



Public Relations Strategy of Diskominfo Binjai City in Enhancing the Positive Image of the Binjai City Government

M. Alfin Eraninka Sembiring^{1*}, Sakti Ritonga²

¹Study Program of Communication Science, Faculty of Social Sciences, State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Medan, Indonesia

²Faculty of Social Sciences, State Islamic University of North Sumatra, Medan, Indonesia

Email : alfin0603202040@uinsu.ac.id, saktiritonga@uinsu.ac.id

Alamat: Jalan Dr. T. Mansur No.9, Padang Bulan, Kec. Medan Baru, Kota Medan, Sumatera Utara 20155

Correspondence: alfin0603202040@uinsu.ac.id*

Abstract. *This article discusses the Public Relations (PR) strategies implemented by the Department of Communication and Informatics (Diskominfo) of Binjai City to enhance the positive image of the Binjai City Government. This study adopts a qualitative approach, analyzing primary data from interviews with the head of the news and audiovisual division and the IKP (Public Communication and Information) team members of Diskominfo Binjai, along with secondary data from related documents. The analysis reveals that Diskominfo Binjai has employed various PR strategies, including information campaigns, social media activities, public events, and collaboration with local mass media. It was also found that the use of information and communication technology (ICT) is an integral part of their PR strategy. This study highlights the importance of PR in building and maintaining a positive image of local government in the current digital era, particularly concerning sensitive issues.*

Keywords Positive Image, Diskominfo Kota Binjai, Public Relations Strategy.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Ministry of Communication and Informatics (Kominfo) is a government agency in Indonesia responsible for the management and supervision of the communication and informatics sector. Its primary duties include implementing policies in the field of communication and informatics, managing radio frequencies, broadcasting, telecommunications, and internet governance. Additionally, Kominfo plays a role in regulating and supervising internet usage to ensure compliance with applicable regulations, including the protection of users' personal data and addressing cybersecurity issues (Priyatna et al., 2020).

Historically, ministries and departments in Indonesia have extensively utilized public relations (PR). Any internal or external communication strategy developed by a company or service with the aim of achieving specific goals based on mutual understanding is known as public relations (Saputra et al., 2019). This study discusses how the PR department of Diskominfo Kota Binjai maintains the positive image of the government amid issues concerning the salary cuts imposed on civil servants in Binjai City under the pretext of conducting development projects in recent years. Furthermore, challenges related to poor sanitation access in Indonesia remain, with one of the obstacles

being the low public awareness of information regarding safe sanitation practices. On the other hand, the Public Relations Department of the Binjai City Government often faces misunderstandings from the public, frequently related to the role of the department itself. A common misconception is that the PR department merely functions as a spokesperson for the government, without paying attention to the significant poor population in Binjai City.

Therefore, the Public Relations Department of the Binjai City Government, as a government institution, must be able to provide information services regarding public policies aimed at educating and providing clear understanding about the implementation of local governance and the public.

In addition to maintaining external and internal relationships within the institution, public relations plays a crucial role in upholding its reputation. According to Scott (Scott, 2010), public relations is a field concerned with managing the reputation and image of businesses, organizations, governments, and other entities, as well as individual professions. Communication, public relations, consumer relations, crisis management, industrial relations, and media relations are some of the tasks undertaken by PR professionals in the public domain (Religius et al., 2022).

The main objective of public relations in government is to assist in achieving program goals, enhancing government responsiveness, and providing sufficient knowledge to the public to enable self-regulation (Dan & Otis, 2014). This indicates that the role of government PR is to disseminate knowledge about policies that bind the public in the implementation of programs and public services. Additionally, offering extensive public services along with streamlined bureaucracy aims to satisfy the public and improve their perception of the government. Writing, editing, photography, producing communications, event planning, and corresponding with the media via telephone are some examples of PR duties. On the other hand, a manager's role is to identify and address issues related to public relations on behalf of the organization. PR managers thrive in society (Zikri & Simon, 2020).

Effective communication is essential for human existence. Just as humans cannot survive long without breathing, the same applies to communication. Public relations within an organization is an integral part of human existence (Oktari et al., 2023). Public relations functions as a mirror for businesses or organizations, aiming to promote positive relationships among all members of the organization to foster understanding, encouragement, and engagement. A PR professional can serve as a liaison between the

organization and the media, as well as the public. Public relations also involves gathering and sharing information about the organization's policies, achievements, and activities, and how the organization responds to public opinion. Public relations plays a crucial role within an organization (Wibowo et al., 2021). The roles of technicians and management are two key aspects in public relations activities frequently mentioned in studies on this issue. The technician's role represents the art of public relations, which is to create a favorable impression of the public on the work of a PR professional within a government setting. Understanding how others perceive a business, individual, group, or activity is known as image (Utomo, 2019).

Based on the literature review, there is still no research on "PR Strategies in Maintaining the Positive Image of the Binjai City Government." However, to aid the research process, the authors can refer to and compare this study with several other studies. The following previous studies support the findings of this investigation:

First, the research findings reviewed by Areni Bertta Safitri, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Sriwijaya University, Palembang, in 2017, titled "The Role of Public Relations in Enhancing Government Image (Study on the Public Relations of the South Sumatra Provincial Government)." The research location for this study, which is government public relations, is comparable to previous research. However, this study focuses more on the contribution of PR in improving public perception of the government. After reviewing the relevant research findings, the authors can briefly conclude whether the public perception of the South Sumatra Provincial Government remains favorable. This is because the number of foreign investors who still trust South Sumatra as a good place to invest grows every year (Safitri, 2017).

Second, the undergraduate thesis findings reviewed by Dio Alif Utama, Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, in 2018, titled "Public Relations Communication Strategies in Enhancing the Image of the Palembang City Government." There is a similarity among these studies, which is their focus on public relations tactics to improve government image. However, this study primarily concerns the Communication Strategies used by Public Relations to enhance the government's image. The authors can summarize the research findings by stating that the Public Relations Department of the Palembang City Government uses communication strategies to build strong relationships with its target audience. For instance, consider adopting a personal approach, organizing media meetings, and press conferences. It is anticipated that all these

initiatives will improve relationships with the media and the government. As a result, this will ultimately help the reputation of the Palembang City Government (Utama, 2018).

Third, the undergraduate thesis findings reviewed by Ema Noviana, from the Faculty of Da'wah and Communication, UIN Raden Fatah Palembang, in 2022, titled "Public Relations Communication Strategies of the Communication and Informatics Department of Palembang City in Enhancing its Image in the Public." Similar to the previously discussed studies, this research also examines public relations communication strategies. What makes the difference is the target, the Palembang City Communication and Information Department, whose image will be enhanced. After reviewing the relevant research findings, the authors can summarize as follows: The Palembang City Communication and Information Department obtained an image known as Corporate Image, representing the organization as a whole. This may arise from various sources, such as its efforts to disseminate the latest information and provide solutions for all services through accessible service media (Noviana, 2022).

2. METHODS

This research employs a qualitative method with a case study approach. The study is conducted at the Communication and Informatics Office of Binjai City, located at Jl. Kartini, Binjai Kota Subdistrict, Binjai City, North Sumatra (Lexy J. Moelong, 1998).

This article relies on primary data sources as the main data and secondary data sources as supplementary data. The primary data sources in this article come from direct interviews with the head of the news and audiovisual division and the head of the Information and Public Communication (IKP) division of the Binjai City Communication and Informatics Office. Additionally, secondary data are obtained from books, literature, scientific articles, and other materials related to the research (Surahman, 2016).

Data in this article are collected using interview and observation techniques. The data will then be analyzed using the Miles and Huberman model. According to Miles and Huberman, qualitative data analysis is conducted interactively and continuously until data saturation is reached (Miles & Huberman, 2014). The data analysis approach includes data collection, data reduction or summarization, data presentation, and conclusion drawing.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Communication and Informatics Office (Diskominfo) of Binjai City is a government agency responsible for managing and developing the communication and information technology sector in Binjai City, North Sumatra. As part of the regional government structure, Diskominfo plays a crucial role in ensuring effective communication between the government and the public and managing accurate and transparent information.

Based on observations and interviews, the head of the news and audiovisual division and the head of the IKP division of Diskominfo Binjai City stated that Diskominfo is responsible for designing policies and programs in the field of communication and information technology in line with the vision and mission of the Binjai City Government. Its primary functions include providing information services to the public, managing the official government website, managing official social media accounts, and organizing promotional and publicity activities. Additionally, Diskominfo is responsible for providing official government information to the public through both conventional and social media channels. They are tasked with clearly and transparently communicating policies, programs, and other important information to the public.

Diskominfo also plays a role in empowering the community to use information technology effectively. They can organize training sessions, seminars, or workshops to improve digital literacy and technological skills among the residents of Binjai City

Through various initiatives and programs, Diskominfo Binjai City aims to ensure smooth communication between the government and the public, leveraging information technology to enhance public services and overall community welfare.

Overview of the Communication and Informatics Office of Binjai City

Diskominfo (Communication and Informatics Office) of Binjai City is a regional government agency responsible for managing and developing aspects of communication and informatics in the city. Diskominfo's main tasks include disseminating accurate public information, developing information technology infrastructure, managing government information systems, and safeguarding data and information security. They also provide various technology-based public services to facilitate public access. Strategic programs initiated by Diskominfo include the implementation of e-government to improve government efficiency and transparency, the development of a smart city concept to enhance the quality of life for residents, and training to improve the competence of human

resources in information technology. Diskominfo manages various communication channels, including social media and government websites, to ensure quick and accurate information reaches the public. With an organizational structure comprising public communication, information technology, information systems, and information security divisions, Diskominfo faces challenges such as cyber threats and budget constraints but also has significant opportunities to leverage technology to improve public services and government efficiency.

Diskominfo Binjai City's Strategy for Enhancing the Positive Image of the Binjai City Government

The main findings of this study reveal the diverse PR strategies implemented by Diskominfo Binjai City. One of the primary strategies is an information campaign aimed at raising public awareness of local government policies and programs. Diskominfo is also actively utilizing social media as a platform to interact directly with the public and to disseminate information quickly and effectively. Additionally, Diskominfo organizes various public events such as seminars, discussions, and exhibitions to strengthen relationships with the public and local mass media. Collaboration with local mass media also plays a crucial role in creating a positive narrative about the Binjai City Government.

1. Crisis Management and Handling Sensitive Issues

The Department of Communication and Information (Diskominfo) must be prepared to manage crises and sensitive issues that may arise within the Binjai City government or the community. They need to have an effective communication strategy to handle these situations quickly and appropriately. Based on interview results, in managing crises and sensitive issues to enhance the government's positive image, Diskominfo Binjai City can implement several effective Public Relations (PR) strategies, including:

Diskominfo should take the initiative to communicate proactively with the public before a crisis or sensitive issue escalates. They can use social media, press conferences, and official statements to provide clear and accurate information about the situation, the steps the government has taken, and the planned follow-up actions.

Moreover, Diskominfo is committed to being a transparent and open institution in delivering information to the public. They need to provide complete and honest information about the ongoing crisis or sensitive issue, including its causes, impacts, and the steps being or will be taken by the government.

Furthermore, in managing sensitive issues, Diskominfo collaborates with other related departments and agencies within the local government to ensure consistency in the messages conveyed to the public. Good coordination among various parties will help avoid confusion and uncertainty among the public.

Diskominfo also expresses readiness to manage negative responses from the public concerning the ongoing crisis or sensitive issue. They need to monitor conversations on social media and mass media, respond effectively to public questions and concerns, and take quick and appropriate actions to address emerging problems.

In terms of issue management, Diskominfo can provide educational information to the public about steps they can take to protect themselves and their families from the ongoing crisis or sensitive issue. They can also provide information about resources and services available to those in need of assistance.

Additionally, Diskominfo can actively utilize social media as a means to communicate directly with the public. They can disseminate the latest information, answer public questions, and respond to feedback or complaints through platforms such as Instagram.



Figure 1. Social Media Activity Posts

In celebration of Binjai City's 152nd anniversary, the Binjai City government organized a concert as a form of entertainment for the city's residents. This event was directly promoted through the official Instagram account of Diskominfo Binjai as a form of support and to serve as an interaction platform for the residents of Binjai. The promotional efforts using social media positively impacted the Binjai City government, as citizens

enthusiastically participated in the event. In addition to this activity, Diskominfo Binjai frequently shares other events on their Instagram account.

a. Public Events and Discussions

Diskominfo can organize public events, seminars, or open discussions aimed at strengthening the relationship between the Binjai City government and its residents. Through these events, Diskominfo can provide opportunities for citizens to participate in the decision-making process and offer constructive feedback. Based on observations of the official Instagram account of Diskominfo Binjai, several points can be identified as PR strategies to enhance government image, including event announcements, hosting public events, interacting with users, and more. The research findings show that many public activities are oriented towards the openness of Diskominfo and the Binjai City government towards its citizens. This is evidenced by posts on the official Instagram account @dinaskominfokotabinjai, as shown below:



Figure 2. Public Activity Posts of Diskominfo Binjai City

By implementing PR strategies that utilize social media to promote public events and discussions, Diskominfo Binjai can reach a wider audience and ensure broader participation in government-organized activities. This approach can also help increase public engagement in the decision-making process and build stronger relationships between the government and its citizens.

b. Dissemination of Public Policy Information

In disseminating public policy information, Diskominfo designs and executes public information campaigns aimed at spreading awareness about the policies, programs, and achievements of the Binjai City government to the public. These campaigns are carried out through online communication channels, particularly Instagram. This is illustrated by the Instagram profile photo of Diskominfo shown below:

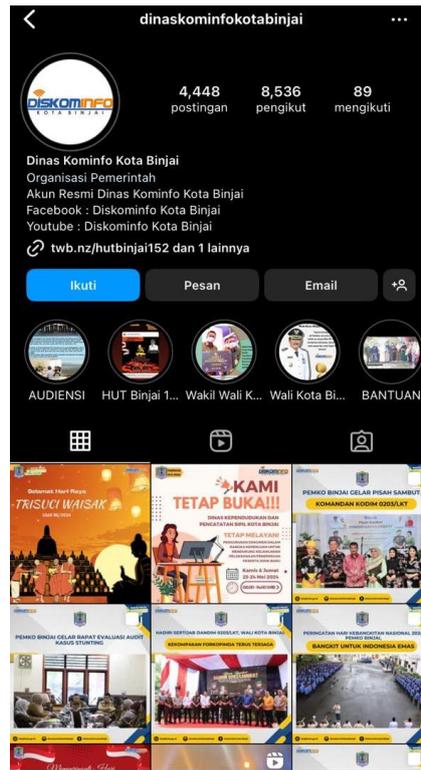


Figure 3. Instagram Profile Photo of Diskominfo Binjai City

Source: Accessed via Instagram App

Based on the image above, Diskominfo Binjai utilizes Instagram to disseminate a variety of information. According to the official account, public policy information shared by Diskominfo on Instagram includes details on new student registration processes, the introduction of the Binjai fun run program, hosting thematic academies, conducting stunting audit meetings, and more. By taking these steps, Diskominfo Binjai can ensure that public policy information is effectively communicated to the public, enabling them to be involved in the government's decision-making processes and benefiting from the implemented policies.

c. Local Cultural Approach

The Binjai City Communication and Information Office (Diskominfo) has adopted a Public Relations strategy focused on a local cultural approach to enhance the government's positive image. By understanding the values and traditions upheld by the Binjai community, Diskominfo actively engages community leaders, traditional leaders, and cultural figures in crafting appropriate messages. They use local media such as community radio and local newspapers to convey relevant and reliable information, which not only educates the public about government programs and new policies but also builds a close relationship with the community. Additionally, Diskominfo remains responsive to culturally sensitive issues, ensuring that the responses provided are not only swift but also effective in maintaining public trust. Through partnership programs and active engagement with community organizations, Diskominfo aims not only to build a positive image but also to secure ongoing support from the community for the local government's efforts. With this approach, Diskominfo Binjai City has created a harmonious and productive communication environment between the government and the local community.

By applying these strategies, Diskominfo Binjai City can build and maintain a positive image of the Binjai City government in the eyes of the public. It is crucial for this agency to continuously monitor public responses and feedback, and evaluate the effectiveness of the PR strategies they implement to ensure their objectives are well achieved.

4. CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that Diskominfo Binjai City has successfully implemented a variety of PR strategies to enhance the positive image of the Binjai City government. Based on the findings, several public relations strategies have been identified that Diskominfo employs to improve the government's positive image on social media, including the dissemination of public policy information, social media activities, public events and discussions, partnerships with local media, and crisis and sensitive issue management.

In facing sensitive issues, Diskominfo Binjai plays a crucial role in ensuring effective and responsive handling of the community's needs. One of the measures taken by Diskominfo Binjai is proactive communication and transparency in building trust and connection with the public. In this regard, Diskominfo provides clear, accurate, and

detailed information about the crisis or sensitive issue at hand, as well as the steps taken by the government to respond to the situation. Additionally, they ensure good coordination between various government departments and agencies to maintain consistency in the messages conveyed to the public. The synergy among various parties helps avoid confusion and uncertainty among the public.

Therefore, Diskominfo Binjai can play a significant role in enhancing the positive image of the government in managing crises and sensitive issues. This will help build stronger trust and connection between the government and the public, and increase effectiveness in handling difficult situations.

REFERENCES

- Afandi, M. H. (2021). *PR kita adalah public relations*. Kemenag. <https://kemenag.go.id>
- Ayudia, A. P., & Wulandari, S. S. (2021). Strategi komunikasi humas dalam meningkatkan citra Pemerintah Kota Probolinggo. *Journal of Office Administration: Education and Practice*, 1(2), 249–268. <https://doi.org/10.26740/joaep.v1n2.p249-268>
- Dan, L., & Otis, B. (2014). *Public relations: Profesi dan praktik* (3rd ed.). Salemba Humanika.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, A. M. (2014). *Analisis data kualitatif: Buku sumber tentang metode-metode baru*. Analisis Data Kualitatif: Buku Sumber Tentang Metode-Metode Baru.
- Moelong, L. J. (1998). *Metodologi penelitian kualitatif*. <https://opac.perpusnas.go.id/DetailOpac.aspx?id=1133305>
- Noviana, E. (2022). *Strategi komunikasi humas Dinas Komunikasi dan Informatika Kota Palembang dalam meningkatkan citra pada masyarakat*. Repository Raden Fatah, 8.5.2017. Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang.
- Nurhanifah, N., Ananda, B. H., Sulista, D. A., Sulistia, D. A., Siddiq, M., Halisa, N., & Rifqi, Z. (2023). Strategi public relations dalam memelihara citra Pemerintah Desa Partihaman Saroha. *Da'watuna: Journal of Communication and Islamic Broadcasting*, 4(1), 138–143. <https://doi.org/10.47467/dawatuna.v4i1.3322>
- Oktari, S., Aliasari, & Muslimin. (2023). Strategi humas Pemerintah Provinsi Sumatera Selatan dalam membangun citra positif pemerintah daerah. *Tabayyun: Journal of Journalism*, 4, 264–279.
- Priyatna, C. C., Prastowo, F. A. A., Syuderajat, F., & Sani, A. (2020). Optimalisasi teknologi informasi oleh lembaga pemerintah dalam aktivitas komunikasi publik. *Jurnal Kajian Komunikasi*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.24198/jkk.v8i1.26115>

- Religius, A., Makmur, A., Amanah, & Handal. (2022). Strategi komunikasi hubungan masyarakat untuk membangun citra positif Pemerintah Kabupaten Bima bervisi “Ramah.” *Ilmu Sosial dan Pendidikan JISIP*, 6(2), 2666–2673.
- Safitri, A. B. (2017). Peranan humas dalam membangun citra pemerintah (Studi di Humas Pemerintah Daerah Provinsi Sumatera Selatan). *Jurnal Ilmu Komunikasi*, 2(3). Universitas Sriwijaya Palembang.
- Saputra, M., Jamhur, P., & Edison. (2019). Strategi media relations dalam membentuk citra positif pada hubungan masyarakat (Humas) Sekretariat Daerah Pemerintah Kota. Retrieved from <http://repositori.umrah.ac.id/id/eprint/138>
- Scott, M. Cutlip. (2010). *Humas yang efektif*. Prentice-Hall. https://books.google.co.id/books/about/Effective_public_relations.html?id=VorzAAAAMAAJ&redir_esc=y
- Soemirat, S. (2005). *Dasar-dasar public relations*. <https://opac.perpusnas.go.id/DetailOpac.aspx?id=512477>
- Sugiyono. (2014). *Metodologi penelitian kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R & D*.
- Surahman. (2016). *Metodologi penelitian*. Badan PPSDM.
- Utama, D. A. (2018). *Strategi komunikasi humas dalam meningkatkan citra Pemerintah Kota Palembang* [Skripsi]. Universitas Islam Negeri Raden Fatah Palembang.
- Utomo, D. A. K., & A. S. (2019). Etika komunikasi publik bagi humas pemerintah dalam bermedia sosial (Studi kasus pada akun Twitter @Kemkominfo dan @Infobmkg). *Heritage*, 8(8), 127–144.
- Wibowo, A., Syahputra, S., & Susanto, R. D. (2021). Strategi komunikasi korporat dalam upaya peningkatan komunikasi internal dan citra perusahaan. *LUGAS Jurnal Komunikasi*, 5(2), 125–132. <https://doi.org/10.31334/lugas.v5i2.1871>
- Zikri, M., & Simon, J. (2020). Peran humas dalam membentuk citra positif pada Pemerintah Kota Medan. *Network Media*, 3(1), 5–24. http://repo.iain-tulungagung.ac.id/5510/5/BAB_2.pdf