

Strategy for Image Restoration Public Relations of Bekasi City Government in Image Recovery Efforts

Satria Wibisono

Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia

Abstract: *The development of technology makes it easier to get information. Entering the digital era, people can easily obtain information from various media. Such as news information in early 2022 regarding the arrest operation by the KPK against one of the officials in the Bekasi area, can cause a crisis and a negative image in the eyes of the public, therefore the public relations of the Bekasi city government must work with strategies in restoring the image of the agency so that it returns to positive. Therefore, with this problem, the researcher aims to find out the image restoration carried out by the Bekasi City Government Public Relations to restore the agency's image. The theory used in this study is the Image Restoration of William L Benoit which contains five strategies, namely: Denial, Strategy Evading Responsibility, Strategy Reducing Offensive, and Corrective Action Strategy. , Strategy mortification. This study uses descriptive qualitative research methods, data collection techniques used are observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. In this study, the authors used data analysis techniques, namely data reduction, data presentation, and drawing conclusions or verification. Test the validity of this research data using source triangulation. Based on the results of research by researchers that the public relations of the Bekasi city government use three image restoration. First, the strategy stage limits responsibility by using good intentions to provide the best service. Then at the strategy stage to reduce attacks, namely by bolstering creates positive activities. The corrective action strategy stage is to convince the public that this is an evaluation and prevent this incident from happening again in the future. The conclusion from the results of this study is that the public relations of the Bekasi city government use image restoration to restore the agency's image to be positive again.*

Keywords: *Positive Image, Image Restoration, Government Public Relations, Communication Strategy*

Introduction

Government public relations has a very strategic and “heavy” role, not only to carry out institutional imagery but also to bring government institutions to a dignified position towards the internal and external public. Therefore, explicitly, or implicitly, government public relations must truly become an ideal and professional mouthpiece, which is fully supported by regional

heads, internal public, and external publics so that their functions are maximized (Rahman & Sjoraida, 2017).

One of the government agencies is the Bekasi City Government which also has public relations practitioners. Bekasi City Public Relations is contained in the structure of the Bekasi City Regional Secretariat which has one function to assist the Bekasi Mayor in carrying out government duties and work programs following the vision and mission of the Bekasi City Government to achieve the desired goals. Along with the times, government public relations must be able to adapt in this digital era because all information or issues that are currently being discussed can be obtained easily. Therefore, the public relations of the Bekasi City Government must be responsive in responding to an issue that has been circulating in various media, especially those related to the reputation of the Bekasi City Government agency.

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The digital era is often referred to by experts as the multiscreen era. An era where all public attention is devoted to media such as smartphones, laptops, and television. In the digital era that offers easy access to information, the public will very easily accept and become an integral part of strategic issues that are currently being discussed (Budiantoro, 2018).



Image 1. republika.co.id

The development of technology makes it easier to get or obtain information. Entering the digital era, people can easily obtain information from various media anywhere and anytime. On the online news web portal, Republika.co.id, published information includes the Bekasi City Government. In this report, it is explained that one of the officials in the Bekasi City Government, namely the Mayor of Bekasi, has committed a criminal act of corruption. That the information that has been published can have a negative influence on the image of the Bekasi City Government. In responding to the news that has been circulating, public relations

practitioners must be ready to take attitudes and plans in responding to issues that have occurred.

After the news circulating in the mass media regarding the determination of the suspect to the mayor of Bekasi which caused a crisis in the agency and a negative image of the Bekasi City Government. As a result, the public (Bekasi City Community) lost their trust in Bekasi City Government agencies. This is one of the pieces of evidence in the Instagram account @humaskotabekasi that there are cornering comments and this can cause provocation so that negative sentiment occurs in the mass media and social media.



Image 2. @humaskotabekasi instagram

In this case, the good name of the Bekasi City Government agency is at stake, because the positive reputation that has been created for years can be lost instantly if it is not immediately responded to, public perception (the Bekasi City Community). Rebuilding the legitimacy/trust of the community is an absolute thing that must be carried out by the Public Relations apparatus of the Bekasi City Government also as a public service organization, it is very important to maintain a positive relationship so that the institution and the community become more harmonious in the future.

The role of public relations is very much needed in the current crisis, which must work hand in hand to overcome the current phenomenon so that the current crisis is not prolonged that it can cause the image of Bekasi City Government agencies to be increasingly unfavorable in the eyes of the public. Because the news or information that can affect the reputation the credibility of the agency to be bad can be referred to as a public relations crisis.

The increasing number of negative reports about the Bekasi City Government in the media, of course, this has an impact on the image of the Bekasi City Government agencies in the public eye (the Bekasi City Community). Based on the background of the problems described by the researcher, the ability of Public Relations in maintaining the image of agencies related to negative news in the mass media is very necessary so that in the future the Bekasi City Government Agencies can carry out their functions as public service agencies for the Bekasi City Community properly. Therefore, the author wants to explore and conduct research on the Image Restoration Strategy of the Bekasi City Government Public Relations in Image Recovery Efforts.

Literature Review

Image Restoration Theory, according to Benoit, the image refers to things that are felt by the organization by its stakeholders and the public. Benoit said to pay attention to two elements that need to be considered when a crisis occurs related to imaging. First, the organization must provide responsibility by taking action, Second, actions that are built must be related to consider the effects that will arise, and it is required that the effects that arise generate a positive reaction (Roberts in Siregar & Haeirina, 2021). According to Benoit, there are five strategies used in image restoration theory for image restoration, namely,

1. Denial
Is a strategy that emphasizes the need to deny accusations that cannot be proven true.
2. Evasion of responsibility
Strategy to limit responsibility in a crisis. Benoit explained that there are 4 ways that can be used in this strategy, namely, provocation (responding to the actions of the other party), good intentions (stating that they have done the best, but the result is felt to be less than optimal by the other party), accident (unexpected event). and planned), defeasibility (lack of information or the organization's inability to control the situation) (Kriyantono, 2014).
3. Reducing the offensive
This strategy seeks to reduce the negative impact and reduce the image in the public eye. This strategy is carried out in several ways, namely, compensation to reduce disappointment, attack accusers challenge and reduce the credibility of the other party, transcendence interprets events towards a more favorable context, and differentiation provides comparisons of events during a crisis with similar events but on a larger scale. , minimization minimizes the attacks of other parties by declaring the crisis only has a small impact, bolstering in this way the organization shows its superiority before the crisis.
4. Corrective action
Strategies to repair the damage and try to prevent a recurrence of the crisis. In this context, it is possible for the accused of the crisis to take certain actions without admitting his guilt or innocence.
5. Mortification,
A strategy of stating guilt and being willing to take responsibility for the crisis that was committed and conveying regret and apologizing (Coombs & Schmidt, 2009).

Previous research was researched in 2020 by Meilissa Elviani and NR Nadya Karina in the Indonesian journal of communications: Volume 1, Number 1, 2020, 38-43. This study examines the Communication Strategy for Image Recovery Efforts entitled "Communication Strategy for Public Relations in Improving the Image of the Ministry of Youth and Sports". In this study, the theory used in determining the strategy is the Theory of Image Restoration Strategies from William Benoit (1995). This study uses a qualitative approach with a qualitative descriptive method. Researchers describe or construct in-depth interviews with research subjects.

The results of the research, one of the strategies implemented by the Public Relations of the Ministry of Youth and Sports is a dynamic strategy of throwing issues and diverting public attention to maintaining the image of the Ministry of Youth and Sports. The Ministry of Youth and Sports Public Relations through social media intensively reports about the achievements of Indonesian athletes, both recent achievements and flashbacks of past achievements.

Methodology

In this study, the researcher chose a qualitative approach. In this approach, the research procedure produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from the observed people and the observed behavior. While the research method used by the author is a descriptive method using a descriptive method, meaning that the researcher analyzes the data collected in the form of words, pictures, and not numbers. The data may come from interview scripts, field notes, photos, video tapes, personal documents, notes or memos, and other official documents (Akhmad, 2015).

Key informants (key informants) are those who know and have various basic information needed in the research being studied. (Faradina, 2016). In this case, the researcher uses key informants to obtain accurate information data. The researcher set Bagus Febrian as the key informant because he had valid information related to the research conducted by the researcher. The researcher determines the informants who are determined based on criteria based on the main functions carried out by the Public Relations Staff of the Bekasi City Government. The researcher set Mr. Muchlis as the main informant and Prameswari Putri as an additional informant.

Findings & Discussion

The results of research to restore the image of public relations must carry out a communication strategy to regain public trust or public trust in government agencies, to create a positive image that arises from the public, because public relations must take appropriate steps in responding to yesterday's news concerning the inactive mayor. because it can bring a negative image to the institution. From the results of interviews with the Public Relations staff of the Bekasi City Government, they explained the image restoration strategy carried out to restore the image of Bekasi City Government agencies. Data that were not found at the time of the interview were complemented by the results of observations and documentation. All data are described based on the theoretical focus as follows.

1. Denial

In this case, the strategy is to deny or respond to the public that the news that has been circulating is not true to the agency while the key informant said as follows.

"So regarding the news of the mayor's arrest, we also don't close our eyes but we also have to keep the image of the Bekasi City Government good, so we as public relations for the Bekasi City Government must make the people of Bekasi City divert their minds so they don't focus on one problem making a bad image. by providing news that is of course

in accordance with facts and without anything being exaggerated or understated.” (Bagus Febrian, 2022)

Based on the key informant's statement that the Public Relations of the Bekasi City Government did not carry out a denial strategy against negative news about OTT, one of the officials, namely the Mayor of Bekasi, because conveying factual information is a must for a public relations officer. Regarding negative news about Bekasi City Government agencies, the responses according to informants are as follows.

“Our job is to act as a door for information, we must be fast, and we must also provide factual data that can be legally justified. In responding to the news that was crowded here, we must counter back, counter back with other positive news, or even if it is negative news that comes out, we clearly have to clarify and even then, we must also connect with the related team or related regional apparatus.” (Putri, 2022)

From the informant's statement that the Bekasi City Government public relations did not use a denial strategy because the news was indeed negative, it did not have to be in denial but could be diverted by countering the news to prevent the public from being too focused on the news. According to the key informants, we also agreed that we, the Public Relations of the Bekasi City Government, will counter opinion if there is indeed negative news that rises against the agency.

2. Evasion of Responsibility

In the strategy Evasion of Responsibility when researchers conduct interviews with key informants in reporting cases of non-active mayors that can cause crises in Bekasi City Government agencies.

"After the news case, of course, the public relations of the Bekasi City Government continued to provide information to the entire community without the slightest obstacle by giving notifications to the public that services throughout all agencies were still running as they should without anything happening, even though something was happening but we from in terms of service must serve the community there should be no disturbance or any reason to stop serving the community. Mr. Plt speaking, regretted that this could happen regarding the non-active mayor, but as directed by Mr. Plt, we are also public servants, public servants must carry out their respective duties. For example, public relations must continue to provide information to the public.” (Bagus Febrian, 2022)

This Limiting Liability Strategy is included in the accident that this incident was an unexpected thing that the plt also regretted that this incident could happen. In this strategy the informant also said that.

"Public relations must make this image positive again, how do we divert the public's attention, not to the case. For example, yesterday we had activities or events from our service to raise the news there, we provide intensive information, it's like the rough language of diverting the issue with good intentions, but the point is we are trying our best, even though sometimes there are still those who attack with negative comments" (Bagus Febrian, 2022)

3. Reducing the Offensiveness

Based on the results of interview data conducted by researchers, the public relations of the Bekasi City Government use a strategy to reduce attacks by minimizing the public perception of the news that occurs following the statement of the results of interviews with key informants.

"So, because we also hold social media @humaskotabekasi every time there is an award from our agencies, we always keep it up, as well as positive activities that are carried out, maybe if you look at the news regarding the arrest of the inactive mayor yesterday, it's also approaching the birthday anniversary Bekasi city, so we also involve the community in the event, so the most important thing is the direction of Mr. Tri Ardhianto yesterday wants the people of Bekasi City to be happy." (Bagus Febrian, 2022)

The informant also added that with this activity the community did not only focus on the news, because this has also become endemic where the policy on the use of masks has been relaxed a bit so the public can go directly to celebrate this activity, following the statement of the informant from the interview with the researcher.

"Opening one of the antv surprise events, we collaborated with one of the media with antv, and then in collaboration with the community we provided booths, we provided UMKM stalls where the products were produced by MSMEs themselves, you are also happy with the people of Bekasi city who are enthusiastic about developing products -Superior products made by the community can also be sold in the middle of the event, it is a form of our synergy with the community. Because this PR is a builder of good relations with the community, not only in the community but in social institutions both internally and externally, we must have good relationships, because Covid has also ramped up, we held activities, for example, yesterday with the ANTV media. -Things like that, one of our strategies for building good relations with the community is still a lot, the message is to public relations, to build the image of the government, we need a lot of innovation and creativity

because with that we have ideas, so after we have an idea, we execute it, so that's it. The important thing is that the community is happy, so the strategy is to build good relations with the community and stakeholders to restore the image, so don't let the community down." (Muchlis, 2022)

4. Corrective Action

The corrective action strategy carried out by the Public Relations of the Bekasi City Government in responding to the ongoing crisis with the following statements from key informants and informants.

"Then after Mr. Tri Ardianto was appointed as the acting mayor of Bekasi, he made a massive declaration of all regional apparatus organizations from the sub-district office to the sub-district level to make a declaration of integrity and anti-corruption. That and we also inform you that we are still working hard to not even happen again like this or prevent this incident from happening again." (Bagus, 2022)

5. Mortification

The mortification strategy can be by admitting mistakes and asking for forgiveness for events that have occurred to the public, along with the results of interviews with informants.

"So after yesterday's news circulated, public relations was not allowed and press conferences were allowed because we were afraid to make this a blunder, even though public relations This is what creates a positive image but this is because we are also still waiting for a decision from the competent authority, namely the KPK regarding its status, for an apology to the public we take a stand, namely the declaration of an anti-corruption day. We also hope that this can make the image of the Bekasi city government return to positive in the eyes of the public." (Bagus, 2022)

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research studied, the public relations of the Bekasi City Government use three of the five image restoration strategies proposed by William L Benoit. The Public Relations of the Bekasi City Government uses a strategy of limiting responsibility with good intentions, namely trying to do the best even though there is still a poor public response to the image restoration efforts carried out by the Public Relations of the Bekasi City Government and considers that it is regretful that this incident could occur as an accident. The Public Relations of the Bekasi City Government uses a strategy to reduce attacks, namely by means of minimization, namely by minimizing the crisis that occurs by bolstering, namely bringing up activities or holding positive activities for the community. Public Relations of the Bekasi City Government in an effort to maintain the integrity and also grow the credibility of the community towards the agency, namely by holding a declaration, of course, this prevents this incident from happening again in the future.

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About the Author:

Chief Researcher
Satria Wibisono <i>Universitas Negeri Jakarta, Indonesia</i>
Researcher Member
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