



Environmental Communication of the Public Relations Division of Pt Semen Baturaja Tbk in Response to Air Quality Issues in the Community

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out how the role of Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk in carrying out effective environmental communication, so as to be able to maintain public trust in the midst of the dynamics of developing environmental issues. The problem contained in this study is that air pollution due to industrial activities is an environmental issue that is increasingly receiving public attention, especially in areas that are directly adjacent to emission sources. The type of research used is field research with a qualitative approach that is descriptive. The data collection methodology used in this study is observation, documentation and interviews. The primary data sources in this study are the leaders of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk, the Public Relations Division of PT Semen Baturaja and the people who live around PT Semen Baturaja Tbk. Meanwhile, the source of secondary data was obtained from documentation obtained from the results of the research. The technique for analyzing data is through three stages, namely: data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions or verification. Based on the results of the research, the communication practices carried out have led to dialogical and participatory two-way communication and show a positive tendency in building harmonious relationships between companies and society.

INTRODUCTION

The impact of the cement industry sector on air quality through the emission of dust particles and pollutants is a concern because of its potential to cause public complaints and public health risks in adjacent settlements. The cement industry is one of the main contributors to air pollution in the world due to its high energy consumption and the potential dust emissions it produces. This condition makes industrial cement one of the main sources of air pollution (Caronge et al., 2019).

Environmental communication has become a crucial element in balancing economic growth and community protection (Rauf et al., 2021). Based on the results of research conducted by previous researchers who discussed Air Quality Perception Factors, it was found that public perception of air quality is often not in line with the purpose of data on emissions and pollutant concentrations. This perception arises due to several factors, including demographic characteristics such as (type of residence, home ownership status, and marital status) as well as the condition of the surrounding environment and environmental "cleanliness" aspects which include general views and the smell of smoke (Wise et al., 2021).

PT Semen Baturaja Tbk, as one of the largest cement companies in South Sumatra, has the responsibility to convey information related to the impact of its operations on the environment, especially air quality. A good communication relationship between the company and stakeholders is a crucial factor in fostering trust and loyalty. (Azhar et al., 2025). Therefore, environmental communication plays a crucial role in influencing and shaping developing perceptions.

The Public Relations Division of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk plays an important role in compiling and conveying environmental messages to the public, especially those in the Ring I area closest to production activities. In the dynamics of modern industry, companies are faced not only with the demands of efficiency and productivity, but also with social and environmental responsibility.

The role of Public Relations in this context is crucial in maintaining the company's license to continue operating by ensuring open communication and involving the public, so that public trust in the company is stronger (Amalia, 2023). Corporate PR plays a strategic role as a liaison between the company and the community. Public relations also serves to help organizations "understand the environment and maintain relationships with important groups". Effective PR communication models including information disclosure, two-way dialogue, and crisis response are key for companies to prevent social conflicts and build legitimacy in the public eye through effective environmental communication (Pratiwi & Pranawukir, 2024).

The process of interaction between living things and the surrounding environment to achieve a balanced and harmonious state then forms a unity known as an ecosystem. Public Relations interaction shapes public perception of air quality. In addition, research also shows that environmental campaigns are based on Public Relations that implements two-way communication and public participation can strengthen the image and trust of the organization (Hasna et al., 2024).

Local phenomena greatly strengthen the urgency of this aspect of communication, especially in Baturaja City and the Ring I area around PT Semen Baturaja Tbk, over the past few years there have been public complaints and reports of dust/pollution incidents that cause public unrest, as well as local media spotlights regarding dust coming out of factory chimneys. Environmental crises such as chimney leak incidents and public perceptions of air pollution are not only technical problems, but also communication challenges that have a direct impact on social legitimacy and corporate image.

In response to this, the Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk through its statement explained that the incident was caused by a technical glitch during the start-up process of the Baturaja Factory. The company has also apologized and committed to conducting a thorough evaluation to prevent a recurrence of similar incidents. Therefore, this study will focus more deeply on examining the effectiveness of communication between the Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk in responding to environmental communication issues related to air quality in the community.

The Liputan4 report on June 2, 2025 highlighted the response from representatives of community social institutions who expressed concern about the impact of factory dust on local residents. This condition is considered to have the potential to affect the comfort and health of people in the Ring I area, including Talang Jawa Village, Pusar Village, Pasar Baru Village, and Sukajadi Village. The institution also emphasized the importance of information disclosure and active communication from the company so that the public can get clarity about the situation that occurred (Rain, 2025).

Based on a Liputan4 report dated June 9, 2025, the media again raised complaints from the Ring I community who reported that the environment where they live is often covered in white dust. The community said that even though the house has been cleaned repeatedly, dust still sticks to the walls, fences, and household furniture. In addition, some people also complained about the air quality in the morning which felt heavier and caused irritation to the eyes (Rain, 2025).

In the report, the media explained that confirmation efforts to the Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk have not received a further response. Therefore, the public hopes for information disclosure and more constructive communication between companies and the public. The series of news shows the dynamics of communication interaction between companies and affected communities. The public expects clear explanations and corrective steps from the company, while companies are required to convey information in a transparent, empathetic, and systematic manner to avoid potential misunderstandings in the public space.

This situation emphasizes the importance of the role of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk's Public Relations as the main liaison between the company and the surrounding community in the context of environmental communication. The success of Public Relations in managing this issue is not only determined by the technical ability to inform, but also by a two-way communication strategy that builds trust, creates mutual understanding, and strengthens the social legitimacy of the company.

Thus, this case became an empirical foothold for researchers who focused on environmental communication carried out by Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk in responding to air quality issues in the Ring I community in Baturaja City. Air pollution due to industrial activities is an environmental issue that is increasingly receiving public attention, especially in areas that are directly adjacent to emission sources. Incidents like this put the company's PR in a strategic position, how they explain the root of the problem, environmental monitoring, respond to complaints, and public perception to stay under control.

Based on the background that has been presented, the author is interested in conducting a research with the title "Environmental Communication of the Public Relations Division of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk in Responding to Air Quality Issues in the Community" this research is placed in the realm of Communication Sciences, especially the concentration of Public Relations (PR) conducted by PT Semen Baturaja Tbk.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach. Qualitative research methods are a way to answer research problems related to qualitative data obtained from surveys, interviews, and document analysis (Wahidmurni, 2017). By focusing on the environmental communication practices of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk in

responding to air quality issues in the community. This approach aims to deeply understand the experiences, views, and responses of both the company and the community, so as to be able to provide a holistic picture of environmental communication practices and the obstacles faced in building the company's image.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Public Relations Environmental Communication of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk in Response to Air Quality Issues

Identifying Public Perceptions

It can be concluded that the practice of identifying public perception carried out by the Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk has reflected the principle of symmetrical two-way communication, although it is still informal. This shows that there is an alignment between practice in the field and the theory of Excellence in Public Relations, especially in the application of the Two-Way Symmetrical Model as the basis for dialogical, adaptive, and public-oriented communication.

Information Transparency

With information disclosure, the company not only conveys a message, but also opens up space for feedback from the public. This shows that the communication carried out has led to ideal communication practices, namely dialogical, participatory, and oriented communication between the company and the public.

Message Control

Message control as the first step of environmental communication not only serves as an internal mechanism, but also as part of a two-way communication strategy oriented towards the balance of interests between the company and society. This is in line with the main principle of Excellence in Public Relations, which is to build harmonious relationships through open, accurate, and responsive communication.

Persuasive Communication Strategies

Ultimately, these findings can be analyzed using the theory of Excellence in Public Relations, specifically derivatives of the Two-Way Symmetrical model. This model emphasizes that effective communication is two-way, balanced, and prioritizes dialogue and mutual understanding between the organization and its public. The persuasive communication strategy carried out by the Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk shows that there are efforts to not only influence the community, but also understand their needs and concerns through an open and communicative approach.

The strategy has reflected the principle of symmetrical two-way communication, where companies and communities interact with each other to reach a common understanding on air quality issues.

Relationship Building

The existence of dialogue forums and community involvement confirms that the company has led to two-way communication that allows for mutual exchange of information and understanding. Furthermore, the relationship building aspect can also be seen from how the company puts public input as part of the decision-making process. This shows that the relationships built are not only symbolic, but also substantive because they involve the public in the organizational process.

Obstacles Faced by Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk in the Midst of Environmental Issues Related to Air Quality

Perception Differences as Indicators of Two-Way Communication Gap

Thus, differences in perception are not only an obstacle, but can also be used as an evaluative indicator for companies in improving the quality of two-way communication that is more effective and sustainable.

Limitations of Public Understanding and Challenges in Information Delivery

In the perspective of the theory of Excellence in Public Relations, this condition shows that the communication practice carried out has been on the right path towards the Two-Way Symmetrical model, which is communication that prioritizes dialogue and mutual understanding between the organization and its public. Although not entirely ideal, the efforts made by the Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk reflect the commitment to continue to improve the quality of communication that is more participatory, adaptive, and oriented towards long-term relationships with the community.

Thus, the limitations of public understanding are not solely an obstacle, but also an opportunity for companies to continue to develop more effective and sustainable communication strategies.

Limitations on Access to Information

Limited access to information in PT Semen Baturaja Tbk's environmental communication can be understood as a dynamic that encourages the company to continue to develop communication strategies that are

more inclusive, adaptive, and oriented to public needs. This also shows that the public relations practice carried out has been on a path in accordance with modern communication principles that emphasize openness, participation, and balance of relationships between the organization and the public.

The Development of Information Flows in Social Media

Thus, communication carried out by Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk can be categorized as an adaptive combination between Two-Way Symmetrical and Two-Way Asymmetrical, which is adjusted to the dynamics of information flows on social media. This approach shows that the company is not only oriented towards delivering the message, but also on building a harmonious and sustainable relationship with its public.

CONCLUSION

Environmental communication carried out by Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk in responding to air quality issues can be seen from efforts to identify public perceptions, implement information transparency, control of structured messages, and use of persuasive communication strategies that are educational and easy to understand. In addition, building relationships with the community is carried out in a sustainable manner through dialogue, public involvement, and social programs, so as to be able to support the creation of trust.

Although there are dynamics such as differences in perception, limited public understanding, uneven access to information, and the rapid flow of information on social media, these conditions are part of the process of adjusting communication that continues to develop. Overall, the communication practices carried out have led to dialogical and participatory two-way communication and show a positive tendency in building harmonious relationships between companies and society.

SUGGESTIONS

For Public Relations of PT Semen Baturaja Tbk

Increase the intensity of dialogue communication with the community through more routine and participatory interactive forums.

Develop strategies for simplifying technical information to make it easier to understand by all levels of society.

Expanding the reach of information distribution by utilizing a combination of digital and communication media

For the next researcher:

Examine environmental communication with a quantitative approach to measure the level of communication effectiveness in a more measurable manner.

Expand the research object on other industrial companies to obtain a more comprehensive comparison.

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