

## **THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS IN IMPROVING A POSITIVE IMAGE IN THE COMPANY PT. SORIK MARAPI GEOTHERMAL POWER (SMGP) MANDAILING NATAL DISTRICT**

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### **Abstract:**

This study aims to determine the role of public relations in increasing the positive image of PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power (SMGP) Mandailing Natal District. The method used in this research is a descriptive qualitative method. Primary data sources, the authors obtain data through observation, interviews, and documentation of affected parties, especially the Public Relations company PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power Plant (SMGP) located in Mandailing Natal Regency and secondary data comes from books, journals, articles, internet and e-books. Data analysis techniques by means of this research data will be analyzed from the start. The data is then reprinted, systematized, and logically evaluated to obtain valid and credible data. The results of the study show that the role of public relations for PT SMGP in the Mandailing Natal among others, is as an expert advisor as a communication facilitator and as a problem solving facilitator.

**Keywords:** *The Role of Public Relations, Positive Company Image*

### **Introduction**

People generally believe that industrial business can benefit the environment and society. This beneficial influence can negatively affect the environment and the organization because it may continue to achieve its goals in other ways. Companies will continue to look for methods to stabilize company performance, such as improving community relations<sup>1</sup>.

Companies, schools, and governments use public relations. Public Interaction fosters a very good relationship between the organization and the public<sup>2</sup>. Public relations helps various groups. Focusing on consumer attitudes and impressions of a company's products and services can reveal communication difficulties<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ferinia, Rolyana, et al. *Komunikasi Bisnis*. Yayasan Kita Menulis, 2020.

<sup>2</sup> Bakiyah, Horidatul, et al. "Strategi Komunikasi Public Relations PT Cakra Mahkota dalam Customer Relations." *Jurnal Komunikasi dan Budaya* 3.1 (2022): 20-34.

<sup>3</sup> Saputra, Herpandi. *Strategi Marketing Public Relations Pt. Ruang Raya Indonesia Dalam Mempromosikan "Ruangguru" Di Kota Pekanbaru*. Diss. Universitas Islam Negeri Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, 2022.

Public Relations has an important function in an organization or agency. Public Relations communicates and builds, enhances, and maintains the image of the organization. So public relations must cultivate a harmonious relationship with the public because that is their job<sup>4</sup>.

Public relations efforts require two important roles: technician and manager. In its implementation, public relations has three responsibilities, first as an explanation, in which a publicist can identify problems, provide solutions, and see the policies implemented, in this case public relations can be considered as an expert consultant. Second, as a communication facilitator, public relations maintains good connections and two-way communication between the public and an entity, both government and private. Third, as a problem solving facilitator for the elderly<sup>5</sup>. Public Relations must be creative in selling services/products to consumers and innovating to develop, maintain, and enhance the image of the institution<sup>6</sup>.

First, a public relations officer must form a personal perception of a person, product, or situation. Internally and publicly, PR provides factual and understandable information. Third, PR can increase public awareness about issues affecting an organization or company. Public Relations explains conditions or events to the public to overcome opposition and ignorance. Fifth, a publicist must be clear in order to gain sympathy<sup>7</sup>.

Skilled PR enhances corporate image to influence public opinion. PR professionals must be honest, loyal, fair, respectful and direct. Professional PR helps governments and businesses work ethically, reducing legal issues. The existence of public relations has a strategic purpose, such as reading obstacles from the outside, such as terrible government regulations, employee misunderstandings about the attitude of citizens in the company area, competitors' actions, consumer boycotts, to company mistakes which are carried out accidentally against the public, or from within, such as employee strikes, vandalism, and so on<sup>8</sup>. A public relations officer helps an organization achieve its goals by building healthy relationships with its stakeholders. Public Relations is aware of what legal difficulties may arise when creating or strengthening an organizational image and how to operate ethically to achieve its goals and functions as a public relations officer.

Image is a person's impression based on facts and reality. The image of an object can be gleaned from a person's attitude towards it<sup>9</sup>. Society's view of the

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<sup>4</sup> Fachri, Achmad Kurnia. "Strategi Hubungan Masyarakat PT. Perusahaan Perdagangan Indonesia (PT. PPI) Dalam Mempertahankan Citra Organisasi." *Jurnal Ilmu Siber (JIS)* 1.6 (2022): 252-259.

<sup>5</sup> Hardiyanti, Cici. *Peran Bagian Humas Dalam Pengembangan Citra Pelayanan Publik Pada Sekretariat Daerah Kabupaten Majene*. Diss. Universitas Bosowa, 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Pranabella, Patricia Gaby, and Durinta Puspasari. "Strategi Hubungan Masyarakat dalam Meningkatkan Citra Perusahaan." *Jurnal Syntax Transformation* 2.8 (2021): 1160-1178.

<sup>7</sup> Ayudia, Anyelir Puspa, and Siti Sri Wulandari. "Strategi Komunikasi Humas Dalam Meningkatkan Citra Pemerintah Kota Probolinggo." *Journal of Office Administration: Education and Practice* 1.2 (2021): 249-268.

<sup>8</sup> Putri, Yolanda Mario. "Meningkatkan Kompetensi Dalam Membentuk Opini Publik Di Lembaga Kursus Dan Pelatihan Public Relations." (2020).

<sup>9</sup> Widiantari, Afrilia. *Peran public relation dalam meningkatkan citra positif perusahaan (Studi Kasus Cafe Di Pancor Kabupaten Lombok Timur)*. Diss. UIN Mataram, 2022.

corporation reflects its image. A company's image is its overall image, not just its products and services. Many factors affect the company's image. Company history, success, outstanding human resources, and reputation as a producer of jobs can enhance its image<sup>10</sup>.

The company expects a positive image to inspire audience compassion and interest in its products or services. Companies Indonesia is aware of this and is working to improve their public image. These companies are working to improve their public relations. Public Relations knows that a good image is not only in the form of buildings, achievements, publications, etc., but how an organization can represent a trusted, strong, continuously growing organization, which is always open for control, evaluation<sup>11</sup>.

In this study, the authors seek to investigate how public relations enhances corporate image in a competitive industry. Each company must be unique, such as PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power Plant (SMGP).

PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power (SMGP), founded in 2010, is an image-conscious company. This company produces geothermal power. PT. Geothermal OTP is well-known in Mandailing Natal Regency as a natural gas producing company that went down and stopped its production. The corporation quickly recovered from setbacks and restored its image. Corporations will not remain silent about their problems. They try everything to get up. PT. The Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power Plant (SMGP) uses many means to regain public trust and improve its image.

From observations, researchers obtained preliminary data as evidenced by several problems at the company, such as on November 11 2014 there was a massive action against the establishment and existence of the company which was motivated by the notion that the people of Mandailing Regency felt the company had been lied to. He is running a geothermal permit in Sorik Marapi, Mandailing Natal Regency. This caused one death. In 2018, PT. The Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power Plant (SMGP) was sued for ignoring SOPs and safety procedures which resulted in one person dying. On January 25, 2021, there was a leak in a pipeline of toxic Hydrogen Sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S gas) gas from a power plant's gas well due to the company's negligence. When this geothermal well is opened, the environment is allowed 300-500m. At the time of the incident, none gas detectors that detected H<sub>2</sub>S gas, which resulted in 5 people dying and 41 people being hospitalized. PT. SMGP caught fire on May 13 2021, due to ignoring SOP and safety procedures. PT. The SMGP drilling site in Sibanggor Julu Village, Puncak Sorik Marapi District, caught fire. Recurring Hydrogen Sulfide (H<sub>2</sub>S gas) poisoning occurred in 2021. 52 people were poisoned by H<sub>2</sub>S on March 6, 2021. PT. The Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power Plant (SMGP) recently had an accident with a burst of hot mud containing noxious gas from a leaking PLTP well. Sunday, April 24 2022. The 30 meter high mudflow poisoned 21 residents who had to be hospitalized.

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<sup>10</sup> Justita Dura, S. E., and M. Ak. *Pengungkapan Kinerja Ekonomi, Sosial, Lingkungan Pada Financial Performance Perusahaan Manufaktur*. Media Sains Indonesia, 2022.

<sup>11</sup> Claretta, Dyva, and Farikha Rachmawati MI Kom. *Inovasi Dan Strategi Public Relations Dalam Meningkatkan Citra Perusahaan*. CV Literasi Nusantara Abadi, 2022.

PT. The Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power Plant (SMGP) may have many conflicts with local communities and authorities. Local residents say PT. SMGP has repeatedly bothered them. Despite the company's many tragedies and controversies, it still produces well and runs efficiently. The author wants to investigate further. Because a public relations officer often deals with similar issues in his organization. He would not allow his company's image to be tarnished, which could destroy it. He will do a number of things to enhance his company's reputation and public trust. Due to proactive public relations, PT. The Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power Plant (SMGP) still has a positive image in society. The author wants to know the contribution of public relations to PT. Positive image and public trust of Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power (SMGP).

### **Research Method**

The author uses qualitative research. Qualitative research uncovers problems in the scope of government, private, community, youth, women, organizations, arts and cultural groups so that a policy can be set for common needs<sup>12</sup>.

Qualitative techniques create written and spoken descriptive data of the people and actions observed. As the researchers will explore, the impact of PR in boosting PT. Citra Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power (SMGP) in Mandailing Natal District. So the researcher must observe more events to interact and communicate with what is being investigated.

This research was conducted in Puncak Sorik Marapi District, Mandailing Natal District. Researchers chose this place because PT. The Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power Plant (SMGP) has become negative between the community and the company, making the community uneasy and worried that the company will have a detrimental impact on the Puncak Sorik Marapi sub-district.

This research will focus on public relations company PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power Plant (SMGP) located in Mandailing Natal Regency. This company is one of the few deemed capable of providing a solution to the problem under study.

In this study, the author's data source is Primary Data where the author obtains data through observation, interviews, and documentation of affected parties, especially the Public Relations company PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power Plant (SMGP) located in Mandailing Natal Regency. And secondary data comes from books, journals, articles, internet, and e-books.

Study researchers will use three iterative data collection approaches to ensure the authenticity of the data, namely observation, interviews and documentation.

Researchers will conduct field observations at PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power (SMGP) and evaluated its Public Relations to determine how it enhances the company's image.

Researchers will interview public relations at PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power Plant (SMGP), Mandailing Natal Regency to obtain authentic data.

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<sup>12</sup> Saragih, Megasari Gusandra, et al. *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif: Dasar-Dasar Memulai Penelitian*. Yayasan Kita Menulis, 2021.

In this study, the three data collection methods above will be complete each other. So the author's data is valid and can be used as a source.

## **Results and Discussion**

### **Communication Fasilitator**

Public Relations is a very vital part for every company, including companies such as PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power (SMGP) Mandailing Natal District. The importance of the position of public relations in a company cannot be separated from the company's efforts to establish and maintain its reputation, especially to increase public confidence in the company's existence. The importance of a reputation that has a direct effect on the existence of this company requires public relations to be able to establish and maintain harmonious relations with the public.

As a management function, it means that management in all institutions/organizations must pay more attention to public relations. It is also to analyze the formation and maintenance of good and mutually beneficial relations between institutions/organizations and their publics<sup>13</sup>. In addition, criteria are also put forward to determine how public relations is and what is not included in public relations. The concept of public relations as a management function with the aim of building and maintaining good and beneficial relations between an organization and the public influences the existence of the organization<sup>14</sup>.

Public Relations PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power (SMGP) Mandailing Natal District has the duty to guarantee the quality of service to the community by maintaining and fostering harmonious relationships by identifying all opinions, perceptions and public responses to PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power (SMGP) Mandailing Natal District. Public Relations of Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power (SMGP) Mandailing Natal District also evaluates the company's programs, especially those that touch the community. Communication delivered by public relations must be easy to understand so that there are no errors in receiving messages that can harm the company. For example, public relations activities can be observed from the interaction between the Public Relations of PT. Sorik Marapi Geothermal Power (SMGP) Mandailing Natal District with its customers regarding complaints about the services provided, especially during a power outage that impacted The Mandailing Natal District.

This is in line with research conducted by Dharmawan and Raulkinsi (2021). With the research title "*Pr Strategy Pt. Indonesia Port Company Container Terminal In Customer Management*". The results of his research stated that the role of public relations influences the company's image, so it must maintain strong relationships with consumers, the public, the media, and related agencies<sup>15</sup>.

This explanation is reinforced by Purwo et al statement (2018: 335) that Public Relations is a comprehensive and integrated strategy regarding the main activities in an organization to determine its success so that public communication

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<sup>13</sup> Gora, Radita, and M. M. S Sos. *Riset kualitatif public relations*. Jakad Media Publishing, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Anshar, Muhammad. "Electronic Public Relation (E-PR): Strategi Mengelola Organisasi di Era Digital." (2019).

<sup>15</sup> Dharmawan, Raulkinsi. *Strategi Humas Pt. Indonesia Port Company Terminal Petikemas Dalam Pengelolaan Pelanggan*. Diss. Universitas Nasional, 2022.

activities are basically related to socialization and education towards the community<sup>16</sup>. Public communication is not only centered on the outside public, but how the internal public also needs to be considered.

### **Expert Prescriber**

There are two main keys in the definition of public relations, namely management and action. If public relations works to protect the organization, then it has a responsibility to the top level management. Public relations has an obligation and is required to be a good and honest 'bridge' for the management. The most important thing is that public relations is able to be neutral to ensure the work goes well without the slightest manipulation. There is no communication made by public relations that is not persuasive, considering that this can be used as a savior for the organization when it is in a crisis that is already known to the public.

This is in accordance with what Al Habib et al (2021: 10) said, which states that one of the roles of public relations is as an expert adviser (expert prescriber), meaning that a publicist must have high experience and ability to be able to help find solutions in solving public relations problems<sup>17</sup>. The role of Public Relations as an expert advisor at PT SMGP Mandailing Natal has a very high ability to help find solutions to problems related to the public.

### **Problem Solving Procces Facilitator**

Said to be the facilitator of the problem solving process, because the Public Relations of PT SMGP Mandailing Natal has played its role well. Public Relations of PT SMGP Mandailing Natal has collaborated with all employees at PT SMGP and leaders in solving problems, especially public opinion that is difficult to contain on behalf of PT SMGP. In this context, Public Relations as a mediator really needs to be a solution provider so that people do not make news that is not true.

According to Iriantara & Yosol (2019) states that one of the roles of government public relations is counseling, meaning that public relations is tasked with providing advice to management on social, political issues and consulting with the team in developing strategies to manage and also respond to sensitive issues that can affect organizational continuity<sup>18</sup>. The public relations staff also said that their party had realized the role of public relations as a facilitator of the problem solving process by continuing to provide technical guidance to the leadership of PT SMGP so they would not go out of procedure.

### **Conclusion**

Charge based on research conducted by researchers, it can be concluded that the role of public relations PT SMGP Mandailing Natal has carried out its role well so as to create a positive image for government agencies, including as expert advisors namely public relations for PT SMGP Mandailing Natal Regency in of

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<sup>16</sup> Purwo, Rakhmad Handin Setya, and Durinta Puspasari. "Peran Humas Dalam Meningkatkan Citra Positif Pada Badan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia (BPSDM) Provinsi Jawa Timur." *Jurnal Pendidikan Administrasi Perkantoran (JPAP)* 8.3 (2020): 458-467

<sup>17</sup> AL HABIB, DERIL ROSYID, and BAMBANG SURATMAN. "Peran Humas Dalam Meningkatkan Citra Positif Pada Lembaga Pemerintahan DPRD Kabupaten Nganjuk." (2021) : 10

<sup>18</sup> Iriantara, Yosol. "Humas Pemerintah 4.0." *Media Nusantara* 16.1 (2019): 13-26.

accommodating input and criticism from all employees and leaders then if there are many problems, public relations will determine the strategy in solving them, as a communication facilitator by communicating transparently if it is felt to be non-confidential to related parties or internal to the company, and as a problem solving facilitator meaning public relations here becomes a party that has a big influence on provide solutions to every conflict in the company

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