



The Role Of Government Public Relations In Building A Positive Image

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Abstract: Image is one of the crucial things needed by an organization, it determines how an organization is viewed by the public. However, the image of an organization does not automatically form. Therefore, it is necessary to have the role of a Public Relations. Good or bad image of an organization is determined by how a Public Relations builds an image, if the image is built in a good direction, it will certainly provide benefits. Conversely, if the image is built in a bad direction it will cause losses. The research was written with the aim of knowing the role of Public Relations in building the image of the Surakarta Customs and Excise Supervision and Service Office (KPPBC TMP B Surakarta), using qualitative methodology and data collection techniques, namely interviews, observations and literature studies. To test the validity of the data, this research uses a credibility test with triangulation techniques. In this research, Public Relations of the Surakarta Customs and Excise Supervision and Service Office (KPPBC TMP B Surakarta) is the subject of research. With this research, it is hoped that it can help the agency's Public Relations in building a positive image of the company to face the increasing number of negative news exposure that can reduce public trust in the agency.

Keywords: Public Relation, Positive Image

Introduction

In today's era of rapid advances in technology and communication, it is easy for people to access information from all media. This makes people more critical in responding to the news they consume. Of course, we cannot change the perception of the community, but we can create our own image of what we want to show (Aprinta, 2014). For this reason, the task of a Public Relations (PR) practitioner is crucial because it has a big impact on the progress of a company. The main tasks and functions (TUPOKSI) of public relations according to Cutlip are Expert Advisor (expert prescriber), Communication Facilitator, Problem solving process facilitator, and Communication technician in (Mauliq, 2020).

Public Relations, also known as public relations, plays an important role in an organization (Kurniawan et al., 2021). It is certain that every organization needs a practitioner in the field of communication who is creative and proactive in establishing good relations and disseminating information to the public. This is done to minimize

errors in conveying messages and misunderstandings in acceptance by the public. So that the image of an organization is always well maintained. For example, agency / institution A is experiencing a period of crisis and the image of the institution is viewed negatively by the public, Public Relations is the first party who will find the best solution and solution to solve the problems being faced.

According to Kotler quoted by Kusumajaya, image means beliefs, ideas, and impressions that individuals have of an object (Kusumajaya & Rivai, 2017). In other words, image is how a person views another person or group of people. Image is one of the things that needs to be maintained in an organization or company, including government agencies (Manafe & Ardeana, 2022). This is a motivation for every agency to try to create a positive image in front of the public, in order to maintain the good name of the agency and increase public trust in the agency (Herlina, 2015). Image can be classified as good and bad, depending on how the organization can steal the hearts of the public in assessing it (Ismaulidina et al., 2020). A good image can build public trust which has a big impact on the progress of a company. But on the contrary, a bad image can be the beginning of destruction for the future of the company (Ginting & Simamora, 2019).

The Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) is a government agency whose main task is to be responsible to the ministry of finance in enforcing predetermined regulations. In addition, customs also serves the public in all matters relating to customs and export and import activities. This aims to protect the country and society from smuggled dangerous goods.

In its structure, the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) also has officials or employees in charge of public relations, this is determined in legislation No.39 of 2007. Employees in charge of public relations themselves carry out their duties under the Directorate of Communication and Guidance of Service Users, more precisely in the Subdirectorate of Public Relations and Counseling. However, at the Surakarta Customs Supervision and Service Office or KPPBC TMP B Surakarta, the field of public relations is called the Information Counseling and Services Section.

The perception of the Directorate General of Customs and Excise (DGCE) among the public is consistently viewed negatively, but not with KPPBC TMP B Surakarta. On the contrary, the reputation built is very good, they managed to restore public trust that was lost due to the many problems exposed to the agency. One example is what has recently been discussed by the public on various social media platforms related to the new regulations set regarding the luggage of passengers both those who will return to the country and those who will travel abroad. Instead of responding to the related news, the public gave a bad response as if they no longer had a sense of trust or trust issue with the Customs and Excise agency.

On the other hand, the response given by the public who have used the services of Surakarta city Customs and Excise is inversely proportional. From here it can be seen the success of the Surakarta city Customs and Excise Information Service and Counseling Section in carrying out its duties as a public relations practitioner, how satisfied the public

is with the performance of this agency. Recorded in the results of the Surakarta KPPBC TMP B service user satisfaction survey in 2023, received a score of 4.75 out of 5 from service users, which means they are very satisfied with the services that have been provided. This phenomenon is a small form of the success of public relations practitioners in becoming a good bridge between an agency and its public.

In this study, researchers used several previous studies that were relevant to the problem to serve as references. Namely, previous similar research with the title "The Role of Public Relations In Building Corporate Image: A Study of First Bank of Nigeria PLC, Calabar" (Henry et al., 2021) This study shows the results that most respondents agree that it is important for an organization to implement a public relations strategy in building its corporate image. To achieve success in carrying out its duties, the public relations unit of First Bank, Calabar implements public relations strategies such as bridging communication with the media, conducting long-term planning and most importantly building and maintaining the company's good reputation. Unlike the study which examines how important the role of Public Relations is for private agencies, this study examines how government agencies still have to maintain a good reputation in order to get loyalty from the public.

Furthermore, in research conducted by Pratama with the title "Public Relations Strategy in Building Company Image through the Indonesia International Motor Show (IIMS) Exhibition" (Rahmadani & .Andrini, 2021). In order to achieve success, careful consideration and planning are needed, including public relations practitioners in carrying out their duties. In this study, Public Relations applies several strategic phases, including; defining the main problems in the realm of public relations, developing plans and developing programs, effective communication strategies and evaluating the results of programs that have been carried out. Although there are similarities in the focus of research, differences are evident between these two studies. The previous research studied how Public Relations builds an image through a specific program, while this research studies the overall Public Relations process.

The success of Public Relations in carrying out its duties does not stop there, in other previous research, namely "Public Relations Communication Strategy in Shaping the Image of Government in Malang City" Herlina (2015) shows that Public Relations must be able to build two communications with various parties well, while the parties in question are parties from within the company (internal) to the wider audience (external). Previous research and this research have objectives that are not much different because they both deal with one scope, namely government agencies, but the difference lies in the agency that is the object of this research is often hit by problems that cause a loss of public trust.

Although there have been many previous studies themed on the role of Public Relations in building a company's image, there are still gaps in the objects studied and the cases faced by these objects. Most similar studies focus more on the importance of image to the progress of a company, which is mostly used for business purposes. This

leaves room to examine the role of public relations in building and maintaining the image of government agencies that consistently have a bad reputation in order to regain public trust in them. The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of government public relations in building a positive image.

Methodology

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method. The subject of the research is Public Relations of the Surakarta Customs and Excise Supervision and Service Office (KPPBC TMP B Surakarta). By using purposive sampling technique. This type of research uses primary data and secondary data. Primary data is data obtained directly from the selected research subjects. While secondary data is data that has been available in many forms, such as evidence, records, and documentation. Data is obtained by using predetermined instruments. To find primary data in this study, in-depth interviews and observations were used. Interviews will be conducted directly with relevant informants, namely two employees of the Counseling and Information Services Section of KPPBC TMP B Surakarta who represent the activities of Public Relations practitioners and three people in the Surakarta karesidenan who are active or have used the services of the Surakarta KPPBC agency, conducted face-to-face with the aid of a voice recorder and notes for researchers to record a list of questions. The researcher also made direct observations to find out what activities are carried out by a Public Relations practitioner. Meanwhile, secondary data sources are data that have been available in many forms, such as evidence, records, and documentation. In this research, secondary data is collected by conducting literature studies on interrelated readings and also collecting documentation both published and unpublished by related agencies.

The data analysis technique used to research is an interactive model proposed by Miles and Huberman (Miles et al., 2015). According to experts, this technique is a process of presenting a set of information that has been compiled with the aim of formulating conclusions. There are 3 stages in this model, namely (1). Data reduction stage (2). Data presentation stage (3). Conclusion drawing or verification stage. In order to test the validity of the data that has been collected, this study uses a credibility test with the aim of knowing the level of accuracy of the data obtained. In addition, the source triangulation technique is also used, by comparing one data and other data from various sources that have been obtained.

Results and Discussion

Results

Public Relations is part of management that has an important function, especially in facilitating corporate communication between the organization and the public, overcoming a problem faced by the company and being responsible for public opinion (Zikri & Simon, 2020). This is stated by theaker in open with the title "Public Relations as a Crisis Communication Solution" written by (Silviani, 2020). In addition, Public Relations has the task of building and maintaining the company's reputation. Philip

Kotler defines corporate image as the overall impression drawn by each individual towards an organization (Kusumajaya & Rivai, 2017). Therefore, a positive image is very important for the company because the image can affect public perception.

The image owned by the Customs agency in the eyes of the public is notoriously bad, this comes from the negative perspective of the Customs bureaucracy which seems difficult and closed, coupled with the many reports of unscrupulous Customs employees who behave improperly such as abusing power to corruption. Which can further damage public trust in this agency and have an impact on the level of public awareness of the policies that have been set.

However, Surakarta Customs in building its corporate image is considered good. Surakarta Customs can restore trust and erode the bad perception of the community by improving transparent communication, excellent service and professionalism of its employees. This can be proven by the increasing number of KPPBC Surakarta service users each year and the decreasing number of illegal goods catch cases, meaning that the people of Surakarta and its surroundings have cared and complied with the regulations and policies of Surakarta Customs. In accordance with interviews conducted by researchers with Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section employee Mrs. Intania, namely:

"The community has begun to raise their awareness that if they do things that are not in accordance with the regulations it is not allowed, because in the past they have met and socialized with Customs, they also know because there are billboards. So that is one example, meaning that the general public has begun to realize that we are there for that". (Intania, employee of the Counseling and Information Services Section of Surakarta Customs)

An interview conducted with another Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section employee, Mrs. Gita Pertiwi, regarding the influence of her agency's image on the community stated that:

"At that time there were sellers of illegal cigarettes, but when we educated them and told them that selling illegal cigarettes would be subject to criminal and administrative sanctions. There were several sellers who responded that they would just register their brands so that they would not be illegal and violate the rules again. That is clear evidence that our campaign is working in the community, the trend of illegal cigarettes is decreasing and their level of compliance with laws or regulations is also increasing." (Gita Pertiwi, employee of the Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section)

The interview conducted with an employee of the Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section can be strengthened by an interview with Mr. Aji Indra as a service user of the Surakarta Customs, when asked about his compliance with the established regulations:

"From me as a service user, yes we have to follow the rules because we have been given facilities by the state." (Aji Indra, Surakarta Customs service user)

From the informants' statements above, it can be concluded that Surakarta Customs has carried out a series of public relations activities in building the image of the institution and is considered good. The activities are in the form of building communication and good relations with its public, to conducting socialization and campaigns. As a result of the efforts that have been made, the impact on the people of Surakarta not only restores trust, but also builds positive perceptions, and makes people more compliant with state regulations.

However, the positive community response expected by Surakarta Customs is not obtained solely in an instant way. To achieve a goal, it is definitely necessary to make an effort, as is done by the Information Counseling and Services Section of Surakarta Customs in carrying out its duties to build a positive image of the institution. One example of the activities used by Surakarta Customs to build the reputation of the institution is to build good communication with the public through the media. As it is known that the media is the most effective means of communication, this is very useful for agencies to disseminate information to a wide audience. However, it is necessary to control the media so that the news and information disseminated related to the good name of the agency is not narrated negatively. As expressed by

Mrs. Gita Pertiwi as an employee of the Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section, namely:

"To establish media relations, we have a media gathering once a year. This media gathering is usually also accompanied by a press conference, for example related to the prosecution of illegal cigarettes, there are drug arrests". (Gita Pertiwi, Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section employee)

In addition, Surakarta Customs relates to its community through socialization activities and campaigns. By conducting these activities, Surakarta Customs can also communicate directly about the wishes of the community. In accordance with what was said by Ms. Intania as an employee of the Surakarta KPPBC Information Services and Counseling Section, namely:

"We have events with different targets. For service users we have *angkringan* *becus* and also *becus* awards, it is for appreciation to service users for their compliance for one year. Then for the community itself, there is usually a custom fest, where we collaborate with the city government and local government to socialize combating illegal cigarettes. Then for those in the academic community, we usually have custom goes to school. And these events are actually quite well remembered by the community" (Intania, employee of the Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section).

The results of the interview above are reinforced by the results of an interview with Mr. M. Habib as a person who uses the services of Surakarta Customs, who stated that:

"I myself have participated in the illegal cigarette campaign, where it was explained and presented about illegal cigarettes, the name of the event was *gempur* illegal cigarettes. This is quite effective because it is a campaign but is

packaged in an event that seems like pressure, because the concept is combined with concerts and other socialization. So people who have had the mindset that Customs is not pro-community, but it turns out that when it is packaged in a good event and given good socialization, people's minds turn positive." (Muhammad Habib, Surakarta Customs service user)

According to Cutlip Public Relations has the main tasks, namely, Expert Advisor (expert prescriber), Communication Facilitator (communication facilitator), Problem solving process facilitator (problem solving process facilitator), and Communication technician (communication technician) in (Mauliqa, 2021). The Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section has carried out its duties in line with what Cutlip stated, according to him Public Relations serves as an expert advisor. In this case, employees of the Information Counseling and Services Section do so by directly conveying to all Surakarta Customs employees regarding messages and expectations for the realization of goals. As stated by Mrs. Intania as an employee of the PLI Section, namely:

"We always emphasize employees that all of us are public relations, so whatever Customs officers do can affect the image of the agency." (Intania, employee of the Information Counseling and Services Section of Surakarta Customs)

In addition to being an expert advisor, Public Relations also serves as a communication facilitator who is also a communication technician. Public Relations is assigned to facilitate the company's communication with various parties. This is also done by the PLI Section of Surakarta Customs, as stated by Mrs. Gita Pertiwi as an employee of the PLI Section of BC Surakarta, that:

"In addition to socialization, we provide information services for the community. It can be through face-to-face to social media such as Instagram and WhatsApp. Through that we serve public questions about Customs." (Gita Pertiwi, employee of the Counseling and Information Services Section of Surakarta Customs)

However, in carrying out its duties as Public Relations, the Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section is considered insufficient as a problem-solving facilitator. This is due to several reasons related to bureaucracy and policies in the institution. In accordance with what was conveyed by an employee of the PLI Section of BC Surakarta, namely Mrs. Intania during the interview, who stated that:

"If there is an overall Customs crisis, we usually wait for orders from the center, for example when we were in a crisis at that time there was an order from the center not to post related to it. The point is to let the center be the lead, so all the news is the center that answers. However, there must also be questions to us, yes we answer normatively and we still follow to at that time not post activities that will raise more questions from the public." (Intania, employee of the Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section)

From the results of research interviews conducted with informants, it can be concluded that Public Relations plays an important role in building the image of an organization in the eyes of its public. The image built by the Surakarta Customs

Information Service and Counseling Section of the institution is considered to be able to change negative perceptions and restore public trust. The activities that have the greatest influence are socializations and campaigns, through these activities the message of Surakarta Customs to the public is more effective in delivery even though it is not in a fast and instant time this activity continues to process in order to achieve the best results. This achievement occurred thanks to the role of Public Relations who applied the strategy and activities of public relations activities appropriately and effectively. Although the duties of Public Relations have not been fully implemented for certain reasons, this can be an evaluation material so that the performance of Public Relations of Surakarta Customs is maximized and the vision and mission of the institution is achieved.

Discussion

Based on the research findings obtained when conducting research in the field, it shows that there is a connection with the theory used, namely image theory. This is because the Surakarta Customs agency has implemented Public Relations strategies in building the agency's image. This theory states that a positive image is very important for the progress of an organization, because the image is a picture for the public to judge and choose them. To be able to achieve a positive image, it is necessary to have the intervention of Public Relations practitioners so that the company's goals and expectations can be achieved. Thanks to the efforts made by the Public Relations of Surakarta Customs, results in trust, awareness and collaboration with the people of Surakarta and its surroundings.

Public Relations Strategy of Surakarta Customs

To build the company's image, Public Relations needs to have the right strategy. Strategy is a process of planning and management, this is an effort made to achieve a goal (Henry et al., 2021). Supporting and helping the company achieve its goals is the main task of a Public Relations. The Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section in carrying out its duties to build and maintain the image of the agency has applied public relations strategies.

There are four Public Relations strategies in disseminating information according to Harwood Childs in (Fauzalia, 2022), the strategies referred to are: strategy of publicity, strategy of persuasion, strategy of argumentation, and strategy of image. Surakarta Customs in determining and disseminating messages applies these strategies. Before making news to the media, Public Relations ensures that the news will not harm the reputation of the institution such as uploading the latest positive activities. However, sometimes the news can still be misinterpreted by public perception.

Media relations

Media is one of the important components needed in building a company's image (El Ishaq, 2017). Literally the media has the meaning of being an intermediary between the source of the message and the recipient of the message, it can also be considered that

the media is a tool or facility that functions for communicators to communicate or disseminate information to a wide audience (Dunan, 2020). The media makes it easier for Public Relations to work in building their company's communication with the public. The media itself is divided into two types, namely, print media (newspapers, magazines, etc.) and electronic media (television, radio and online).

The relationship between an organization and the media is very important. Because the media is an important component in helping Public Relations disseminate information to a wide audience. In doing this, the Surakarta Customs Information Service and Counseling Section uses various types of media, such as print media, electronic media (radio) and online media. In addition, Surakarta Customs builds good relations with the media by holding a press conference which is held at least once a year. With this, Surakarta Customs can also be helped in controlling the messages spread by the media, thus reducing the possibility of the media making news with negative and untrue narratives on behalf of the Surakarta Customs agency.



Figure 1: Surakarta Customs Builds Relationship With TV Media.

Event and socialization

In order to increase publicawareness of a brand or product (brand awareness), an effort needs to be made, one of which is by holding an event or event. Holding events is one of the means for organizations to build communication and relationships with their publics, with this the public can get to know them better and can assess their image. Surakarta Customs itself is fairly active in holding events in the city of Surakarta. An example of an event that has been carried out is gempur illegal cigarettes, where the main purpose of this activity is community socialization about the prohibition of illegal cigarettes. From the results of interviews with the community it is evident that this activity can be remembered and make them aware.

Therefore, it can be concluded that building an image requires direct interaction with the public. This way the public will feel close and can judge for themselves how their impression of an organization is. Just like what was done by Surakarta Customs, by holding events and socialization that is directly related to the community can have a positive effect on the institution.



Figure 2. Socialization of "Gempur Cempur Illegal Excise" by Surakarta Customs.

Challenges and Solutions

Challenge has the meaning of something that aims to arouse ability (Leliana & Kussanti, 2018). In the process of doing a business, it is certain that there are challenges and obstacles. Likewise with the Surakarta KPPBC Information Service and Counseling Section in building and maintaining a positive image of the institution. One of the biggest challenges they face is overcoming negative public perceptions that are difficult to control. Moreover, people only see and receive information from one source, without confirming what the truth is. Then, the bad perception of the Customs agency that has been attached to the community continues to stick. Even though Customs has carried out positive activities, provided the best service and received achievements, it is still difficult for the public to believe or trust issues. This is a challenge for an organization in building and maintaining its image.

However, when there is a crisis involving the image of the institution, Surakarta Customs does not take many steps to solve the problem. This is because Surakarta Customs is a regional office which bureaucratically must follow orders according to the direction of the head office. So that the duties and roles of Public Relations of Surakarta Customs have not been fully implemented.

Conclusion

Based on the results and discussion, it is found that the Counseling and Information Services Section in charge of Public Relations has carried out its duties in accordance with the TUPOKSI of a public relations officer. Although not all of their duties have been carried out because of one or two things related to the bureaucracy in the Customs agency. Surakarta Customs in disseminating agency information uses various kinds of media, such as online media (Instagram, WhatsApp, Youtube), electronic media (radio) and print media (newspapers). In addition, one of the superior activities of Surakarta Customs that is directly related to the community is events and socialization, for example the socialization of illegal cigarettes.

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