

Public Relations Strategy a Building Trust Amidst Hoax Attacks

Saurma MGP Siahaan¹, Iskandar Zukarnain², Dewi Kurniawati³, Sakhyan Asmara⁴

¹University of North Sumatera

²University of North Sumatera

³University of North Sumatera

⁴University of North Sumatera

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ABSTRACT

Introduction: Public relations strategy is important to be prepared by the public relations sector in dealing with hoaxes that come unexpectedly, which can become a communication crisis. Moreover, hoax attacks also continue to develop in accordance with technological developments, so this is a challenge for the public relations sector as the guardian of trust, reputation and company image.

Objectives: This study discusses Public Relations Strategies in Building Trust Amidst Hoax Attacks at the Central Board of the Public Relations Association (BPP PERHUMAS).

Methods: This study using qualitative methods with data collection through interviews and documentation. Interviews were conducted with 4 public relations practitioners at the Central Board of the Public Relations Association (BPP PERHUMAS) as informants who have met the criteria as public relations practitioners with decades of experience in the field of communication and experience in managing hoaxes. The researcher also conducted a credibility test by triangulating with the Director General of Information and Public Communication of the Ministry of Communication and Informatics of the Republic of Indonesia who is also an Advisor to PERHUMAS and Chief of Global Alliance Asia Pacific Regional, a public relations association at the Asia Pacific level. The purpose of this study was to find out how public relations strategies build trust amidst hoax attacks, find supporting factors and stages of the strategy carried out.

Results: The results of the study indicate that there are various strategies that can be used in building public relations trust amidst hoax attacks. positive campaigns and measuring public trust are important as public relations strategies in building trust amidst hoax attacks. The success of this strategy will be greatly influenced by the support of the company, through the establishment of various policies on hoaxes, the existence of SOPs and special teams and public relations competencies.

Conclusions: The researcher found that the public relations can combine from among the strategies that have been put forward by previous experts, namely crisis communication strategies derived from the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) or Situational Crisis Communication Theory from Timothy W. Coombs (2007) and Image Repair Theory or Image Recovery Theory from Professor William L. Benoit (1995) and Reactive Strategy or Reactive Strategy from Ronald D. Smith (2009) as an alternative solution for this problem. But must be but adjusted to the type of hoax that befell. With several stages of strategy that are also supported by advances in communication technology and a comprehensive approach, it is hoped that public relations can carry out strategies in building trust amidst hoax attacks.

Keywords: Hoax, Public Relations Practitioners, Communication Crisis and Public Relations Strategy.

INTRODUCTION

Public relations strategy is an effort made by the public relations field to overcome communication problems or crises in the Company. This public relations communication strategy is made in a planned manner to build trust, reputation and a positive image of the company in the eyes of the public and its stakeholders. Communication strategy becomes

a guide for planning (communication planning) with communication management (communication management) to achieve the goals that have been set (Effendy, 2017).

Public relations strategies are prepared with planning to deliver messages to previously identified target audiences. In addition to the audience, other things that influence the success of this strategy are the message itself and the channels used to deliver the message. Likewise, success in building and maintaining a communication strategy requires more than that, including responding to current conditions where the penetration of information technology is apparently used by people not only for positive things, but also negative things such as spreading hoaxes.

According to Pellegrini in Simarmata (2019) based on MacDougall's definition of hoax, hoax is a deliberate lie made by a party to hide and divert the truth, so that it can generate personal gain for the hoax maker. Hoax has become a tool for certain parties to attack competitors or parties whose trust, reputation and image they want to lose.

Hoaxes can be divided into fake news to falsify and display untruths in news; clickbait links that are strategically inserted on sites that lead readers to switch to other sites; confirmation bias that interprets new events as convincing evidence; misinformation intended to deceive; satire that provides humorous or ironic commentary on recent events; post-truth where emotions play a bigger role than facts in shaping public opinion and propaganda that seeks to influence the general public through information, facts, discussions, gossip, which are true, to lies.

The characteristics of hoaxes include sentences inviting people to spread information to many people, without displaying dates and deadlines, without writing sources and using the big names of certain companies. These four characteristics can basically help to recognize hoaxes when reading information. Ideally, we do not immediately accept information but must be skeptical even though the information seems true (Clara Novita, 2016).

The speed of the internet and the penetration of information technology that should have positive benefits are actually counterproductive when misused as a tool to spread hoaxes. Technological advances have made hoaxes develop rapidly through various means, including deepfakes which are the result of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technology. Deepfakes are fake videos with digital software, using machine learning and facial changes, then combined and made into new videos so that the real event seems to have never existed. That is what people hope to believe because it seems real and difficult to prove as a fake video and specially designed. Of course, deepfakes are very dangerous because hoaxes with AI can use the face of a figure we know and do it without permission from the person.

No wonder, hoaxes have even become a new business that is quite tempting in getting money quickly. As done by the Saracen group syndicate, namely people or groups who spread SARA issues through social media for economic interests, and their service users mean it for political purposes or motives.

Several mass media responded to the sad situation with the rampant hoaxes and contributed to providing enlightenment to the public through the Fact Check Coalition.

OBJECTIVES

Public relations strategy is important to be prepared by the public relations sector in dealing with hoaxes that come unexpectedly, which can become a communication crisis. Moreover, hoax attacks also continue to develop in accordance with technological developments, so this is a challenge for the public relations sector as the guardian of trust, reputation and company image.

Hoaxes, both in Indonesia and abroad, continue to grow and require efforts to handle and manage them. Hoaxes do not only attack companies, but also countries. Various statements about hoaxes in Indonesia and around the world also show how the challenge of hoaxes must be addressed in order to prevent losses and communication crises.

This hoax storm condition is also a challenge for the company's public relations in responding to false messages or information or hoaxes, because hoaxes can then develop into a crisis that can be even more detrimental to the company or institution. Thus, public relations as the guardian of the reputation and image of the company or institution is expected to be able to manage hoaxes so as not to lose the trust of the public and its stakeholders.

This study discusses Public Relations Strategies in Building Trust Amidst Hoax Attacks at the Central Board of the Public Relations Association (BPP PERHUMAS).

METHODS

The researcher reveals and seeks the truth of this hoax-related phenomenon, with the first step of selecting and establishing a constructivist paradigm as a constellation of study results consisting of a set of concepts, values, techniques and others that are used together by the scientific community to determine the truth of the problem and its solution. Next, the researcher tries to explore the understanding of the informant, namely public relations practitioners at BPP PERHUMAS, regarding the situation being studied, namely public relations strategies in building trust amidst hoax attacks.

The three aspects or foundations of philosophical thinking are ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

Ontology examines various realities and then individuals construct different understandings based on past experiences and knowledge. The ontology of science covers all aspects of life that can be tested through the five human senses. The ontology aspect of this research is the hoax attack.

In the epistemological aspect, researchers and objects of research are not separate where the researcher's beliefs and experiences influence the research questions and also how to translate research findings. The epistemological aspect or how to gain knowledge from this research is to examine several communication theories that are considered relevant to the research problem, so that in the end it will develop a Public Relations Strategy in Building Trust Amidst Hoax Attacks.

Axiology tries to touch on the nature and benefits that exist in knowledge. One of the benefits of science is to provide benefits and convenience for human life. Axiology aims to understand how and why something happens and how individuals interpret it. The axiological aspect or value of the knowledge obtained is by identifying public relations strategies in preparing planning, strategies and company policies in building trust amidst hoax attacks.

The technical implementation of data analysis in qualitative research conducted by researchers in this study is to analyze data before going to the field as preliminary research data or secondary data and data analysis after going to the field. Data analysis according to Miles, Huberman and Saldana (2014), is carried out in three steps, namely:

- a. Data Reduction, as a process of simplifying, summarizing, selecting the main points, classifying, focusing on important things in the same theme and pattern.
- b. Data Presentation (Data Display), can be done in the form of brief descriptions, charts, relationships between categories, flowcharts and so on which can be equipped with graphs, matrices, charts or the like.
- c. Conclusion Drawing (Verification), as the final result of the conclusion of the research where the new findings can be a description or picture of an object whose existence was previously unclear, as stated by (Sugiyono, 2012) that findings can be a description or picture of an object that was previously dim or dark so that after being studied it becomes clear, can be a causal or interactive relationship, hypothesis or theory.

The researcher used data collection techniques through interviews with informants who had met the predetermined criteria, through triangulation and through documentation. The informants in this study were public relations practitioners at BPP PERHUMAS who met the criteria, including decades of experience as public relations practitioners or in the field of communication. Interviews are a data collection technique by conducting direct questions and answers to the resource person (Moleong, 2012).

The questions and answers were carried out by the interviewer who asked questions to the interviewee who provided answers to the questions. In-depth interviews were conducted in a natural, in-depth and holistic setting. This means that everything related to data collection activities is carried out in the context of real-life events without special treatments either to the research subjects or the context in which the research is conducted. Holistic means that researchers must obtain information that will become data in its entirety so as not to leave out any information. From the results of data collection, facts or realities will be obtained. Therefore, researchers must dig up information, not only from participants and key informants through in-depth interviews but also people around the research subjects.

Denzin & Lincoln (2009) stated that qualitative research is a type of research that emphasizes the process and meaning that is carried out in a non-strict and unmeasured manner. It is also said that researchers who use qualitative research prioritize socially constructed realities. Qualitative research according to Prihananto (2014) encompasses a group of methodologies that aim to describe and interpret social phenomena. Qualitative research was chosen because researchers needed specific research data on Public Relations Strategies in Building Trust Amid Hoax Attacks from public relations practitioners at BPP PERHUMAS.

RESULTS

The results of this study show that BPP PERHUMAS in its strategy of building trust amidst hoax attacks has made various efforts and invited various parties to maintain trust, reputation and image of the company and even the country, including through the Joint Campaign of Indonesia Bicara Baik, mapping the condition of the company in the eyes of the public and its stakeholders through PERHUMAS Trust Indicators and Communication indicators (one of them), with several elements, namely channels, sources, transparency, and accountability.

This is considered capable of showing how the company has communicated with its public and how the public responds so that the company can evaluate the strategies that have been used so far, whether to continue or make changes. Supporting factors for public relations in building trust amidst hoax attacks include the existence of a company SOP for managing hoaxes, the existence of a hoax management team, the ability or competence and expertise and extensive networks in the public and stakeholders owned by public relations practitioners, the position of public relations practitioners who have sufficient authority in making policies and strategic choices that have been prepared to be able to build trust, reputation and image of the company amidst hoax attacks.

There are several stages in implementing a public relations strategy in building trust amidst hoax attacks. Public Relations can choose the right strategy according to the type of hoax experienced. Both strategies before the hoax spreads and after the hoax spreads widely, so that public relations practitioners can build and maintain trust, reputation and corporate image.

DISCUSSION

Strategy can be seen from three communication or public relations objectives, namely increasing knowledge; forming a positive attitude towards the company and changing behavior. Strategy is very dependent on a particular situation and must start at the company level by creating various policies that will be a reference for public relations in managing hoaxes. This is because hoaxes can happen at any time, so it is very important for companies to set their own policies. Crises, including those caused by hoaxes, often occur and have an impact on the decline of existing systems, so that they can be a big problem for companies that experience them.

There are 2 types of crises, namely disasters and organizational crises. A crisis due to a disaster occurs suddenly and seriously disrupts the system that has been routinely run and demands new ways to take action so as not to cause a crisis for the organization. While an organizational crisis is more about how management manages the organization so that it avoids a crisis, including a crisis caused by hoaxes.

Crises can also be divided into 3 types (Cutlip, 2006), namely Immediate Crisis, which is a crisis that is immediate so that its handling requires consensus at a high management level because it is caused by a disaster. Emerging Crisis, which is a crisis that has just emerged and requires public relations practitioners to investigate the case before the problem has an impact on the company. Sustained Crisis, which is a crisis that has been around for a long time but the problem still arises and persists, and is not controlled by public relations practitioners.

Existing regulations can also be categorized as supporting factors for public relations. Currently in Indonesia there are several regulations on hoaxes which include several laws and regulations designed to regulate the spread of incorrect information (hoaxes). Some of these regulations include the Electronic Information and Transactions Law (UU ITE) Article 28 which regulates the prohibition of the spread of information that contains lies or is misleading. Violations can be subject to criminal sanctions and fines. There is also the Criminal Code (KUHP) Articles 14 and 15 which regulate the spread of fake news that can cause unrest in society. The perpetrators can be subject to criminal sanctions.

In addition, there is also the Broadcasting Law which stipulates that broadcasting institutions are responsible for presenting information that is correct and not misleading. If proven to have spread hoaxes, broadcasting institutions can be subject to sanctions. There is also a Kominfo Regulation that regulates the supervision of content on the internet and the handling of hoaxes. They can delete content that is considered a hoax and block sites that spread false information.

The implementation of this regulation often involves cooperation between the government, law enforcement officers, and social media platforms where law enforcement against the spread of hoaxes also faces challenges, including freedom of speech and determining the criteria for what is considered a hoax. Thus, the regulation on hoaxes in Indonesia which aims to protect the public from misleading information also needs to be balanced with education and public awareness about the importance of verifying information.

The government has also launched a program to improve media literacy in the community so that the public is more critical of the information they receive. The public is also encouraged to report hoaxes and conduct fact-checking. The mass media is also expected to spread accurate and responsible news. Several mass media have even proactively prepared certain applications to carry out fact-checking or fact checks to straighten out news or information spread in the public.

From the results of the study and various other expert opinions, the researcher argues that PR practitioners can make choices or combinations of various strategies that have been explained by experts in building trust amidst the onslaught of fake news, but must be adjusted to the type of fake news and the company's goals. These strategies include a combination of strategies that have been put forward in the following three theories:

- a. Situational Crisis Communication Strategy from Timothy W. Coombs (2007). This strategy connects crisis response strategies with crisis situations, where organizations formulate crisis response strategies as an answer to save their trust, reputation and image. Starting from the Deny Strategy, Diminish Strategy, Rebuild Strategy and Reinforcing Strategy.
- b. Image Repair Strategy from William L Benoit (2014). This strategy is to reduce the negative impacts that disrupt the company's trust, reputation and image. All parts of this theory can be an option for public relations according to the type of fake news to be handled.
- c. Proactive Strategy and Reactive Strategy from Ronald D. Smith (2017). In this case, only Reactive Strategy can be used regarding hoax issues. This Reactive Strategy is a strategy when a company receives criticism or sharp criticism from the public where the company responds and defends itself to gain public understanding and restore trust, reputation, and the company's image. In this case, including hoax attacks, in order to continue to build trust amidst hoax attacks and maintain the company's reputation and image.

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