
PT PERTAMINA'S CORPORATE COMMUNICATION STRATEGY IN RESPONSE TO THE MINISTER OF FINANCE'S INSINUATION OVER THE STAGNATION OF NEW REFINERY CONSTRUCTION

By:

Ketut Deta Rastika

Universitas Nasional

Address: JL. Sawo Manila No.61, RT.14/RW.7, Pejaten Bar., Ps. Minggu, Kota Jakarta Selatan, Daerah Khusus Ibukota Jakarta (12520).

Korespondensi Penulis: rastika.deta@gmail.com

Abstract. This study aims to analyze PT Pertamina's corporate communication strategy in response to the insinuation of the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia regarding the slow construction of new refineries that are part of the Refinery Development Master Plan (RDMP) and Grass Root Refinery (GRR) projects. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach with a case study method, through analysis of the company's official statements, national media reports, and digital communication activities on various official Pertamina platforms. The results show that Pertamina implements a defensive-reflective communication strategy that emphasizes data-based clarification without being confrontational, and uses a framing strategy to shift public perception from criticism to understanding the complexity of national energy policies. In addition, Pertamina applies the principles of transparency and reassurance through regular publication of project progress, as well as strengthening relations with the media as an instrument to control public opinion (media relations). The communication built is diplomatic and synergistic with the government, reflecting the application of the principles of Stakeholder Theory and Image Repair Theory in the management of SOEs' reputations. Overall, Pertamina's communication strategy has proven effective in maintaining the stability of the company's image, stabilizing public

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opinion, and strengthening institutional legitimacy amid political pressure and public expectations.

Keywords: Corporate Communication, Reputation Management, Framing Strategy, Image Repair Theory, Pertamina.

***Abstrak.** Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis strategi komunikasi korporat PT Pertamina sebagai respons terhadap pernyataan Menteri Keuangan Republik Indonesia mengenai lambatnya pembangunan kilang baru yang merupakan bagian dari Rencana Induk Pengembangan Kilang (RDMP) dan proyek Kilang Baru (GRR). Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif dengan metode studi kasus, melalui analisis pernyataan resmi perusahaan, laporan media nasional, dan aktivitas komunikasi digital di berbagai platform resmi Pertamina. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Pertamina menerapkan strategi komunikasi defensif-reflektif yang menekankan klarifikasi berbasis data tanpa bersifat konfrontatif, serta menggunakan strategi framing untuk mengubah persepsi publik dari kritik menjadi pemahaman terhadap kompleksitas kebijakan energi nasional. Selain itu, Pertamina menerapkan prinsip transparansi dan jaminan melalui publikasi rutin perkembangan proyek, serta memperkuat hubungan dengan media sebagai alat untuk mengendalikan opini publik (hubungan media). Komunikasi yang dibangun bersifat diplomatis dan sinergis dengan pemerintah, mencerminkan penerapan prinsip-prinsip Teori Pemangku Kepentingan dan Teori Perbaikan Citra dalam pengelolaan reputasi BUMN. Secara keseluruhan, strategi komunikasi Pertamina telah terbukti efektif dalam menjaga stabilitas citra perusahaan, menstabilkan opini publik, dan memperkuat legitimasi institusional di tengah tekanan politik.*

***Kata Kunci:** Komunikasi Korporat, Manajemen Reputasi, Strategi Framing, Teori Perbaikan Citra, Pertamina.*

INTRODUCTION

In the context of the national energy industry, PT Pertamina (Persero) plays a strategic role as a state-owned enterprise (SOE) responsible for the supply and management of energy, especially oil and gas. However, in recent years, Pertamina's

performance has been in the spotlight of the public and the government, especially related to the stagnation of the construction of new oil refineries that are part of the Refinery Development Master Plan (RDMP) and Grass Root Refinery (GRR) programs. The program is actually expected to increase domestic fuel production capacity and reduce dependence on imports. However, until now, the progress of the refinery project is not significant (Casal-Ribeiro et al., 2025).

This situation has become increasingly attractive to the public after the emergence of insinuations from the Minister of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia, which highlighted the slow realization of the construction of new refineries by Pertamina. The statement then triggered various responses and reactions in the public space, including the mass media and social media. In the context of corporate communication, the insinuations of high-ranking state officials such as the Minister of Finance are not just technical criticisms, but also a test of Pertamina's communication strategy and institutional reputation as a state-owned corporation that plays a strategic role in national energy security (Fritsch, 2015).

Pertamina as a corporate entity is required to be able to manage public issues and build positive perceptions through effective, transparent, and strategic communication. Corporate communication strategies are the main instrument in maintaining a company's image, especially when facing a reputation crisis stemming from external actors such as government officials. Corporate responses to public criticism not only determine the direction of public opinion, but also affect the trust of investors, strategic partners, and other stakeholders (Vigolo et al., 2025).

In this case, Pertamina's communication strategy is interesting to study because it involves the dynamics between energy politics, corporate governance, and public communication. How Pertamina responds to the Minister of Finance's insinuations through official statements, media management, and message framing reflects the extent to which the company is able to manage the crisis and maintain its public legitimacy. On the other hand, this phenomenon also shows the importance of communication synergy between SOEs and related ministries, so that the message conveyed to the public remains consistent with government policies and does not cause the perception of internal conflicts between state institutions (Annesi et al., 2025).

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Therefore, this research or article seeks to analyze PT Pertamina's corporate communication strategy in response to the Minister of Finance's insinuation about the stagnation of new refinery construction, focusing on crisis communication approaches, reputation management, and the implications of public messages on the company's image. This analysis is expected to provide a deeper understanding of how strategic SOEs such as Pertamina manage public discourse in sensitive situations, as well as how corporate communication strategies can be used as a tool for internal and external diplomacy to maintain reputation stability amid political pressure and high public expectations (Leonhardt & Guertler, 2025).

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach that aims to deeply understand PT Pertamina's corporate communication strategy in responding to the Minister of Finance's insinuation regarding the stagnation of new refinery construction. The qualitative approach was chosen because it is considered the most relevant to explore the meaning, context, and dynamics of communication that cannot be explained numerically, but through the interpretation of the message, social context, and communication strategies used by the company. This research is in the form of a case study, because it focuses on one specific event, namely how Pertamina builds public communication and manages its institutional image amid government criticism. Through the case study approach, researchers can identify communication patterns and rhetorical strategies used by corporations in dealing with sensitive public issues that have an impact on the company's reputation (Sugiyono, 2018).

This research was conducted by focusing on PT Pertamina's public communication activities during the period of issues related to the Minister of Finance's insinuations, especially in 2024 to 2025. Data was collected from various sources, including the company's official statements through Pertamina's website and press releases, uploads on official social media such as Instagram, X (Twitter), and LinkedIn, as well as news from national online media such as Kompas, CNBC Indonesia, Kontan, Tempo, and Detik. These sources were chosen because they have an important role in shaping public opinion and showing how corporate messages are received by the public.

The data used in this study consisted of primary data and secondary data. Primary data was obtained through in-depth interviews with relevant sources, such as Pertamina's corporate communication practitioners, communication academics, and energy policy analysts (if interviews can be conducted). Meanwhile, secondary data was obtained from public documents, official press releases, news articles, annual reports, and analysis of public opinion in online media. Data collection was carried out through documentation techniques, literature studies, and media observations, where researchers searched various publications to find communication patterns and messaging strategies used by Pertamina in responding to these criticisms.

The data analysis process was carried out using discourse analysis and framing, which aims to identify rhetorical patterns, message viewpoints, and how Pertamina frames its response to the Minister of Finance's insinuations. The analysis is carried out through three main stages, namely data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawn. At the data reduction stage, the researcher selects data that is relevant to the focus of the research. Furthermore, at the data presentation stage, the findings are organized in the form of a narrative that describes Pertamina's communication strategy systematically. Finally, at the conclusion stage, the researcher interprets the meaning behind the communication strategy used, both from the aspect of the message, the media used, and the political and social context behind it.

To maintain the validity and validity of the data, this study applies the triangulation technique of sources and methods. This step is carried out by comparing the results of media observations, official company documents, and interviews with various sources to ensure the consistency and accuracy of the data. Through this approach, the research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of PT Pertamina's corporate communication strategy, as well as show how the company manages reputation and builds a public narrative in situations that contain political pressure and high media attention.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study reveal that PT Pertamina's corporate communication strategy in responding to the Minister of Finance's insinuation about the stagnation of new refinery construction is carried out through a cautious, diplomatic, and oriented approach

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to strengthening public image. Based on data analysis from official statements, media publications, and digital communication activities, five main findings were found that illustrate Pertamina's corporate communication pattern in dealing with a reputation crisis.

Defensive-Reflective Communication Strategy

Research shows that PT Pertamina implements a defensive-reflective communication strategy, which is a corporate communication approach that focuses on self-defense efforts through factual clarification, without causing confrontation or escalating conflicts with critics. In the context of the insinuation raised by the Minister of Finance regarding the stagnation of new refinery construction, Pertamina chose to respond carefully by prioritizing rational arguments based on technical data that can be verified by the public. This strategy can be seen from various official company releases, press releases, and statements from Pertamina's top officials who emphasized that the national refinery project continues to run according to its long-term plan, despite facing a number of obstacles in terms of investment, licensing, and global energy market dynamics (Beckert & Koch, 2025).

This defensive-reflective approach demonstrates the intelligence of corporate communication in maintaining a balance between defending reputation and respecting government authority. As a strategic SOE, Pertamina is not in a position to openly feud with public officials, so a communication strategy is needed that maintains the company's authority without giving the impression of resistance to government supervision. Therefore, Pertamina's response is more directed towards reframing issues through the delivery of project progress, investment achievements, and the company's commitment to the national energy security agenda. In this way, Pertamina not only explains the situation at hand, but also affirms the position of corporations as constructive partners in national economic and energy policies (Akbar, 2021).

In addition to functioning as an image defense mechanism, the defensive-reflective strategy also plays a role in shaping Pertamina's image as a professional, calm, and rational institution in the face of public and political pressure. This attitude is different from a confrontational strategy that can worsen the communication crisis situation. Pertamina chooses an empathetic and argumentative communication channel, by

displaying quantitative data and project sustainability narratives to reduce negative speculation in the public space. This approach is in line with the principles of Image Repair Theory by William Benoit, which emphasizes the importance of reducing offensiveness and corrective action in maintaining organizational credibility in the midst of criticism. Furthermore, this strategy can be seen as a form of reflective communication, in which the company not only focuses on short-term defense, but also introspects on the challenges faced in its strategic projects. Through this reflection, Pertamina seeks to strengthen project governance, improve the internal communication system, and ensure that the information conveyed to the public truly reflects the company's actual performance. This shows the integration between reputation management and organizational learning as part of a long-term communication strategy.

Thus, Pertamina's defensive-reflective communication strategy not only serves to contain the escalation of issues and maintain harmonious relations with the Ministry of Finance, but also reflects the maturity of corporate communication in the face of external pressures. This approach shows that Pertamina is able to combine data firmness, calmness, and political sensitivity in one strategic communication framework oriented towards the sustainability of the company's reputation.

Framing Issues Through Framing Strategies

PT Pertamina uses the communication framing strategy as the main instrument in shaping public perception of the stagnant issue of new refinery construction. Framing, in the context of corporate communication, serves to determine how an issue is perceived, interpreted, and interpreted by the public. In this case, Pertamina does not deny the fact that the refinery project is delayed, but carefully frames the issue as part of a global and structural challenge, not as a form of managerial failure or internal weakness of the company. This approach allows Pertamina to direct public opinion to see problems in a macro context involving external factors such as fluctuations in world oil prices, international geopolitical dynamics, global environmental policies, and long-term investment processes that are full of bureaucratic complexity (Ndone, 2025).

Through public messages that are consistently conveyed through press releases, media conferences, and digital uploads, Pertamina constructs a narrative that refinery construction is a long-term project that requires policy stability and cross-sector support.

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By framing the issue as a national challenge, not a single institution's fault, Pertamina succeeded in doing what Entman (1993) called problem definition and causal interpretation, namely shifting the public's focus from who is at fault to what is the real root of the problem. This strategy is also in line with the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) put forward by W. Timothy Coombs, where organizations need to tailor their communication response to the type and level of responsibility of the crisis. Because this delay issue is included in the category of victim cluster (crisis caused by external factors), the diminish response or reframing strategy is the right step to protect reputation without having to defend excessively (Vallen et al., 2023).

In addition, Pertamina's framing strategy also highlights the narrative of sustainable development and national energy transformation. In various official publications, the company emphasized that the refinery project is not only about accelerating production, but also about strengthening energy security and national independence in the long term. By raising this narrative, Pertamina succeeded in creating a reframing issue that changed public perception: from seeing delays as obstacles to seeing them as a process of structural transformation towards a more efficient and sovereign energy system. This strategy shows Pertamina's ability to utilize the principle of media setting agenda, where the company actively determines the topics and directions of public discourse that it wants to strengthen.

This framing also reflects Pertamina's sophistication in managing the symbolism of corporate communication, namely how the company uses visual imagery, slogans, and official statements to reinforce its main message. In social media uploads, for example, Pertamina uses visualizations of the refinery project under way, physical progress data, and quotes from high-ranking company officials who affirm their commitment to national energy security. All of these elements form a consistent framing layer between text, visuals, and strategic narrative. This approach shows that Pertamina's communication strategy does not only function as informative, but also persuasive and symbolic, creating a positive impression amidst dynamic public opinion.

Thus, Pertamina's framing strategy functions as an effective public perception management tool. Through careful framing of the message, the company is able to shift

the public's attention from personal criticism of individuals or management to structural understanding of complex national energy challenges. This strategy not only maintains the company's image positive and contextual, but also strengthens Pertamina's position as a strategic actor in the national energy policy system. This kind of framing shows how corporate communication can be used as a public policy instrument to build a shared awareness that energy problems are not just the responsibility of corporations, but also the result of economic, political, and national policy interactions as a whole.

Implementation of Transparency and Reassurance Strategy

The findings of the study show that PT Pertamina strategically implements information transparency and public reassurance strategies as part of efforts to maintain the trust of stakeholders, especially in the midst of increasing public scrutiny of the company's performance after the Minister of Finance's insinuation. In the context of corporate communication, transparency strategies are not just a moral obligation, but a strategic instrument to build institutional credibility and legitimacy. Pertamina understands that information disclosure has a crucial role in suppressing the potential for distortion of public narratives and maintaining the company's reputation in the eyes of the public, government, and investors. Therefore, the company actively utilizes various official communication channels such as corporate websites, annual reports, press releases, and social media accounts (Instagram, X/Twitter, and LinkedIn) to convey the latest developments of the Balikpapan RDMP and GRR Tuban refinery projects (Al Mahameed & Abras, 2025).

Pertamina's communication is always data- and evidence-based, reflecting the company's seriousness in showing real progress that can be verified by the public. In various digital uploads, Pertamina displays physical construction achievements, project progress graphs, and testimonials from project leaders that illustrate the company's commitment to development targets. This approach indirectly shapes Pertamina's image as a professional, open, and accountable institution, while affirming that the company continues to operate according to the principles of good corporate governance (GCG). Through this strategy, Pertamina not only seeks to convince the public that the refinery project is not stagnant, but also affirms transparency as a form of social responsibility and ethical corporate communication.

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The implementation of the reassurance strategy is also evident in the way Pertamina manages its public communication messages and tone. In the face of sharp criticism from government officials, the company does not show a defensive stance, but rather puts forward a reassuring and solution-oriented message. For example, Pertamina emphasizes the importance of cross-agency collaboration to accelerate refinery construction and commitment to strengthening national energy security. This approach reflects relationship-oriented communication, where companies prioritize long-term relationships with governments, communities, and strategic partners rather than simply responding to momentary issues. In this way, Pertamina positions itself as a responsible, adaptive, and optimistic entity in the midst of public pressure.

From a theoretical perspective, Pertamina's transparency and reassurance strategy can be associated with Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984), which emphasizes the importance of open communication in building a relationship of mutual trust between the company and stakeholders. Pertamina understands that the company's reputation is not only built on financial performance, but also on the extent to which the company is able to maintain honest, informative, and sustainable communication. Through this strategy, Pertamina has succeeded in upholding the principle of two-way symmetrical communication as stated by James E. Grunig—which is dialogue and mutually influencing communication between corporations and the public. Transparency here is not only informative, but also participatory: the public is given space to understand, assess, and even provide input on the company's performance.

Pertamina's consistency of transparency also has strategic value in the context of crisis management. By keeping the flow of information open and controlled, companies can minimize the potential for misinformation, rumors, or negative framing that develop in the media. This is important because in reputational crisis situations, information gaps are often filled by speculation that can worsen public perception. Pertamina anticipates this by displaying valid data, empathetic language, and visual evidence of project progress, so that the public has a rational basis to assess the situation. This strategy makes Pertamina's corporate communication proactive, not reactive, and able to turn crisis dynamics into opportunities to demonstrate professionalism and institutional accountability.

Thus, the implementation of transparency and reassurance strategies by PT Pertamina not only serves as an informative communication mechanism, but also as a tool to reconstruct public trust and strengthen the company's social legitimacy. Continued transparency shows Pertamina's seriousness in upholding the values of openness, accountability, and public responsibility. Meanwhile, the reassurance message affirms Pertamina's position as a stable and adaptive entity amid political pressure and challenges in the global energy industry. These two strategies combine to be an important foundation in building credible, resilient, and reputation-oriented corporate communications.

Strengthening Media Relations

The results of the study show that the relationship with the mass media (media relations) is one of the main pillars in PT Pertamina's corporate communication strategy, especially in an effort to maintain reputation and control the public narrative after the emergence of insinuations from the Minister of Finance. In the context of strategic communication, the media plays a role not only as a channel for conveying information, but also as a partner that has great power in shaping public opinion. Pertamina recognizes the importance of the role of the media in determining the direction of news, so the company implements a proactive media engagement strategy to ensure that the message conveyed to the public is accurate, constructive, and in line with the company's vision (Einwiller et al., 2025).

Pertamina actively collaborates with major national media such as Kompas, Tempo, CNBC Indonesia, Kontan, and Bisnis Indonesia in the form of publication of project progress reports, exclusive interviews with the board of directors, and clarifying press releases. Through this approach, Pertamina has succeeded in building a mutually beneficial relationship between the company and the media. For companies, the media is a tool to educate the public about the progress of refinery projects and the global challenges faced; Meanwhile, for the media, Pertamina's open access to information increases the credibility and accuracy of their reporting. Thus, Pertamina's media relations strategy is not just a form of external relations, but also part of a planned public perception management (Mutenda, 2025).

Furthermore, this strategy shows how Pertamina implements the principle of narrative control in corporate communication. In a situation where public opinion can be

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easily distorted by social media and sensational news, the ability to maintain the consistency of messages becomes critical. Pertamina does this by ensuring that every official release, interview, and press conference contains a uniform message: that the company remains committed to national energy security and continues to work according to its long-term development plan. The consistency of the message is key to building trust continuity sustainable public trust in the company's credibility. From a theoretical point of view, Pertamina's media relations practice reflects the application of the concept of Agenda Setting Theory (McCombs & Shaw, 1972), where the media is used as an instrument to influence the priority of issues in the public mind. By collaborating with the mainstream media, Pertamina has succeeded in shifting the focus of news from criticism of performance to discussions about project progress reports and the company's contribution in supporting the national energy development agenda. Through this mechanism, Pertamina not only responds to issues, but also directs public opinion strategically. This is also in line with the principles of Reputation Management Theory, which emphasizes the importance of controlling public messages as an effort to maintain the corporate image in the long term.

In addition, Pertamina's relationship with the media also reflects the application of the two-way symmetrical communication strategy as explained in Excellence Theory by Grunig and Hunt (1984). Pertamina does not treat the media solely as a means of spreading messages, but as a dialogue partner in building mutual understanding. Through open interviews, press conferences, and media visit programs, the company provides a space for the media to assess and confirm facts directly in the field. This practice shows that Pertamina implements a participatory and open-ended communication model, which in turn strengthens the company's credibility as a strategic state-owned enterprise that prioritizes transparency and public accountability.

Media relations strategies also function as a tool to mitigate reputational risks. In the dynamics of fast news, negative issues can easily spread and lower the company's image. Therefore, Pertamina takes anticipatory steps by providing periodic press releases, clarifying erroneous information, and establishing informal communication with economic and energy journalists to ensure that the news context remains objective. This approach is in line with the concept of issue management, which is a company's

systematic efforts to monitor, assess, and respond to public issues that have the potential to affect corporate reputation. Thus, the media not only functions as an external party, but also as part of the crisis communication ecosystem that supports the stability of the company's image.

By building good relations with the media, Pertamina has succeeded in managing public opinion, minimizing the potential for negative news, and strengthening its image as a state-owned enterprise with professionalism and integrity in carrying out the national energy mandate. A consistent, open, and data-based media relations strategy is proof that Pertamina has a mature communication system that is adaptive to the pressure of public opinion. A harmonious relationship with the media also shows that the company understands the importance of communication collaboration in the era of digital transparency, where reputation is not only determined by internal performance, but also by the narrative formed in the public space.

Thus, Pertamina's strengthening media relations is not only a form of tactical communication, but is an integral part of a long-term corporate communication strategy to maintain trust, control perceptions, and ensure that Pertamina's image as a pillar of national energy security remains strong in the eyes of the public and other strategic stakeholders.

Diplomatic and Synergistic Communication with the Government

The latest research findings show that PT Pertamina displays a diplomatic and synergistic communication style in responding to the insinuations conveyed by the Minister of Finance regarding the slow construction of new refineries. This attitude shows that Pertamina does not position the criticism as an attack, but as a form of strategic input from key stakeholders who have an interest in the success of the national energy project. In every public statement, both through press releases and interviews with the media, Pertamina emphasized the importance of cross-agency cooperation, as well as reinforcing the message that the company needs regulatory, fiscal, and investment support from the government to accelerate the completion of refinery projects (Miliani et al., 2025).

Pertamina's communication style is diplomatic, inclusive, and solutive, where each message is designed to show the alignment between corporate goals and government policies. The language used in official communication emphasizes the values of synergy,

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collaboration, and unity of national vision, by displaying narratives such as "Pertamina supports government policies in realizing national energy security" or "Pertamina is committed to strengthening the strategic role of SOEs in sustainable development." The choice of this kind of diction shows a high awareness of political communication the company not only prioritizes corporate performance, but also aligns its message with the direction of national development as stated in the National Medium-Term Development Plan (RPJMN) and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) agenda in the energy sector (Casal-Ribeiro et al., 2025).

This diplomatic approach reflects Pertamina's maturity in corporate communication as a state institution that understands political sensitivity and government hierarchy. In the context of the relationship between SOEs and ministries, reactive or defensive communication against criticism has the potential to create the impression of disharmony between state institutions. Pertamina avoids these risks by building a message that emphasizes harmony and a sense of collective responsibility. Thus, the communication carried out not only serves to defend itself, but also to affirm Pertamina's role as a strategic partner of the government in carrying out the mandate of national energy security. This strategy shows the adaptability of organizational communication in a bureaucratic system, where the balance between the economic interests of corporations and the political interests of the state must be carefully maintained.

From a theoretical perspective, this approach can be explained through Government Relations Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement Theory, which places the government as the primary stakeholder in SOE communication governance. Pertamina runs a symmetrical two-way communication, where the messages conveyed not only flow from the company to the government, but also accommodate feedback and use it as a basis for internal policy improvement. In this case, communication functions as a coordination mechanism that strengthens synergy between institutions, as well as a tool of public diplomacy to maintain the stability of institutional relations and corporate social legitimacy. This approach shows that Pertamina is not only a business entity, but also plays a role as a diplomatic actor in the national energy policy ecosystem.

In addition, this synergistic communication style also strengthens public trust and stakeholders' belief that Pertamina remains loyal to government policies and oriented

towards national interests. In various official statements, Pertamina has never positioned itself as the "blame" party, but as part of a joint solution to strengthen Indonesia's energy independence. This strategy is particularly important in the context of the reputation of SOEs, as the public often assesses the credibility of state-owned companies by the extent to which they are able to maintain harmonious relations with the government as the highest authority holder. Through communication based on collaboration and institutional loyalty, Pertamina has succeeded in sending a message that the company is not only responsible for economic performance, but also for the country's ideological mission in national development.

Thus, the diplomatic and synergistic communication carried out by Pertamina shows the level of strategic maturity in the management of inter-institutional relations. This approach not only suppresses potential public conflicts and strengthens the company's positive image, but also creates communication stability that supports the sustainability of national strategic projects. In a broader context, this strategy shows how corporate communication can function as a tool of economic diplomacy, linking the interests of government, corporations, and society within a common goal: realizing energy security, national independence, and sustainable development in Indonesia.

Overall, the results of this study show that PT Pertamina's corporate communication strategy is reactive, rational, and reputation-oriented, with a focus on framing positive messages, information disclosure, strengthening media relations, and harmonious institutional relationships. Through this approach, Pertamina has successfully managed the reputation crisis professionally, maintained credibility in the midst of public pressure, and demonstrated the maturity of corporate communication in the context of the relationship between SOEs and the government. This strategy not only serves as a reputation defense mechanism, but also as an instrument of public diplomacy that maintains Pertamina's image as the main implementer of national energy development.

DISCUSSION

Pertamina's defensive-reflective communication strategy reflects the application of the principles in Image Repair Theory developed by William L. Benoit. This theory explains that when an organization faces an attack on its reputation, the strategic step that

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can be taken is to clarify, justify, or improve its image through public messaging. Pertamina, in this case, chose a form of reducing offensiveness by highlighting the institution's goodwill and responsibility towards the national refinery project. Through an official statement affirming its commitment to long-term development, Pertamina did not reject criticism directly, but instead shifted the focus from mistakes to the broader context of energy policy. This shows the company's efforts to take corrective action, namely showing real steps for improvement without having to refute the critics frontally. The strategy effectively maintains a balance between reputation defense and institutional diplomacy (Zacky & Zacky-Eze, 2025).

The findings on the use of framing strategies in Pertamina's communication can be explained through the concept of Crisis Communication Framing in modern crisis communication studies. Framing is used to control the public's interpretation of an issue by choosing certain narratives, symbols, and emphasis in the message. In this case, Pertamina framed the issue of "stagnant refinery construction" as a national challenge influenced by global factors, not as a form of institutional failure. This strategy is consistent with W. Timothy Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which emphasizes the importance of adjusting communication strategies to the level of organizational responsibility for crises. Because this crisis is external (not the result of Pertamina's direct fault), the diminish response and reframing strategy is the right step. In this way, the company can maintain legitimacy without having to admit mistakes that are not internal (Yang et al., 2025).

Pertamina's transparency and reassurance strategy shows the application of the Stakeholder Theory principle from R. Edward Freeman. This theory emphasizes that every organizational decision must consider the interests of all affected parties, both internal and external. Pertamina realizes that public criticism of the company's performance can affect investor confidence, the government, and the public. Therefore, the company strives to maintain open communication through the publication of project data, progress reports, and social media uploads that showcase real work results. This practice reflects a responsive communication approach, where companies not only provide information, but also demonstrate accountability and openness to public evaluation. Transparency that is consistently maintained is proof that Pertamina carries

out communication not only to maintain its image, but also to strengthen long-term relationships with strategic stakeholders (Jacobs & Liebrecht, 2025).

The results of the study show that Pertamina uses mass media as an important instrument in building a positive narrative and controlling public perception. This is in line with the concept of Reputation Management in corporate communication theory, where the media is the main bridge between the organization and the public. By collaborating with national media such as Kompas, CNBC Indonesia, and Tempo, Pertamina ensures that the message conveyed remains structured and in line with the company's strategic goals. According to the Corporate Reputation Framework approach, a company's credibility is not only built from tangible actions, but also from how those actions are effectively communicated through public channels. Pertamina has successfully used media relations as an agenda setting tool, where the company can direct the focus of news from negative issues to discourse on the progress of national energy development and independence (Winkler et al., 2025).

In the context of SOEs, the communication relationship between companies and the government has a strong political dimension. Therefore, Pertamina's diplomatic and synergistic communication strategy reflects the application of the principle of Government Relations Strategy, which is to maintain harmonious communication with government stakeholders. Pertamina does not use offensive defensive rhetoric, but prioritizes a collaborative language that emphasizes the unity of the vision of national development. From the perspective of the Stakeholder Engagement Model, this strategy serves to avoid public conflicts and strengthen Pertamina's position as an integral part of the country's energy policy. Diplomatic communication is also a tool to ensure the consistency of messages between agencies, so that the public sees the unity of direction between Pertamina and the Ministry of Finance in achieving the same goal. Thus, Pertamina's communication not only serves as a clarification mechanism, but also as a form of public diplomacy on a national scale (Selaković et al., 2025).

Based on the integration of research findings and corporate communication theories, it can be concluded that PT Pertamina's communication strategy in responding to the Minister of Finance's insinuations reflects a mature and strategic crisis communication model. Pertamina not only focuses on defending its image, but also on efforts to reconstruct public meaning through framing, transparency, and planned media

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relations. The approach based on Image Repair Theory, SCCT, and Stakeholder Theory shows that effective corporate communication in the context of a crisis is not only reactive, but must also be diplomatic, participatory, and data-driven. With a measurable and collaboration-oriented strategy, Pertamina has succeeded in maintaining public legitimacy and strengthening its position as a strategic SOE that is adaptive to the dynamics of public opinion and political pressure in the era of information disclosure (Divon et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that PT Pertamina's corporate communication strategy in responding to the Minister of Finance's insinuations regarding the stagnation of new refinery construction is carried out in a measurable, diplomatic, and data-based manner, with the main orientation on restoring image and strengthening public legitimacy. Pertamina has successfully managed strategic issues that have the potential to become reputational crises through the application of modern corporate communication principles combined with government relations approaches.

First, Pertamina uses a defensive-reflective strategy by emphasizing clarification and institutional responsibility, without showing a confrontational attitude towards public criticism. This strategy is in line with the Image Repair Theory model which emphasizes the importance of reputation management through clarification and corrective actions. Second, the company carefully framing issues to shift the public narrative from accusations of failure to discourse on global challenges and complex national energy policies. Thus, the company is able to position itself as a strategic actor that faces systemic constraints, not the main cause of project delays.

Third, through the transparency and reassurance strategy, Pertamina shows its commitment to information disclosure and public accountability. Data-driven communication and regular project updates build trust and reduce negative tensions in society. Fourth, the strategy of strengthening media relations is carried out effectively to maintain the consistency of messages and control the direction of public opinion. By utilizing credible national media channels, Pertamina is able to change the focus of news from criticism to productive discussions on the progress of national energy development.

Fifth, the diplomatic and synergistic communication style between Pertamina and the government shows corporate maturity in maintaining the stability of institutional relations. Pertamina does not position itself as an opposing party, but as a collaborative partner that supports the government's vision in realizing energy independence. This strategy shows the application of the principles of Stakeholder Theory, where communication is not only directed to maintain the company's image, but also to strengthen long-term relationships with strategic stakeholders.

Overall, PT Pertamina's corporate communication strategy has proven effective in controlling reputation crises, stabilizing public opinion, and affirming the company's strategic role as the main pillar of national energy security. An approach that combines transparency, diplomacy, and strategic framing shows that corporate communication is not just a defensive tool, but also a strategic instrument to maintain harmony between corporations, governments, and society during complex public policy dynamics.

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