then continuing the performance by carrying out activities and various programs as well as applying better systems and activities for the company. One of the efforts made by Public Relations in maintaining harmonious relationships with its stakeholders is by maintaining good relations with the government.

During the Covid-19 pandemic, Company X Indonesia faced challenges in

communication due to social distancing. The company collaborated with SKK Migas and provided journalists with masks and gloves to prevent virus spread. Maintaining positive relationships and disseminating information was limited during the pandemic, so the company relied on media to support its PR activities. The tight competition, especially for companies engaged in the same field of Oil & Gas, was certainly a challenge for the Public Relations division of Company X Indonesia in carrying out these activities.

The strategies and roles of Public Relations are one of the things that cannot be separated from the positive image of a company, starting from the planning stage to the evaluation stage. In the process of building, improving, and maintaining a positive image, of course various good Public Relations strategies are needed. Public Relations strategies can take various forms such as through social media, building good relations with internal and external parties of the company, implementing corporate social responsibility, as well as building good relations with the media, conducting research and evaluation periodically within a certain period of time. One of the large companies engaged in the upstream oil and gas sector is Company X Indonesia.

METHOD

This research employs a qualitative descriptive method. The object of this research is the Public Relations of Company X Indonesia. The research is guided by the Two-Way Asymmetrical Theory proposed by James Grunig (1992). Main data subjects were selected based on credibility and direct involvement in Public Relations activities. The subjects in this research are part of the Public Relations division, especially the External Relations & Communications Team of Company X Indonesia, which is located in Jakarta.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Public Relations Strategy. Strategy involves steps that are carefully planned, systematically conceptualized, and organized. Public Relations strategy can be classified into generic strategies. The term strategy was proposed by Porter, that generic strategy is a company's approach in order to outperform competitors in its industry (Umar, 2003:32).

The definition of Public Relations according to Defleur and Dennis, quoted from their book "Community Relations: Concepts and Applications", is: Public Relations as a communication process in which individuals or community units seek to establish organized relations with various groups or publics for specific purposes.

The scope of Public Relations is divided into two, namely internal Public Relations and external Public Relations. In general, examples of internal publics of a company according to Yulianita in her book "Dasar-Dasar Public Relations" are:

- a. Employee Relations
- b. Manager Relations
- c. Labour Relations
- d. Stockholder Relations (2007:57).

External Public Relations refers to people or members of the community outside the organization, both those who have ties and needs with the organization and those who are only suspected of having ties and needs with the organization. Similar to internal publics, external publics are also adjusted based on the nature, form, type, and character concerned. In general, examples of external publics of a company according to Yulianta in his book entitled "Dasar-dasar Public Relations" are:

- 1) Press Relations
- 2) Government Relations
- 3) Community Relations
- 4) Supplier Relations
- 5) Customer Relations

- 6) Consumer Relations
- 7) Educational Relations
- 8) General Relations.

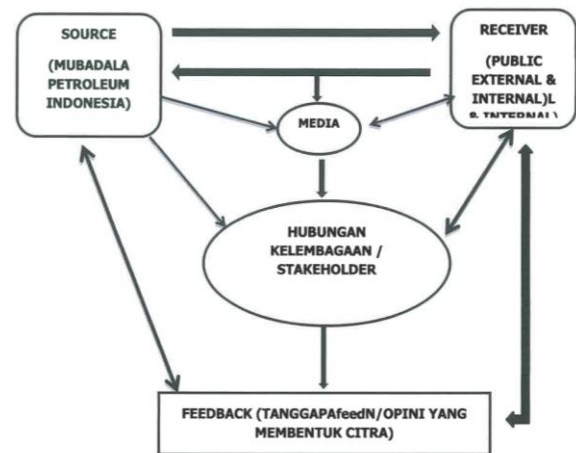
Image. Linguistically, image means citra. Image can be a visual counterpart or similarity of an object, or an imaginary concept created by advertisements and projected by the media, which embodies emotions, perceptions, attitudes, and groups intellectual orientations into a unity. Image is closely related to the reputation of a brand or organization. Image is the consumer's perception of the quality associated with a brand or organization/institution.

At the organizational/institutional level, organizational image is defined as the perception of an organization that is reflected in the customer's memory (Aaker and Keller, 1990).

Strategy (Public Relations) Two Way Communication. The theory used by the author in this research is the Two-Way Asymmetrical. This theory was proposed by James Grunig (1992). According to this theory, Public Relations carries out campaigns through two-way communication, and the delivery of messages is based on research results as well as persuasive communication strategies toward the public in a scientific manner. The element of truth of information is taken into account to persuade the public to be willing to cooperate, and to be open in accordance with the expectations of the organization. The issues of feedback and feedforward from the public are considered, and information regarding the audience is required before carrying out communication. Thus, the power to build relationships and take initiative is always dominated by the sender (Sources) (Ruslan, 2008:104).

The researcher considers this theory to be relevant to the problem to be studied, because in this theory Public Relations

conducts campaigns through two-way communication as well as persuasive communication strategies in a scientific manner. In this way, a harmonious relationship between the company and its public will be built. Thus, the effort to build a positive image of the company will be achieved.



In the Two-Way Asymmetrical model in this research, the position of Public Relations at Company X Indonesia is as the source that implements the strategy, directed to the public as the receiver. Implemented Public Relations strategies generate responses and feedback from the public. This feedback comes in the form of either a positive or negative image.

Theme Analysis. Based on the results of in-depth interviews and field notes during the data collection process in the period from September 2021 to March 2022, the researcher conducted data analysis and produced four themes, namely: Public Relations Strategy, Internal Approach Strategy, External Approach Strategy, and CSR Activity Feedback from the Community.

Public Relations Strategy of Company X Indonesia. Company X Indonesia's PR strategy includes maintaining market stability, careful expansion, and improving

its positive image through media collaboration, humanitarian programs, and CSR initiatives. In addition, Company X Indonesia also complements its Public Relations strategy through macro and micro approaches.

Furthermore, there are several aspects and efforts carried out in the strategic process of building a positive image in the eyes of the public, namely the efforts to mitigate the negative stigma of oil and gas exploration companies as companies that only exploit and damage the environment in exploration areas. This stigma certainly attaches to every exploration company. The strategies and solutions implemented in an effort to gradually minimize this stigma include approaches to the communities closest to the exploration areas, namely by providing various assistance, as well as efforts to improve human resources through organizing activities such as cooking training for fishermen's wives to improve their standard of living, and also various CSR activities such as waste management and the provision of scholarships for children living in exploration areas.

Internal Approach Strategy. Internal Public Relations are the people who are the Public Relations targets within an institution or company. In this case, a Public Relations officer becomes the Public Relations for the people within the institution or company, of course in accordance with their respective positions or roles. This is adjusted to the nature, type, or characteristics of the organization or company itself. The following are efforts in improving the internal approach strategy:

Employee Relations. As a Public Relations function that advances the quality of the company in matters of human capital, Company X Indonesia has a major vision, namely to become the employer of choice by

2024. To achieve this, the subsidiary of X Investment Company, owned by the Government of Abu Dhabi, UAE, annually enhances its learning and development programs. Specifically in 2021–2022, their focus is on enhancing human capital digitalization. The following are the results of an interview with Informant (N1) as follows:

“I am confident that our company, by implementing a modular approach in managing talent and developing leaders, which is called an integrated & systematic development action plan, will improve the quality of our closeness with employees, where by combining the Individual Development Program and talent review, we can maximize our management in creating good relationships for all members”

From the description of the statement above, it can be interpreted that by having good management as well as comprehensive internal Public Relations programs that pay attention to employees, the company can improve employee performance. The development of employees is monitored through three pillars: Performance Management, Competency Management, and Key Players Management. All three are also monitored by external parties, namely the government through the Special Task Force for Upstream Oil and Gas Business Activities (SKK Migas).

Manager Relations. Public Relations has duties and functions in managing the quality of each member in order to obtain a positive image. In developing its human resources, Company X Indonesia develops three business leadership curricula that have been applied and implemented at all levels. The three curricula include: Lead Self (designed to improve employee productivity); Lead Others (designed to enhance managers or supervisors); and Lead Business (designed for executives and senior managers or department managers). The following are the

results of an interview obtained from Informant (N1) as follows:

“Everything is now available in online modules integrated with the Coursera platform, so employees can access them anytime and anywhere. The learning method, in general, is carried out through on-the-job experience (70%), coaching and feedback (20%), and formal training (10%).”

From the description of the statement above, it can be interpreted that Public Relations programs in developing human resources can influence the company's image so that it can maintain its best performance. In order for the company not to experience issues that could threaten it, the task of Public Relations is to create fair programs and policies that can support every part of the company. This is what has been carried out at Company X Indonesia.

Labour Relations. In maintaining good relations with workers without the issue of career gaps, the Public Relations of Company X carries out activities such as upskilling and reskilling for future digital leaders. By carrying out these activities, employees do not need to be divided into seniors and juniors. For more details, the following are the results of an interview with Informant (N1) as follows:

“The identification of successors is carried out based on the readiness level which consists of three aspects, namely ready next (1–4 years), high potential national, and emergency stand-in. All of these are documented and monitored in the succession handbook held by department managers. Currently, 37% of our employees have been mapped as high performers within the organization, and 85% of successors for key and critical positions have been identified.”

From the above description, it can be concluded that by conducting regular monitoring, Public Relations must have complete data on employees to improve

performance as a form of enhancing the company's image in order to gain trust from partners or the community. The task of Public Relations is to ensure that these activities continue to run and are effective in their implementation. These programs are designed to maintain the stability of the company in a good condition.

External Approach Strategy. In addition to internal strategies, Company X Indonesia also carries out various strategies through external approaches by establishing good relations with various external parties, including the government, the wider community, as well as the media, especially those who have a connection and relevance with the organization or who are newly identified as having such connections and relevance with the organization. One of the programs carried out is (Corporate Social Responsibility) or CSR activities.

Stakeholder Relations. In this regard, X carries out CSR steps as follows:

CSR Program with Regional Stakeholders. Public Relations activities concern and pay attention to matters related to education in the surrounding local area or even at the national level. The following are the results of an interview with Informant (N2) as follows:

“This scholarship support is expected to be utilized as best as possible by the recipient students to complete their studies at Kotabaru Polytechnic. In addition to scholarship support, Company X has also actively participated in providing support for training and certification of Basic General Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) experts as well as improving campus accreditation.”

From the above description, it can be understood that by providing scholarships to students and offering support in training and

certification for Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) experts, the company can enhance its positive image in order to cultivate the nation's assets supported by an educational level that benefits future generations. This is intended to assess the potential of the younger generation to develop the company and maintain its image in the future. In addition to providing assistance in the form of scholarships, another effort made by Company X Indonesia to improve its positive image is the distribution of basic food packages, as conveyed by Informant (N1) in an interview at the Company X Indonesia office in Jakarta on November 2, 2021:

"Our Public Relations strategy certainly refers to the needs of the community. Our main targets are micro and macro businesses. To be able to gain the attention of the community and provide assistance during the Covid-19 pandemic situation, we must give what they need in order to survive by providing benefits to those in need. From here, we prepare the programs we offer and determine how to distribute these programs according to the needs of the community."

Based on the informant's statement, the company considers community responses when implementing its CSR strategy to ensure activities are well-received. In this regard, Public Relations activities can provide synergy that can be perceived positively and minimize the existing stigma that companies engaged in natural resource exploration mostly do not consider the impact of the waste generated in the public's mindset. Through this approach, the community is guided and able to assess that what the company does is not merely exploiting nature, but also providing easily understood education and additional information related to these CSR activities.

Institutional Relations with the Government, namely SKK Migas. In the implementation of its Public Relations, Company X Indonesia also carries out Public Relations activities in establishing good relations with the Government. Based on information obtained from an external informant, namely Informant (N3) as a representative from SKK Migas, it was stated that:

"Company X Indonesia has made a very good contribution to the development of the upstream oil and gas industry in Indonesia, and in carrying out all of its external Public Relations strategies, Company X Indonesia has also become one of the KKKS that is committed to regulations and also completes CIVD. In addition, there is also much information regarding stakeholders in the field who have succeeded after being guided by Company X Indonesia, and this has had a significant impact on human resource development, especially for residents living around the gas drilling exploration areas. The image produced is also very good. Moreover, Company X Indonesia has also become one of the active investors in participating in various series of events that we organize, one of which is always being involved in the national capacity forum events in order to improve stability and progress in the upstream oil and gas sector."

From the explanation of the interview results above, the participation of Company X Indonesia in synergy with SKK Migas through the regularly held national capacity forum serves to strengthen relations with the government, stakeholders, and high-ranking state officials. Company X also routinely participates in events organized by SKK Migas every year. This active participation demonstrates Company X Indonesia's concern for the local product industry, particularly in the process of procuring goods and services to support upstream oil and gas

operations in Indonesia. The expectation from this event is to showcase local products created by women fostered by Company X Indonesia, which are exhibited at the Company X booth during the National Capacity Forum. These products are also expected to become local commodities that can help improve the community's economy.

Collaboration with the Media. One of the functions of Public Relations is to maintain relationships with its external parties, one of which is journalists. In this case, Public Relations took steps by collaborating with the Special Task Force for Upstream Oil and Gas Business Activities (SKK Migas) together with Company X to provide support to regions fostered by the company. The following is the result of an interview with Informant (N1):

“This support for journalists is expected to enable them to continue working effectively and efficiently, while also protecting themselves by using cloth masks and gloves, and it is further expected to help safeguard media personnel from the Covid-19 outbreak.”

From the description above, it can be understood that as the Public Relations function desired by the company, one of the tasks of Public Relations is to maintain relationships with journalists, as establishing and sustaining media relations is an effective way to build, maintain, and enhance the organization's image or reputation in the eyes of stakeholders. Media relations play a crucial role in the establishment of a company and are highly important as a form of communication and as an intermediary between an institution and its public.

CSR Activity Feedback from the Community. In the oil and gas industry, the primary targets are the community and micro-enterprises, both of which are interconnected because, fundamentally, they

are the consistent consumers of oil and gas to meet their daily needs. Therefore, Company X Indonesia needs to analyze community needs to achieve a positive image from the satisfaction obtained through its CSR programs.

Based on the community satisfaction index data obtained, the level of satisfaction is higher in environmental aspects, followed by economic aspects. Therefore, the programs to be implemented by Company X Indonesia focus on the environment and the economy, which significantly impact community satisfaction. This can create a positive image and increase trust among established business partners..

CONCLUSION

The study concludes the following regarding the Public Relations Strategy of Company X Indonesia in enhancing its positive image:

1. Company X Indonesia implements Public Relations strategies through internal and external approaches to enhance its positive image. The internal approach includes building and strengthening harmonious relationships within the company, such as with employees and executives. By maintaining good relationships, the synergy required to collaborate in implementing the company's Public Relations programs can run optimally.
2. Regarding external relations, these are carried out with various external parties or stakeholders, such as the media. Company X Indonesia's engagement with the media includes collaboration with journalists in various regions, especially in exploration areas. In addition to the media, the company also approaches the communities around the exploration areas by providing assistance through CSR programs, such as distributing medicines, masks, and gloves

to journalists, and providing basic necessities and scholarships for underprivileged children in the community. Furthermore, Company X Indonesia conducts various educational initiatives to enhance human resources, including training in areas such as waste management and other educational programs.

The institutional collaboration conducted by Company X Indonesia includes working with government authorities such as SKK Migas. The company's Public Relations programs and strategies are closely related to effective communication and approach strategies, especially with government stakeholders like SKK Migas, which represents the government's interests in Indonesia. Operating in Indonesia, Company X Indonesia must comply with the protocols and regulations established by the Indonesian government. The company's PR communication emphasizes two-way communication, and Company X Indonesia has fully complied with K3S program procedures in Indonesia. The company consistently strives to act responsibly, so that the image built through various efforts and approaches with government authorities also fosters positive relationships and enhances the company's reputation in the eyes of the public. These findings indicate that systematic and integrated Public Relations strategies are crucial for maintaining a positive corporate image and fostering trust among stakeholders in the oil and gas industry.

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