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PRESS RELEASE STRATEGY AS A PUBLIC RELATIONS INSTRUMENT IN BUILDING CORPORATE REPUTATION: A CONCEPTUAL STUDY AT PT ASTRA INTERNATIONAL TBK

Tiyas Sholikhatul Maghfuroh[1], Dewi Puspita[2], Dela Ayu Nabila [3] , Pramudya Ibnu Subrata[4]
[1,2,3]Universitas Slamet Riyadi, Surakarta
Email: adewa7587@gmail.com

Abstrak: *This conceptual article examines the strategic role of press releases in the formation of corporate reputation and institutional legitimacy within the context of public companies. Amidst increasing demands for transparency and accountability, this study redefines the press release not merely as a technical information tool, but as a sophisticated managerial mechanism for stakeholder engagement. By integrating Excellence Theory, Stakeholder Theory, and Legitimacy Theory, a conceptual model is proposed to illustrate how specific communication strategies—encompassing information transparency, strategic message framing, and the inclusion of a managerial voice—act as primary determinants of stakeholder perception. The analysis emphasizes that a consistent and data-driven corporate narrative reduces information asymmetry and reinforces the organization's economic, social, and moral legitimacy. This research contributes to the strategic public relations literature by positioning the press release as a "strategic bridge" that facilitates the construction of reputation as a valuable intangible asset, particularly within the dynamic regulatory environments of emerging markets such as Indonesia. Ultimately, the article provides a robust analytical foundation for future empirical studies to validate the causal relationships between formal corporate communication practices and long-term organizational sustainability in the global capital market.*

Kata Kunci: *Corporate Reputation, Press Release, Strategic Communication, Stakeholder Engagement, Corporate Legitimacy, Public Relations.*

INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary era of corporate communication, the role of Public Relations (PR) has been redefined as a strategic management function that transcends simple information dissemination. PR is now positioned as a systematic mechanism for managing organizational relationships with stakeholders in a sustainable manner (Lattimore et al., 2021; Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019). This transformation is driven by increasing demands for transparency and public accountability, particularly for public companies mandated to disclose material information to investors and the broader public. Within this context, PR activities are understood as part of a strategic communication framework designed to build trust and strengthen corporate reputation through planned, data-driven messaging (Gregory, 2020). In practice, corporate press releases serve as formal instruments to communicate

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financial reports, strategic policies, and social responsibility programs, thereby structuring public perception of organizational credibility and professionalism (Pertamina, 2024).

The evolution of PR has been accelerated by a digital ecosystem that enables real-time information distribution to diverse interest groups. Corporate transparency through official publications has become a global benchmark, as evidenced by multinational corporations that publish annual reports to provide comprehensive access to performance and sustainability priorities (Antara News, 2025). Such practices indicate that organizational legitimacy is increasingly determined by the consistency of clear, accurate, and verifiable information, which sustains long-term stakeholder relationships (Coombs, 2019). Consequently, the function of the press release has shifted from a mere factual briefing to a strategic framing tool. This mechanism allows organizations to deliberately shape their image through specific narratives, performance data emphasis, and managerial statements that reflect institutional integrity (Gregory, 2020; Lattimore et al., 2021).

For public companies operating in competitive capital markets, reputation is a critical strategic asset determining organizational longevity. Reputation is constructed as an intangible asset that contributes to firm value, investor confidence, and stock price stability (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019; Gregory, 2020). Perceptions of management integrity and financial consistency collectively form corporate standing in the eyes of shareholders and market analysts (Coombs, 2019). In the context of information disclosure, a positive reputation is associated with lower risk profiles, reduced capital costs, and expanded access to external financing (Lattimore et al., 2021). Furthermore, in the digital age, rigorous public oversight by media and regulators means that every official publication serves as an indicator of transparency (CNN Indonesia, 2025). Continuous, data-based communication reinforces social legitimacy and maintains stakeholder trust during market volatility (Coombs, 2019); conversely, information inconsistency or delays in disclosing material facts can trigger reputational declines that immediately impact market reactions and investor sentiment.

Despite the recognized importance of reputation, a significant literature gap exists due to the dominance of empirical studies focusing on communication effects rather than the development of comprehensive conceptual models. Most existing research utilizes quantitative content analysis or media exposure metrics, leaving the theoretical integration between press release strategies and long-term reputation construction relatively limited (Gregory, 2020; Lattimore et al., 2021). While corporate reputation is widely discussed, the conceptual links between formal communication elements such as information transparency,

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message framing, and managerial voice have not been systematically formulated into a unified framework (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019; Coombs, 2019). Consequently, there is a profound need for a conceptual model that bridges reputation theory, stakeholder theory, and strategic communication to explain how press releases function as strategic mechanisms for building legitimacy and stakeholder trust (Hadi & Mutmainnah, 2024; Pangestu, 2025; Nama, 2025).

This article aims to develop a conceptual framework explaining the relationship between press release strategies and reputation formation within public companies. The proposed model posits that transparency, framing, and managerial voice are primary determinants of stakeholder perceptions regarding organizational credibility (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019; Gregory, 2020). Drawing on the phenomenon of PT Astra International Tbk, the consistent publication of financial performance and corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives through press releases reflects a strategic integration of financial transparency and social legitimacy (Kompas.com, 2025; CNBC Indonesia, 2025). Furthermore, this study contributes to the PR literature by offering an emerging market perspective, specifically from Indonesia. Given that most strategic communication theories are developed in Western contexts, they often overlook the institutional dynamics and stakeholder expectations unique to developing economies (Hadi & Mutmainnah, 2024; Gregory, 2020). By formulating an integrated model, this research provides a robust analytical foundation for future empirical studies in Southeast Asia, emphasizing that corporate reputation is not spontaneous but strategically constructed through professional communication practices.

LITERATUR REVIEW

A. Evolution of Public Relations and Relationship Management

The evolution of Public Relations (PR) has transitioned from a rudimentary publicity approach toward a systematic, long-term relationship management paradigm. Initially, organizational communication focused primarily on garnering public attention through mass media; however, this orientation has expanded into a framework where stakeholder engagement sits at the core of strategic communication (Lattimore et al., 2021; Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019). This shift is largely driven by heightened public expectations for corporate transparency and accountability within the digital ecosystem, where information flows are instantaneous and decentralized. Consequently, modern PR is no longer viewed as

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a mere technical function for information dissemination but as a vital managerial mechanism designed to sustain organizational reputation over the long term.

A widely utilized framework to explain this strategic role is the Excellence Theory, which underscores the necessity of two-way symmetrical communication between an organization and its publics. Through this symmetrical approach, communication is not solely intended to persuade the public but to adapt organizational policies based on stakeholder feedback (Gregory, 2020). This model serves as the normative standard in contemporary PR because balanced communication is believed to minimize conflict and enhance the quality of organizational-stakeholder relations (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019). Effective communication is therefore measured not by the volume of publicity, but by the organization's capacity to foster a dialogue grounded in mutual interests and collective rationality (Lattimore et al., 2021; Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019).

B. Strategic Function of Corporate Press Releases

In corporate communication, a press release is defined as a formal document produced to convey structured and controlled information to the media and stakeholders. It is designed to provide factual data with inherent news value, allowing it to be quoted or reproduced by mass media outlets (Antara News, 2025). Beyond simple distribution, the press release functions as a strategic device that represents an organization’s official stance in the public sphere. Its professional structure consisting of headlines, leads, managerial quotes, and factual disclosures is standardized to ensure that core messages are rapidly understood by journalists and investors while maintaining narrative consistency and institutional credibility (Pertamina News Release, 2025).

From a strategic communication perspective, the press release serves as a potent tool for information framing. By selecting specific issues, emphasizing certain performance metrics, and incorporating curated managerial voices, an organization can construct a reality that aligns public perception with institutional interests (Gregory, 2020). This framing process is often subtle, reflected in how facts are prioritized and arranged within the text, making the press release a non-neutral medium for building corporate interpretations. Furthermore, in the realm of financial and CSR disclosure, press releases reduce information asymmetry between management and stakeholders, thereby strengthening market trust and social legitimacy (Kompas.com, 2025; Hadi & Mutmainnah, 2024).

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C. Conceptual Framework of Corporate Reputation

Corporate reputation is conceptually distinct from corporate image, which is often perceived as a short-term impression based on visual symbols or immediate experiences. In contrast, reputation is a collective evaluation that evolves over time based on the consistency of an organization's performance and behavior (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019). It represents an aggregate of the organization's historical credibility in the eyes of its stakeholders and is significantly more stable and difficult to alter than a temporary image. Therefore, reputation is positioned as a cumulative reflection of how an organization fulfills its promises to various interest groups (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019; Gregory, 2020).

In strategic management, a strong reputation is categorized as an intangible asset with significant economic value, contributing to competitive advantage and the ability to attract investors and talent (Gregory, 2020). It acts as a "buffer" during crises, as pre-established public trust can mitigate the negative impacts of adverse news (Coombs, 2019). Dimensions of reputation, such as credibility, trustworthiness, and responsibility, are essential evaluative components (Lattimore et al., 2021). Consistent, transparent, and responsive communication reinforces these dimensions, whereas inconsistencies can lead to reputational erosion and a loss of social legitimacy (CNN Indonesia, 2025).

D. Stakeholder Theory and Corporate Legitimacy

Stakeholder theory posits that organizations are accountable not only to shareholders but to a diverse array of internal and external groups, including employees, customers, regulators, and the broader community (Hadi & Mutmainnah, 2024). The sustainability of a firm depends on its ability to balance these varied interests through strategic communication tailored to different influence levels. Transparency and the quality of information disclosure are critical in reducing information asymmetry and fulfilling the stakeholders' right to accurate data, which in turn fosters long-term relationship stability (Kompas Bisnis, 2025). Legitimacy theory explains how organizations strive to ensure their operations remain congruent with social values and norms. For public companies, legitimacy is a state where corporate actions are perceived as desirable and appropriate within a social system (Nama, 2025). When a gap appears between social expectations and corporate practice, communication strategies like comprehensive disclosure in annual reports or press releases are employed to regain social approval (Republik Indonesia, 2010; Nama, 2025). In this context, the press release functions as a symbolic tool used to secure institutional support

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and maintain organizational viability in a complex environment (Antara News, 2025).

E. Corporate Profile and Operational Context: PT Astra International Tbk

PT Astra International Tbk is recognized as one of the largest public conglomerates in Indonesia, boasting a highly diversified business portfolio that includes the automotive, financial services, heavy equipment, agribusiness, infrastructure, and information technology sectors. As a major actor in the national economy, Astra's operational impact is significant, particularly in job creation and industrial investment (Antara News, 2025). Consequently, its status as a listed entity on the Indonesia Stock Exchange mandates rigorous transparent governance and systematic corporate communication. In this context, the company's communication activities are under constant scrutiny from investors, regulators, and the general public, making it a pivotal subject for studying corporate reputation management.

Given its conglomerate structure, Astra manages a wider complexity of stakeholders compared to single-sector firms. Internal stakeholders, such as employees and management, must be harmonized with external groups including consumers, suppliers, government bodies, and local communities. Strategic communication is therefore essential to balance these often-competing expectations to ensure organizational sustainability (Hadi & Mutmainnah, 2024). By adhering to strict disclosure requirements, Astra aims to reduce information asymmetry between management and investors, thereby maintaining market trust and institutional legitimacy (Kompas Bisnis, 2025). This regulatory compliance, integrated with strategic communication channels like press releases, serves as a cornerstone for sustaining its position in the Indonesian capital market (Pertamina, 2024).

F. Strategic Characteristics of Astra's Press Releases

The press releases issued by PT Astra International Tbk are characterized by a high degree of consistency, particularly regarding the dissemination of quarterly and annual financial performance reports. This regularity ensures that the public and investors receive a timely and transparent overview of the company's business trajectory, which is vital for reducing market uncertainty (Kompas Bisnis, 2025). Astra's communication is further distinguished by the inclusion of comprehensive quantitative data, such as net profit and unit performance indicators. Such data driven disclosure enhances the credibility of the corporate message, as it provides a verifiable factual basis for stakeholder evaluation (Hadi &

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Mutmainnah, 2024).

Beyond financial metrics, Astra's press releases effectively utilize a "managerial voice" through official quotes from senior executives to interpret business performance and future strategic directions. This inclusion of leadership perspectives not only legitimizes the information provided but also builds a symbolic connection between the organization and its audience (Gregory, 2020). Furthermore, the narratives within these releases often blend business optimism with a strong commitment to sustainability and corporate social responsibility (CSR). By articulating long-term visions and social contributions in a formal, professional tone, Astra reinforces its reputational positioning as a credible and responsible corporate citizen, securing support across diverse stakeholder groups (Hadi & Mutmainnah, 2024; Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019; Pertamina News Release, 2025).

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employs a descriptive qualitative method with a conceptual analysis approach to explore the strategic role of press releases in corporate reputation formation. This methodology is selected for its efficacy in explaining complex organizational communication phenomena, where literature data and official corporate documents are analyzed in depth to construct a coherent theoretical model (Gregory, 2020; Lattimore et al., 2021). The analysis is directed toward uncovering strategic communication patterns specifically information transparency and message framing which function as primary determinants in managing the relationship between the organization and its various publics (Coombs, 2019; Pertamina News Release, 2025).

The research data are derived from literature studies and corporate documentation, encompassing fundamental texts on reputation management, strategic communication journals, and official records from PT Astra International Tbk (Antara News, 2025; Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019; Hadi & Mutmainnah, 2024). Data collection focuses on formal texts, such as financial press releases and sustainability reports, to identify how managerial narratives and data disclosures are integrated to establish legitimacy (Kompas.com, 2025; CNBC Indonesia, 2025). Through the examination of these documents, this study evaluates the consistency of corporate messaging as an instrument to minimize information asymmetry between management and stakeholders (Kompas Bisnis, 2025; Nama, 2025).

Data analysis is conducted through a theoretical synthesis that links dimensions within Excellence Theory, stakeholder theory, and legitimacy theory (Hadi & Mutmainnah,

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2024; Coombs, 2019; Nama, 2025). The analytical process involves categorizing strategic elements of corporate communication, which are subsequently positioned as variables that build organizational trust and credibility (Pangestu, 2025; Lattimore et al., 2021). By integrating these theoretical perspectives, the study formulates a conceptual model explaining how press release strategies are systematically constructed to maintain long term reputation and corporate competitiveness in the capital market (Lattimore et al., 2021; Gregory, 2020).

RESULTS AND DICUSSION

A. The Values-Driven Persona Model and Authenticity

The mechanism of value transfer within this conceptual framework is understood through the Values Driven Persona model, which identifies a continuous linear flow from a founder's fundamental values to the establishment of corporate trust. In this model, the internal values held by leadership are transformed into a strategic personal brand through consistent behavior and public discourse (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019; Gregory, 2020). This internalization process serves as a primary anchor in building positive stakeholder perceptions, ensuring that corporate reputation is evaluated based on human integrity rather than just functional product attributes. Furthermore, a leader's authenticity rooted in religious values, as proposed in Proposition 1 (P1), acts as a determinant factor that significantly enhances reputational resilience during industry crises.

Public trust integrated with a leader's religious persona functions as a buffer against audience skepticism, as the leader's character is viewed as a moral guarantee for organizational transparency. In this context, reputational crises are managed not only through technical public relations mechanisms but are mitigated through the trust capital accumulated by the leader's consistent inner values during stable periods. The efficiency of founder led branding in building community loyalty, as stated in Proposition 2 (P2), surpasses paid advertising efficacy in value sensitive markets like the global Halal industry. Human driven communication possesses a more organic persuasive power for collectivist consumers, where the company leader represents the audience's moral aspirations (Hadi & Mutmainnah, 2024).

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B. Identity Synchronization and PR Cost Management

The synchronization between the leadership figure and brand promises, formulated in Proposition 3 (P3), acts as a mechanism capable of substantially reducing public relations communication costs. This efficiency is achieved because the leader acts as living proof who automatically validates corporate statements, minimizing the need for repetitive and expensive reputation verification campaigns (Coombs, 2019). In the dynamics of the 2026 beauty industry, which demands radical transparency, a leadership persona aligned with organizational values provides a competitive advantage by accelerating public trust acquisition without excessive financial expenditure (Pangestu, 2025). Theoretically, this extends conventional PR theory by integrating spirituality and personal ethics into organizational communication frameworks (Canel & Luoma-aho, 2019; Gregory, 2020).

For PR practitioners, extracting authentic leadership narratives is the key to ensuring that the resulting image is not perceived as manufactured. Rather than fabricating executive identities, practitioners are encouraged to conduct deep explorations of the leader's life history, philosophical values, and existing commitments (Antara News, 2025; Berita Satu, 2025). This approach ensures that communication content, such as Paragon Corp's "Halal dari Awal" narrative, resonates with honesty because it is rooted in behavioral reality. Within the Indonesian cultural context, which values collectivism and role models, strengthening a leader's persona serves as a mechanism for deep social legitimacy, positioning the integration of local culture and leadership authenticity as a strategic imperative for global competitive advantage (Pangestu, 2025; Hadi & Mutmainnah, 2024).

C. Strategic Value Transfer and Cultural Context

The relevance of the founder led branding model is significantly pronounced within the Indonesian cultural context, which honors exemplary values. Unlike Western societies that tend toward individualism and skepticism of authority, Indonesian audiences show a higher propensity to trust organizations led by a protector or educator figure who practices religious values (Hadi & Mutmainnah, 2024). Consequently, the reinforcement of a leader's persona in Indonesia functions not only as a marketing tool but as a social legitimacy building mechanism. This model responds strategically to the global market dynamics that demand radical transparency.

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The effectiveness of this human centric branding model is evaluated as a strategic response to market volatility. The reduction in PR communication costs is a secondary impact of identity consistency, where the leader validates the company's integrity without requiring massive advertising campaigns (Coombs, 2019). Therefore, the integration between local cultural contexts, leader authenticity, and modern PR strategies is positioned as an imperative for companies seeking to maintain competitive advantages. In the global beauty industry, which is increasingly driven by ethical values, the living proof provided by an authentic leader ensures long term organizational sustainability (Pangestu, 2025).

CONCLUSION

The primary theoretical contribution of this study lies in the reconceptualization of the protocol function from a mere administrative support activity into a strategic instrument within the Government Public Relations (GPR) framework. By redefining protocol, this research fills a significant void in communication literature, which has traditionally limited the study of protocol to ceremonial aspects and static seating arrangements. This study establishes that in the complex environment of State-Owned Enterprises, protocol is a crucial variable that determines the effectiveness of crisis communication and the maintenance of state legitimacy. It argues that organizational dignity is not a barrier to information velocity; rather, the two can be harmonized through a more dynamic and adaptive communicative approach.

Furthermore, the integration of state sovereignty and digital agility serves as a new development for Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) within the public sector. By expanding the attribution of responsibility to include elements of institutional authority as a determinant of crisis response success, this study provides a theoretical foundation for

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