

## THE ROLE OF PUBLIC RELATIONS AND THE POSITIVE IMAGE OF REGIONAL OWNED ENTERPRISES (BUMD)

Anantri Putri Sofiani<sup>1</sup>, Lulu Millati Anjani<sup>2</sup>, Nizhaamul Fatmawati<sup>3</sup>, Farida Nurfalah<sup>4</sup>

Universitas Swadaya Gunung Jati, Cirebon, Indonesia<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

Email: putri.sofiani13@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, lulumillati2016@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>,  
nizhaamulfatmawati@gmail.com<sup>3</sup>, farida.nurfalah@ugj.ac.id<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

Public relations is a party that can connect a company with the community to create reciprocal communication and establish good relationships. This research aims to determine how BUMDs carry out their public relations role and create a positive image for the company. This research uses a qualitative descriptive analysis method. Interviews, observation, and documentation were carried out using data collection methods. The theory used in this research is the Role Theory of Public Relations. The research results show that the role of Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM) Tirtajati Public Relations is to provide comfort, understanding, information, and solutions to customers. Public Relations of PDAM Tirtajati collects aspirations and complaints and then connects them to related fields. Several inhibiting factors, such as insufficient services, impacted the community's negative response. Public Relations of PDAM Tirtajati strives to provide excellent service, establishes good communication with customers, provides complaint services via WhatsApp Center and Social Media to make it easier for the public, and establishes external communication with other agencies or organizations, public relations also provide explanation of the problems that occur, then offers solutions and treatments to resolve issues.

**Keywords:** Role, Public Relations, Positive Image, Obstacles, Efforts

### Introduction

Regionally Owned Enterprises (BUMD) are businesses owned by the Regional Government to be a source of Regional Revenue (PAD) (Ismail et al., 2022). BUMD has the same tasks as other government institutions: trying to maintain and improve a company's performance. Building a corporate image in BUMD requires maintaining good relations with employees, the media, the industry, investors, and the community.

Kotler (2016) reveals that an image is a set of ideas, impressions, and beliefs that a person has about an object. Image is closely related to public trust, assessments, responses, opinions, associations, or certain symbols towards a company. This image can be positive or negative.

According to Ardianto (2011), an image is a description of the public's feelings towards a company, organization, or institution in the form of an impression created intentionally to create positive value. For companies, image is an important asset because it is related to their value.

Moore in Rasyid (2015) states several types of images: mirror image, current image, desired image, multiple image, and corporate image.

Public Relations is a field of Communication Science that focuses on efforts to foster cooperation and mutual understanding between an agency or company and the public (Supada, 2020). Public relations is tasked with carrying out one of its duties and functions: fostering harmonious relationships between management and company owners and vice versa and management leaders and employees. Likewise, to build or bridge communication with the outside community as the public who can determine the success or failure of a goal and image that the company wants to achieve.

According to Jeffkins (2018), in his book, "the task of public relations is to take care of various needs related to communication with the public, starting from making news releases and press conferences, providing information to journalists, producing magazines, organizing events, and receiving visits."

Public Relations of PDAM Tirtajati Cirebon Regency plays a role in building, maintaining, and improving the company's positive image. However, in its implementation, some obstacles can reduce the company's positive image, such as customers who complain about water that often doesn't flow. Still, bills continue to flow, leaks take a long time, and responses must be more responsive to customer problems. This can affect the image of PDAM Cirebon Regency. However, public relations at PDAM Tirtajati Cirebon Regency can handle this matter to maintain the company's positive image.

According to Dozier and Broom(1995)in the book *Public Relations and Communication Media Management*, the role of public relations in an organization can be divided into four categories: Expert Advisors, Communication Facilitators, Problem-Solving Facilitators, and Communication Technicians (Ruslan, 2017).

Quoted via a search application, Google, PDAM Tirtajati has quite low reviews, namely 1.4 stars from 228 reviews. In this review, the majority of people complained about the expensive monthly fees, but often, the water is dry and does not come out, especially during the dry season. It was also stated that even though the public had submitted complaints, they did not receive a satisfactory response.

In contrast to the unfavorable reviews on Google, quoted in the news published by *Kabar Cirebon* with the title "Making Services Easier, PDAM Tirta Jati Cirebon Regency Opens Public Service Mall," published on February 26, 2023, it was explained that PDAM Tirtajati opened a service post in Cirebon Regency Public Service Mall. According to Suharyadi, the Main Director of PDAM Tirtajati, the public can access various services and complain.

This time, the author's research took the title *The Role of Public Relations and the Positive Image of BUMD*. Thus, the problem discussed by the researcher is a difference

between the assessments spread on the Google search engine and the interview statements of the sources, the author is interested in conducting research with the following research objectives: 1.) Knowing the role of public relations in creating a positive image at the PDAM Tirta Jati, Cirebon Regency. 2.) Understand what obstacles arise in creating a positive image at the PDAM Tirtajati Regency. 3.) Find out what efforts are made by public relations to overcome the obstacles.

Previous research conducted by Bachman et al. (2023), entitled "Public Relations Process in the Socialization of MPasport Applications at the Cirebon City Immigration Office," states the need for socialization from public relations to the public to facilitate understanding of learning from something useful for gaining efficiency in doing something. PDAM Tirtajati carries out minimal direct outreach to the public regarding services and complaints regarding programs at PDAM.

Based on previous research titled "The Public Relations in Handling The Complaints" proposed by Oktyarini and Mulyana (2022), The role of public relations, apart from maintaining a positive image of a company or organization, is to resolve complaints that occur. Even though there is a crisis related to complaints, public relations is expected to be able to maintain good communication and provide solutions.

The research entitled "Public Relations Strategy of the Surabaya PDAM in dealing with Consumer Complaints through the "Customer Meeting" Program to build relationships with Consumers," presented by Aisyah (2020), explained that the Humanism customer meeting program carried out by PDAM Surabaya was a brilliant innovation that could provide space for public relations and the community to discuss with each other regarding conveying community complaints to PDAM and having them resolved immediately.

Research conducted by Fitriyaningsih. Flowers, Kholik. Abdul, entitled "South Tangerang Diskominfo Public Relations Process in Building a Positive Image Through Instagram," explains the importance of Instagram as a medium for creating a positive image. Instagram is a forum for representing Diskominfo's public relations to the public.

Research by Nurilawati et al. (2024) entitled "Local government innovation towards good governance through public service malls" discusses the function of Public Service Malls (MPP) as one method that can be used to improve the quality of government services by combining all types of services in the same place and hopefully making it easier for the community to access services through one door.

The research gap identified from previous research is that PDAM Tirtajati's public relations performance still needs to be improved. BUMD Public Relations still needs to implement socialization optimally.

PDAM Tirtajati Public Relations also needs to improve in the lack of optimal use of social media. The content uploaded on social media does not display information and education. PDAM Tirtajati also does not utilize social media as a personal branding tool for its agency. Therefore, the gap occurs in the form of less-than-optimal use of social media for personal branding.

## **Research Methods**

This research method uses a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis techniques. Bogdan and Taylor (1975) define qualitative methodology as a research procedure that produces descriptive data from people and observable behavior in the form of written or spoken words.

This research was conducted at the Tirtajati PDAM Office, Cirebon Regency, in March-April 2024. Semiawan (2010) states that qualitative research uses triangulation techniques to assess data validity. Data collection techniques in qualitative research use interviews, observation and documentation.

Informants in qualitative research are divided into two groups: key informants and supporting informants. The key informants in the research are the Public Relations Sub Division of PDAM Tirtajati, while the Supporting Informants are PDAM Tirtajati Employees and Customers.

## **Result and Discussion**

### ***Results***

Based on data analysis from the results of research conducted using data collection techniques, the author conducted in-depth interviews, observations, and documents in March 2024. The primary data was obtained through interviews while supporting data was obtained through observations and documents to explain and complement the data obtained through in-depth interviews. The interview results are derivatives of the variables studied, based on the Role of Public Relations and the Positive Images of BUMD.

## **The Role of Public Relations**

### **1) Expert advisor**

Expert advisors are tasked with providing solutions to problems and resolving them. Problems that often occur at PDAM Tirtajati are those beyond their control, namely low water discharge, pipe leaks, and natural disasters. There are two sections of the PDAM Tirtajati subdivision that handle this, namely the technical section to deal with leaks, pipe damage, and other problems. Second, Public Relations is tasked with providing comfort, understanding, information, and solutions to customers when issues arise.

In this way, PDAM Tirtajati Public Relations carries out its duties well, and TUPOKSI provides solutions to its customers' problems.

### **2) Communication Facilitator**

The task of a communication facilitator is to accommodate the aspirations and desires of the audience, whether from the company or customers. PDAM Public Relations opens a complaint service through the listed contacts, such as WhatsApp Center and social media. Customers can also make complaints directly by coming to the office.

PDAM Tirtajati Public Relations can accommodate aspirations and complaints submitted by customers well.

### **3) Problem-Solving Facilitator**

Problem-solving facilitators assist organizational leaders as advisors in executing decisions rationally and professionally. At this point, PDAM Tirtajati Cirebon Regency has never faced a major crisis. Other problems can be resolved quickly.

### **4) Communications Technician**

In this role, Public Relations is required to be able to disseminate news and information both within a company and to customers. Communication media must be adapted to changing times so that information can be communicated quickly to customers. External communication media implemented are Public Service Mall (MPP), social media in the form of WhatsApp Center, E-mail, Instagram, and Spam Report (a website belonging to the Cirebon Regency Regional Government, which covers all departments). WhatsApp Center is a communication medium that has been used for 2 (two) years, but people prefer to make complaints via Instagram.

In conclusion, PDAM Tirtajati can use communication media well, which is used for complaints or disseminating information.

## **Discussion**

Discussion related to public relations research at PDAM Tirtajati, Cirebon Regency, the role of Public Relations in an organization according to Dozier and Broom (1995) in the book (Ruslan, 2014). Public relations has four parts: Expert Advisor, Communication Facilitator, Problem Solving Facilitator, and Communication Technician. Expert Advisors on its application in PDAM Public Relations can provide solutions for customer complaints. In the role of Public Relations Communication Facilitator, PDAM Tirtajati can accommodate the aspirations of its customers. Then, PDAM Tirtajati's Public Relations role as a Problem-Solving Facilitator overcame the crisis that occurred, even though it was not a big crisis because PDAM Tirtajati had never experienced one. Finally, the Communication Technicians used by PDAM Tirtajati Public Relations have kept up with the times, using WhatsApp Center, Instagram, etc.

PDAM Tirtajati customers play a direct role when there is a problem with cloudy water and small water flow. When experiencing problems, the resource person immediately makes a complaint through the RT/RW intermediary in the complex area. After making a complaint, PDAM Tirtajati immediately comes and makes repairs according to the problems experienced by the customer.

This is in accordance with research conducted by Musyarrofah, Mifrohatul, entitled "The Role of Public Relations in Developing Higher Education," which shows that public relations plays the role of solving problems that occur in an organization. Good handling from PDAM Tirtajati can maintain the agency's positive image. This is reinforced by Figure 1, as below.



**Figure 1. PDAM Tirtajati opens at the Public Service Mall**

The research results from interviews concluded that PDAM Tirtajati Public Relations could fulfill the role of public relations, as stated by Dozier and Broom. These four aspects have been implemented as they should and are carried out well, producing a positive image at PDAM Tirtajati through the performance and role of good and excellent public relations.

### ***Obstacle of Positive Image of the Regional Drinking Water Company (PDAM) Tirtajati Regency***

Obstacles are things that can influence or hinder the success of an organization or company in the role of PDAM Tirtajati Public Relations in creating a positive image. Based on the results of observations made by researchers after conducting interviews, the obstacle to creating a positive image comes from a service that could be more excellent and optimal, which can trigger negative responses from customers. Customers need to gain knowledge regarding contact and social media when making complaints, which is one of the things that can cause delays in reporting problems.

Based on the results of complete participation observations and supported by the results of informant interviews conducted by researchers, public relations is needed to create a positive image. There is also a need for awareness in looking for factors that become obstacles in carrying out tasks to maximize public relations' performance in creating a positive company image. Unfavorable ratings on Google are one of the challenges for PDAM Tirtajati, and they impact the company's image.

### ***Efforts of public relations to overcome the obstacles***

Efforts are needed to overcome the obstacles in PDAM Tirtajati's public relations role in creating a positive image. Based on the results of observations made by researchers

after conducting interviews. PDAM Public Relations strives to maintain and improve service quality promptly and well, maintain communication with customers to build good relationships, and provide information related to the WhatsApp Center and social media owned by PDAM Tirtajati so that the public knows more about it.

The key informant, Mr. Arul, made efforts to overcome obstacles by improving service quality, maintaining communication with customers, and providing information through the WhatsApp Center and social media used by PDAM Tirtajati.

Based on the data analysis presented, researchers and informants need to make efforts to overcome communication barriers regarding the role of PDAM Tirtajati Public Relations in creating a positive image for the company. PDAM Tirtajati Public Relations is expected to be more sensitive and aware of the importance of a positive image in the company through improving the quality of services and company work programs.

## Conclusion

Based on the data presentation and data analysis that has been carried out to determine the role of public relations and the positive image of BUMD, it is concluded that in forming an image, PDAM Tirtajati's public relations carries out its duties well under the theory of the role of public relations proposed by Dozier and Broom (1995) which can be distinguished, into four, namely Expert Advisor, Communication Facilitator, Problem Solving Facilitator and Communication Technician. Image is essential in a company as the public views the company. According to Jefkin Frank, there are four theories about the image: Shadow Image, Current Image, Desired Image, Corporate Image, and Multi-Image Image. Public Relations of PDAM Tirtajati Cirebon Regency is responsible for carrying out the role of public relations and creating a positive image for BUMD, namely establishing good relationships with customers and providing excellent service. Public Relations of PDAM Tirtajati offers solutions and treatments depending on their problem. The public can complain about issues via WhatsApp Center, E-mail, Instagram, and Spam Reports or by coming directly to the office.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Aisyah, S. A. (2020). Strategi Public Relation Perusahaan Daerah Air Minum (PDAM) Surabaya dalam Mengatasi Keluhan Konsumen Melalui Program “Temu Pelanggan” Untuk Membangun Relasi Dengan Konsumen. *The Commecium*, 3(3), 51–61.
- Ardianto, E. (2011). *Handbook of public relations: pengantar komprehensif*.
- Bodgan, R., & Taylor, S. (1975). *Introducing to Qualitative Methods*. New York: A Wiley Interscience Publication.
- Dozier, D. M., & Broom, G. M. (1995). Evolution of the manager role in public relations practice. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 7(1), 3–26.
- Ismail, A., Hardi, E. A., & Noor, F. (2022). Analisis Peran Badan Usaha Milik Daerah

dalam Meningkatkan Pendapatan Asli Daerah (Studi pada PDAM Tirta Batanghari). *Digital Bisnis: Jurnal Publikasi Ilmu Manajemen Dan E-Commerce*, 1(4), 20–34.

Jefkins, F. (2018). *Public relations for management success*. Routledge.

Kotler, P., & Armstrong, G. (2016). *Prinsip-Prinsip Pemasaran*, Jakarta: Erlangga.

Nurilawati, N., Apriliyanti, R., Khumayah, S., & Imawan, K. (2024). Local government innovation towards good governance through public service malls—*Indonesian Journal of Multidisciplinary Science*, 3(7).

Oktyarini, A. V. N., & Mulyana, D. (2022). The Public Relations In Handling The Complaints. *Bandung Conference Series: Public Relations*, 2(1), 199–203.

Rachman, D. A., & Nurfalah, F. (2023). Proses Hubungan Masyarakat dalam Sosialisasi Aplikasi M-Paspor Di Kantor Imigrasi Kota Cirebon. *Jurnal Komunikasi Media Dan Budaya*, 2(1), 11–22.

Rasyid, A., Saleh, A., Cangara, H., & Priatna, W. B. (2015). Komunikasi dalam CSR Perusahaan: Pemberdayaan Masyarakat dan Membangun Citra Positif. *Mimbar: Jurnal Sosial Dan Pembangunan*, 31(2), 507–518.

Ruslan, R. (2014). Manajemen Public Relations dan Komunikasi. *Manajemen Public Relations & Media Komunikasi*.

Ruslan, R. (2017). *Manajemen public relations & media komunikasi: Konsepsi dan aplikasi*.

Semiawan, C. (2010). Family Education in the Global Era. *Jakarta: PT. Preenhalindo*.

Supada, W. (2020). Efektivitas CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) Dalam Praktik Public Relations. *Danapati: Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 1(1), 35–46.

---

**Copyright holder:**

Anantri Putri Sofiani, Lulu Millati Anjani,  
Nizhaamul Fatmawati, Farida Nurfalah (2024)

**First publication right:**

Syntax Literate: Jurnal Ilmiah Indonesia

**This article is licensed under:**

