

Media Relations Strategy of PT Panca Amara Utama in Responding to Workforce Recruitment Issues

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ABSTRACT

Keywords

Media Relation; Strategy; PT Panca
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Media relations is a part of public relations that has a crucial function within a company, namely building relationships with mass media with the aim of maintaining the company's image and increasing public trust. The purpose of this study is to identify the media relations strategies of PT Panca Amara Utama in responding to workforce recruitment issues that have been widely reported on social media. This research uses a qualitative-descriptive approach by describing events as they occur. The results of this study show that there are several media relations strategies implemented by PT Panca Amara Utama in responding to workforce issues, including media monitoring, mass media management, rapid response through internal meetings, and strengthening the company's image through coverage of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs.

1. Introduction

In the modern industrial era, characterized by information transparency and the complexity of social dynamics, communication management has become a critical aspect in responding to various conflicts or crises that emerge within society. According to Ummah (2023), in *Crisis Management and Communication*, it is essential to provide accurate information, including verifiable facts, to the public. This practice helps build public trust and manage the rapid flow of information disseminated through the media, which may cause unresolved issues to shape negative perceptions of a company. This condition presents a particular challenge for PT Panca Amara Utama, a company operating in a strategic industrial sector such as ammonia, which is highly susceptible to public scrutiny, including social issues such as labor recruitment concerns.

In the context of unemployment as a crucial issue in Banggai Regency, the Central Statistics Agency of Banggai Regency reported that as of August 2024, the unemployment rate reached approximately 3.11% (BPS, 2024), contributing to social unrest. PT Panca Amara Utama is also faced with the challenge of contributing to job creation for local communities, in line with the Banggai Regency Regional Regulation No. 9 of 2022, Article 31, Paragraph 2, concerning the placement of local workers, which prioritizes residents domiciled in the region for at least 80% of the required workforce (Perda Banggai, 2022). The unemployment rate in Banggai Regency not only reflects the need for employment opportunities but also indicates dissatisfaction among communities surrounding the operational area of PT Panca Amara Utama regarding the recruitment process, which is perceived as lacking transparency.

Over the past several years, PT Panca Amara Utama has faced pressure from surrounding communities questioning the transparency and fairness of its recruitment process, as they feel disadvantaged. Recurrent demonstrations highlight the importance of communication strategies that are not only reactive but also strategic and well-directed.

Media coverage in local outlets regarding these demonstrations and public demands for transparency in PT Panca Amara Utama's recruitment process has become a major public concern. Various articles reporting protest actions by local residents have been triggered by dissatisfaction with recruitment policies perceived as failing to provide adequate opportunities for local communities. For instance, such coverage appeared in local media outlets including *Banggai Raya*, *Kabar Luwuk*, and *Banggai Kece* in April 2025.

Furthermore, a review of local media reports in 2024 indicates that similar demonstrations demanding the recruitment of local workers were also covered by *Banggai Kece*, *Kabar Luwuk*, and *Tribun Palu*. In situations such as these, a well-defined media relations strategy is essential. This division is responsible for delivering information quickly, accurately, and transparently to both the media and the public, while also maintaining a positive corporate image amid ongoing pressure. Without proper communication management strategies, companies risk losing public trust. According to Raturoma (2018), as cited in Ariqah (2023), effective communication management strategies can be designed to reduce the risk of public panic, alleviate public concerns, minimize speculation, protect organizations from speculative criticism commonly arising in mass media discourse, and maintain credibility.

Therefore, it is essential for PT Panca Amara Utama to understand and carry out its role in managing conflict. This is not only useful for responding to emergency situations but also for developing long-term resilience against potential reputational threats that may arise at any time. Communication preparedness greatly influences the company's ability to control its image, reduce speculation, and restore public trust.

This article aims to further explore how PT Panca Amara Utama's media relations strategy is implemented in addressing and responding to labor recruitment issues that have been widely reported in local media.

2. Method

This study employs a qualitative descriptive research method using both primary and secondary data sources. The primary data were obtained through interviews and direct observation with PT Panca Amara Utama, particularly with the external affairs department. Meanwhile, the secondary data consist of documents relevant to the research topic.

Qualitative research refers to a type of research in which the findings are not obtained through statistical procedures. Instead, researchers are required to interpret and understand the meaning of interactions, events, and behaviors of the subjects, which are then analyzed from the researcher's perspective. The results of this method emphasize meaning rather than generalization. The study was conducted in 2025 at PT Panca Amara Utama, located in Batui District, Banggai Regency, Central Sulawesi Province. The method used was a qualitative descriptive approach. Qualitative research is a systematic activity aimed at developing theory grounded in social reality rather than testing existing theories or hypotheses. Thus, epistemologically, the qualitative paradigm acknowledges the existence of empirical facts in the field as sources of knowledge; however, existing theories are not used as standards for verification (Safrudin et al., 2023).

This research is descriptive in nature as it seeks to describe the phenomenon under study, namely the media relations strategy in responding to issues related to labor recruitment.

3. Result and Discussion

3.1 Result

PT Panca Amara Utama is a company that produces 700,000 metric tons of ammonia per year. Ammonia is a chemical compound used in the production of fertilizers, explosives, acids, and other petrochemical products. PT Panca Amara Utama, hereinafter referred to as PT PAU, is a subsidiary of Surya Esa Perkasa and has several subsidiaries spread across Indonesia, one of which is located in Uso Village, Batui District, Banggai Regency.

PT Panca Amara Utama (PT PAU) has a vision to lead Indonesia toward world-class industrialization, with a mission to add value to Indonesia's resources by investing in the real sector, developing human resources, reducing the country's dependence on imports, and creating opportunities for future growth. PT Panca Amara Utama also upholds its core values of EPIC (Excellence, Perseverance, Integrity, Care).

PT Panca Amara Utama (PT PAU) has various departments that manage the company's operations, one of which is the External Relations department, within which media relations is included. According to (Ariqah, 2023), external public relations refers to relationships with publics outside the company or institution, involving the implementation of two-way communication between the company and its stakeholders. This plays a significant role in determining the success of a company and ultimately helps shape a positive corporate image.

The External Relations Department is responsible for bridging communication between the company and external parties such as local communities, the media, the government, NGOs, and others. Its objective is to build and maintain public trust, thereby fostering harmonious relationships between the company and its stakeholders. The following is the organizational structure of the External Relations Department section of PT Panca Amara Utama:

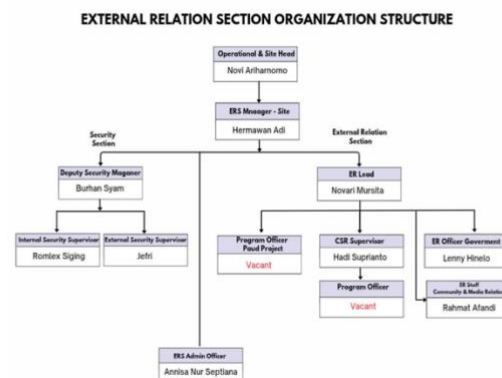


Figure 1. External Relation Section Organization Structure

In dealing with conflicts such as prolonged protest issues, PT Panca Amara Utama has an external communication team (External Relations) that plays a strategic role, as illustrated in the organizational structure. However, among all these functions, the role of media relations carried out by Mr. Rahmat Afandi is highly crucial in relation to public opinion and media coverage, serving as the front line in building and maintaining the company's image through information dissemination in the mass media.

In this regard, media relations cannot operate independently but must work in synergy with Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), the government, and other external relations teams to ensure that every piece of information delivered reflects the company's real actions.

3.1.1 Media Relations

According to Frank Jefkins (2006), as cited in Setiadarma (2020), media relations is an effort to publicize messages or information as effectively as possible in order to create awareness and understanding among the public, carried out by an organization.

In addition, Setiadarma (2020) also argues that media relations are activities carried out by individuals or public relations professionals within an organization to establish good relationships with mass media in order to achieve optimal and balanced publicity for the organization or company. Thus, it can be concluded that media relations, also referred to as media relations activities, involve building relationships with mass media through strategic planning to create harmonious communication, with the aim of enhancing public trust and fostering a positive corporate image. The media plays a crucial role in improving public information channels within PT Panca Amara Utama.

Information that does not align with facts can have a negative impact on the company's image in the eyes of the public.

In a study entitled "*Media Relations Strategy in Crisis*" conducted by Aan Setiadarma, M.Si in 2022, the objective was to identify media relations activities or strategies in dealing with crises. These include mass media management, development of PR materials, building networks with journalists and other organizations, as well as the use of print media, radio, television, and outdoor media. Aan also highlights activities carried out during crises, such as press conferences, special events, and briefings aimed at influencing public attitudes and fostering a positive corporate image. Furthermore, he emphasizes the importance of building strong relationships with the media to strengthen the company's image and address negative news (Setiadarma, 2022).

The second study, entitled "*The Role of Corporate Communication of PT Angkasa Pura I in Implementing Media Relations Strategy*," published in 2021 by Nicholas Jevan Pradana and Intan Primadini, aims to understand the strategies carried out by PT Angkasa Pura I in building a positive image and strengthening relationships with the media in relation to the operations and development of Yogyakarta International Airport. Nicholas Jevan Pradana and Intan Primadini highlight various communication activities such as media monitoring, media visits, media gatherings, press releases, and media tours, which are used to enhance public perception, build good relationships with the media, and effectively manage the airport's image (Pradana & Primadini, 2021).

The similarity between the research conducted by Nicholas Jevan Pradana and Intan Primadini and this study lies in the fact that both discuss media relations strategies carried out by companies in the context of relationships with the media and the public.

3.2 Discussion

Local media coverage regarding labor recruitment issues at PT Panca Amara Utama has become a recurring issue, as community demonstrations have occurred not only in 2025 but also in the previous year, 2024. Several local media outlets have reported on this issue, including *Banggai Raya*, *Luwuk Kece*, *Kabar Luwuk*, and *Tribun Pahu*, among others.

In one report published by a local media outlet, *Banggai Raya* (Tuesday, April 15, 2025), PT Panca Amara Utama once again faced demonstrations related to labor recruitment. Protesters carried out actions by burning tires as a form of protest. The Batui Police Chief, IPTU Rudi Dg. Sumbung, stated that their demands were related to transparency in the recruitment process (Iskandar, 2025). In response to such media coverage, the media relations division of PT Panca Amara Utama has implemented several media relations strategies.

3.2.1 The Role of Media Relations in Responding to Labor Recruitment Challenges

Based on the interview findings regarding media relations strategies in responding to labor recruitment issues implemented by PT Panca Amara Utama, several key approaches were identified. These include media monitoring, media relations management, rapid response, and image strengthening through coverage of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs. The following section provides a detailed explanation of each of these strategies:

a. Media Monitoring

The media relations division of PT Panca Amara Utama routinely conducts media monitoring, covering both mass media and social media platforms. Monitoring of news, public opinion, and sentiment on social media is typically carried out using applications such as Facebook and Instagram, among others. In monitoring mass media, PT Panca Amara Utama utilizes web-based tools and applications, including Google Alerts, a service that helps provide updates on the latest news by tracking specific topics. Another monitoring tool used is Meltwater, which offers more specialized features. This platform includes various functionalities such as media management, media monitoring, and analytics. Through media monitoring activities, the company can more effectively measure and aggregate the proportion of positive and negative public sentiment reflected in media coverage.

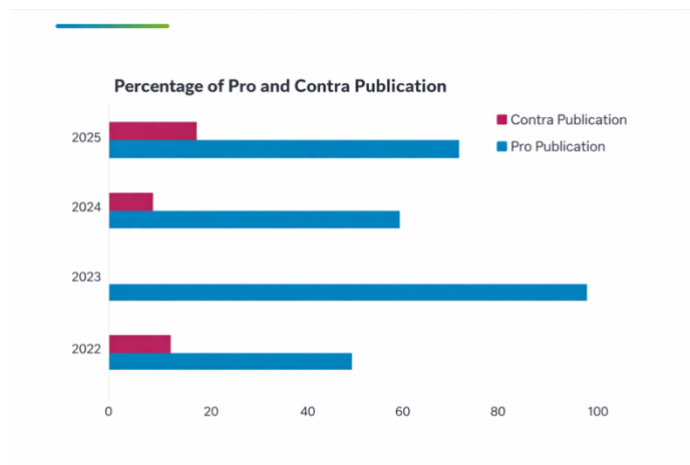


Figure 2. Percentage of Positive and Negative Media Coverage

Based on the figure above, it can be concluded that the percentage of media coverage from 2022 to June 2025 is predominantly positive/pro compared to negative/contra coverage toward the company. Through media monitoring, the company is able to understand and measure public perception. Consequently, when issues, conflicts, or crises arise, the company can more easily adapt to communication dynamics and respond effectively to emerging problems

b. Media Relations Management

The media relations division of PT Panca Amara Utama is committed to maintaining good relationships with various media stakeholders. As of June 2025, several media relations achievements have been established, including collaborations with the Dinas Komunikasi dan Informatika Kabupaten Banggai, local media such as Obor Motindok, as well as media partners and the public relations division of the Polres Banggai. According to Yosai Iriantara (2011), as cited in Taufiqurrohman and Luthfi (2024), managing good relationships with the media is essential to support public relations activities. Through consistently maintained communication and mutual respect, when issues such as public demonstrations arise, the company is able to collaborate and create spaces for dialogue with the media to convey accurate and balanced information.

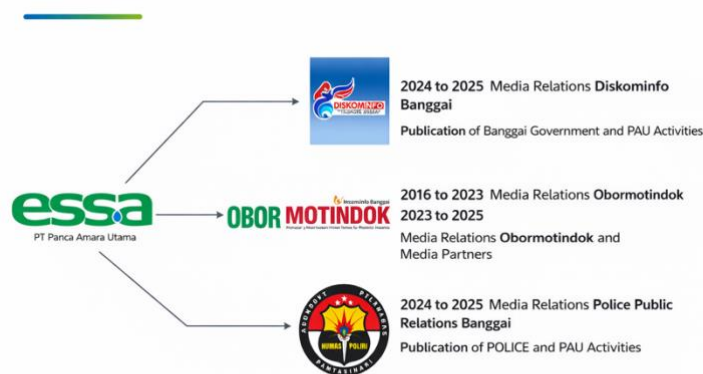


Figure 3. Media Relations Achievements of PT PAU

This positive relationship enables constructive dialogue, which helps prevent the spread of inaccurate news while also reflecting a shared commitment to maintaining journalistic ethics. Thus, a mutually beneficial synergy has been established between the company and the media in delivering factual information to the public.

c. Rapid Response

The next strategy in addressing issues related to demonstrations over labor recruitment is a rapid response through internal meetings. These meetings involve internal stakeholders, including relevant staff and departmental leaders, particularly those within corporate communication, who convene to form a crisis team. Once established, the team discusses the issues and concerns at hand and determines the appropriate course of action.

Internal meetings serve as a crucial initial step in managing demonstration-related issues. The objectives of these meetings are threefold. **First**, to analyze the situation by gathering information related to the demonstrations, including their causes, demands, and impacts. **Second**, to formulate strategies by identifying the steps to be taken in responding to the issue, including determining the spokesperson and key messages to be delivered. Third, to implement the actions based on the strategies that have been previously planned.

d. Image Strengthening Through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Program Coverage

In various conflicts or crises, including issues related to demonstrations, the media relations division of PT Panca Amara Utama tends not to counter, refute, or respond directly with opposing information to discredit negative media coverage. Instead, the strategy adopted is to balance media narratives through positive coverage of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs, which reflect the company's social and environmental responsibilities. The importance of CSR programs lies not only in their philanthropic aspects but also in their impact on improving community welfare (Simbolon, 2024).



Figure 4: CSR Program Publication

Based on the journal “*Doing Better at Doing Good: When, Why, and How Consumers Respond to Corporate Social Initiatives*” by C. B. Bhattacharya and Sankar Sen (2004), it can be concluded that Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities have a positive impact on companies, particularly in shaping consumer perceptions and attitudes. The study shows that CSR not only contributes to enhancing a company's image and reputation, but also fosters emotional attachment between consumers and the company, which can ultimately increase loyalty, word of mouth, and resilience to negative information.

However, the influence of CSR on purchasing behavior is not always direct, as it is affected by various factors such as the fit between CSR initiatives and the company, product quality, and the level of consumer concern for the social issues addressed. Therefore, the success of CSR lies not only in its implementation, but also in how companies communicate and align these initiatives with consumer needs and perceptions, so that they can provide sustainable benefits for the company, society, and the social causes involved.

4. Conclusion

Media relations hold a highly crucial position within a company. This function is responsible for building relationships with mass media with the aim of enhancing public trust and maintaining a positive corporate image. In the context of public demonstrations related to non-transparent labor recruitment issues—evidenced by extensive media coverage—this issue can be considered prolonged, as it has also occurred in previous years.

In responding to such situations, the media relations division of PT Panca Amara Utama has implemented specific strategies in managing media, including media monitoring, media relations management, internal meetings, and image strengthening through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs.

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