

## **Media Relations Activities of Syariah Hotel Solo in Improving Corporate Image**

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### **Abstract**

Media relations are the attempt to achieve a maximum publication or broadcasting in order to create people awareness. The success of public relations to build image can be obtained from the harmonious relations with the media relations. Syariah Hotel Solo presents a new brand identity which is easily recognized by its preferences to use the ornamental pattern which is rooted in Islamic tradition, but was able to compete in news coverage in the media. This research aims to know media relations activities and the challenges conducted by Syariah Hotel Solo in order to improve the company's image. The method used is descriptive qualitative. Techniques of data collection are through interviews, observation and documentation. The results of research show that media relations activities performed by Syariah Hotel Solo in order to improve corporate image are: Press Conference, Press Briefing, Press Tour, Press Release, Press Luncheon, Press Interview, Media Visit, and Greeting Media Partner's Anniversary. Some of the activities are implemented formally and informal. The obstacles are adjusting the date of internal hotel activities with media's schedule and competition with other hotel's news. This research is expected to become consideration for public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo in implementing media relation activities.

**Keyword:** *Media Relations, Public Relations, Syariah Hotel Solo*

### Introduction

A company needs to respond the challenges and changes in the environment very quickly. Public relations hold a very important and strategic role in a company. Furthermore, a tool of communication in public relations activities serves as a bridge to build a conducive atmosphere within the framework of "win-win solutions" between the various stakeholders in the company, both internal and external in order to build image of the company. (Prasetyo, 2010)

The image of company is formed through proper communication. In this fast moving information age, the decision to present the latest information is often based on the stories of people or friends. Word of mouth or buzz becomes the king today. Managed properly, public relations can be a very effective tool to create a positive image of the company.

The success of public relations to build image can be obtained from the harmonious relations with the media (media relations). It cannot be denied, that the role of the media is very vital in building public awareness. A good relation between both parties will benefit both of them. Media will have a reliable, up to date and accurate source of information while public relation will have a channel to publish its company's promotion and news. This mutually beneficial relationship will have a positive impact for the public relations and media. Through media relations, the company's positive image can be built.

Media relations are the attempt to achieve a maximum publication or broadcasting in order to create people awareness to the company. Relations with the media is not only maintained as a solution after a problem has occurred. It also has to be maintained in a sustainable way.

The same challenges are also faced by PR (public relation) of hotels in Solo, one of tourist destinations in Central Java. The growing numbers of hotel encourages higher level of competition in hospitality industry. One of notable player in the industry is Syariah Hotel Solo.

Syariah Hotel Solo (SHS) is a 4(four)-star sharia hotel and is also the largest syariah hotel in Indonesia located in Adi Sucipto street Solo. The hotel presents a new brand identity which is easily recognized by its preferences to use the ornamental pattern which is rooted in Islamic tradition. Being Sharia means adhering to Islamic values and teaching, nevertheless the hotel accept both Muslim and non-muslim to stay at the hotel. One of notable characteristics of sharia hotel is its commitment to serve halal food which is certified by Council of Indonesian Ulama (MUI).

Public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo are also doing many efforts in order to improve the company's image. One of the efforts made is a good relationship with the media to publish the company and deliver its message to the public, Last October, SHS is only second to The Sunan Hotel Solo in term of publication in printed newspaper.

Understanding the importance of the role of the media in public relations activities program of Syariah Hotel Solo, this research aims to find out the public relations activities in establishing relations with media as an

attempt to improve the image of the company, in accordance with the concept of public relations.

#### Literature Review

Media relations according to Philip Lesly is:

“A relationship with communication media in seeking publicity or responding to media's interests in the company's interest”

Media relations and public relations are the same in its nature. Both institutions must work to ensure that information sourced from activities processed according to journalistic principles. In its function, public relations implement media relations activities in order to build good relation for awakening positive image. Several media relations activities are as follows:

The press conference, is an interview given to several journalists by a Government official or private institution in order to make an announcement or answer questions. The President, King, Ministers, Governors, Directors, Ruler, Notable Families, Public Figures, press conference.

Press Briefing includes a formal press conference held by company periodically. Usually in the beginning or the end of month or a year by public relations and company leader. Press briefing hold a discussion or dialogue, give each other input or information that is considered important for both parties.

Press Tour, is an activity where journalist from the mass media which has been well known by public relations are invited to visit some events or organized by a company either in short or long term.

Press Release is an information in the form of news made by public relations that was

delivered to the Press Manager or Editorial of mass media (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines) to be published in mass media.

Special Event in the publications activity and public relations are often held with the journalists, either institutionally or individual. This is usually done in various ways, such as gathering or any other special event.

Press Luncheon is where public relations officials held a luncheon for representatives of mass media or journalists. In this occasion, the press could meet with company's top management to listen to the company's development.

Press Interview. Interview with the press may happen spontaneously or planned. Spontaneous interviews could happen at the legislative assembly or seminar, inauguration, marriage, or any other occasion. Although the situation is spontaneous the company has to aware that the interview might be published in mass media. Based on explanation above, it is important for PR to do media relations activities, to maintain a good relationship with media.

According to Frank Jefkins in his book *Public Relations*, image is defined as

"The Impression, or picture proper (in accordance with reality) of company's policy, personal and services ". (Frank Jefkins, 2003:93)

According to Bill Canton in "Dasar-Dasar Public Relations" (2016) said:

"Image: the impression, the felling, the conception which the public of an object, person or organization.

An interesting insight about image can be found in Islamic teaching. Islam governs all aspect of Muslim's life from the way they behave physically and spiritually. In Al-

Qur'an Allah SWT said:

يَابَنِي آدَمَ قَدْ أَنْزَلْنَا عَلَيْكُمْ لِبَاسًا يُؤَارِي سَوْآتِكُمْ  
وَرِيثًا وَلِبَاسُ التَّقْوَىٰ ذَٰلِكَ خَيْرٌ ذَٰلِكَ مِنْ آيَاتِ اللَّهِ  
لَعَلَّهُمْ يَذَّكَّرُونَ

" O ye children of Adam! We have bestowed raiment upon you to cover your shame, as well as to be an adornment to you. But the raiment of righteousness, that is the best. Such are among the signs of God, that they may receive admonition." (Q.S Al-A'raf 26)

This verse is interesting as it covers explanation on the importance of clothing as an adornment. In addition, it also emphasize that the best kind of clothing is not a physical clothing but rather a spiritual clothing which is called by *taqwa*. In can be interpreted from the verse that building an image will not be sufficient just by a physical performance in the form of employees clothing, company's building architecture, product packaging and so on. A complete image building will include the excellence of service and the whole intangible experience which costumers feel.

The research about corporate image has proven that the image could be measured and changed, although image changes are relatively slow. (Frank Jefkins, 1992).

Syariah Hotel Solo (SHS) is a 4(four)-star sharia hotel and is also the largest sharia hotel in Indonesia. The hotel presents a new brand identity which is easily recognized by its preferences to use the ornamental pattern which is rooted in Islamic tradition. Being Sharia means adhering to Islamic values and teaching, nevertheless the hotel accepts both Muslim and non-muslim to stay at the hotel. The hotel was built by Hutomo Mandala or Tommy Suharto.

In 2016, Syariah Hotel Solo was listed as “The Nominees of the tourist-friendly Muslim family Hotel” and got recognitions from Halal Tourism in National Halal Tourism Competition in 2016. The hotel presents a new brand identity which is easily recognized by its preferences to use the ornamental pattern which is rooted in Islamic tradition. By presenting Islamic teaching, it means Syariah Hotel Solo ought to follow Sharia of Islam and for all ladies employees must wear long clothes and hijab. While for men, they have to wear suitable uniform with cap. Those rules are one of the aims to create a positive image of Syariah Hotel Solo which is exactly different with others (Company Profile SHS)

### Research Method

The type of research used is descriptive qualitative. The researcher described about media relations activities of Syariah Hotel Solo in order to improve company’s image. The locations of this research is Syariah Hotel Solo Adi Sucipto street No. 47, Solo, Central Java. The hotel presents a new brand identity which is easily recognized by its preferences to use the ornamental pattern which is rooted in Islamic tradition, Syariah Hotel Solo is one of tourist destinations in Central Java.

The subjects of this research are: First, Paramita Sari Indah Widarini Public Relations Manager who also designs and implements media relations activities in Syariah Hotel Solo. Second, Dwi Basuki, a Food and Beverage Manager. He is in charge of Promotion Menu conducted quarterly in Syariah Hotel Solo as well as explaining the menu to costumers. Third, Wike, an Assistant of House Keeping Manager of Syariah Solo Hotel. She is responsible for the readiness of the room that will be visited by journalists in Press Tour agenda.

Miles and Huberman stated that qualitative research begins with the collection of data, and continued by data reduction. It should be done by summarizing, sharpening, looking for things that are the eligible for use and discard unnecessary data. Once the data managed carefully, it will be easier to present. Then the conclusion can be drawn and verified (Moleong, 2016).

### Result & Discussion

The press conference is an interview given to several journalists by a Government official or private institution in order to make an announcement or answer questions. The main requirement of the press conference is that the news conveyed to reporters ought to be very important. A press conference will lose its function when the news is not too important, especially if covered by television and radio. (Elvinaro, 2016)

At Syariah Hotel Solo, public relations said, the press conference is held if there are important events organized. Event considered as big are; Milad Syariah’s activity, 3 Months Promo (Food & Beverage), Special Promo on Ramadhan, Eid Fitri and Islamic New Year (Muharram). In every press conference at Syariah Hotel Solo, public relations always prepare the news to be presented.

A very well planned preparation is one of key factors which is always considered by public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo. Several preparations are as follows: First, sending the invitations to journalist a week before. Second, preparing the news which will be delivered as press release. Third, preparing the material for presenter (usually General Manager) or public relations of Syariah Hotel. Fourth, preparing the place. Normally, it is located at “Al Kautsar Restaurant” for informal environment and the possibility to hold breakfast or lunch after the

press conference.

Relationship of public relations and journalists may take the form of functionaries' relationship or personal approach. According to Frank Jefkins, one form of press relations is: personal contact. Basically, the success of relationship between public relations and journalist depends on the "what and how" personal contact between the two sides are maintained through informal relationship such as honesty, mutual understanding and mutual respect as well as good cooperation in order to achieve goals or positive publications

In Islamic perspective, the approach taken by Syariah Hotel Solo public relations to the media. Especially journalists, every media relations activities in accordance with the hadith of the Prophet Muhammad the image of a believer to God and the end.

عن أبي هريرة رضى الله عنه عن رسول الله صلى  
الله عليه وسلم قال:

مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيُكْرِمْ ضَيْفَهُ،  
مَنْ كَانَ يُؤْمِنُ بِاللَّهِ وَالْيَوْمِ الْآخِرِ فَلْيَقُلْ خَيْرًا أَوْ  
لِيَصْمُتْ ( رواه البخارى و مسلم )

"The Prophet Muhammad said, "He who believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him show hospitality to his guest, and he who believes in Allah and the Last Day, let him speak good or remain silent."

This Hadith explained "*Man Kana Yu'minu Billahi Wal Yaumul Alkhiri Fal Yukrim Dhoifahu*" how a *Mu'min* or believer who believes in Allah and the last day will appreciate his guest. In this research, it is described as a media person. Personal relationship reflected in each activity such as; providing facilities and convenient and adequate service to

journalists, so that will form a "friendly" relationship in every activity. In other sentence said "*Fal Yaqul Khairan Aw Liyashmuth*" means public relations provides true information of its credibility to journalists. Then, when news and information are loaded in the media the public consumed true news.

This hadith contains the law that let a Muslim believer to honor the guest. It is a worship that should not be diminished whoever they are. It is also a suggestion to entertain his guests with whatever you have even if it is little. Respecting the guest can be done by immediately welcoming him with a happy face, good manner, and supplying meals.

In this case, public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo often take an informal approach with journalists. This is to ensure that bonds that woven between public relations and media relations are not just business partner but more on daily life by personal contact.

Beside press conference, public relations also organize press briefing activity as one of effort in improving company's image. This activity includes a formal press conference held by company periodically. Usually in the beginning or the end of month or a year by public relations and company leader. Press briefing held in similar way like a discussion or dialogue, where everyone gives each other suggestion or information that is important enough for both parties. Beside, journalist will have an opportunity for digging information about factual and actual problems. The journalist will be aware of publication of regulation, law or new policy by government in the future

As part of press briefing activity, public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo invite journalists quarterly or when there is a launch

of promo package that will be published by local or national media. In this activity, public relations as coordinator in this activity always coordinate with FBM (Food and Beverage Manager). FBM deliver the materials used in menu creation. Occasionally, some journalists ask about material like "Why don't use other materials?" In this process, he explained in detail that material are used in all menu are in accordance with standard and recommendation of halal label form Council of Indonesia Ulama (MUI).

Public relations Syariah Hotel Solo also build good relations and mutual benefit in line with Frank Jefkins explanation: First, by providing service to media, as has been done by public relations to create partnership with media and create reciprocal relationship such as providing compliment voucher personally to journalist to stay for free at the hotel. Second, by supplying good copy, namely supplying good manuscript that attract attention. This will help journalists in the provision of news. Third, by cooperation in providing material, namely doing good cooperation in providing information. It can be done by involving good interviewees such as General Manager or public relations itself in the interview. Fourth, by providing verification facilities, namely the providing of adequate facilities. Fifth, by building a personal relationship with the media, namely establish personal relationships with the media. Underlying this openness and mutually respective professions (Rosady, 2014).

Press tour, is an activity where journalist from a mass media invited to visit some event organized by a company either in short or long term.

The press tour activity, which is known at hotel is not same with the government's

institution which invites some journalists from several media to cover some event or place for several days. In hospitality industry where the scale and scope is smaller, the tour will be different. It is known that public relations of Syariah hotel did not invite the journalists to visit of the hotel in order to cover some news or event. However, press tour is conducted by the hotel only when there is special request from journalists, if there is no such request, it means there is no press tour.

In press tour, journalists have chance to shoot the preparation and ask the facilities of the wedding room. Journalist from TVRI Jakarta also did press tour one of superior room in Syariah Hotel Solo. It was about Syariah Hotel Solo's preparations of the wedding of Kahiyang-Ayu, the daughter of the President of Indonesia.

Public relations always coordinate with Assistant Housekeeping Manager. The purpose of coordination with House Keeping Manager is for excellent preparation to give good impression to journalist. In cleaning the room, Syariah Hotel Solo has standardization of hygiene in cleaning thoroughly by taking out the garbage and then cleaning using "clockwork" system. Rotating the room clockwise to clean all garbage. In every press tour activity, public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo always coordinate with House Keeping at least a week before. In other words, press tour does not have to be held outside the company but also can be held in the company

In this case Syariah Hotel Solo has two types in making his release:

First, Basic Press Release, includes various information contained in company or organization which has various values for local media, regional or national. Press release in this case is sent as message to journalist or

editor in media. Information contained varies from Milad of Syariah Hotel Solo and all and achievements achieved by Syariah Hotel Solo in every competition.

Second, Product Release, includes target of a product for regular trade publications in industry. Press release usually composed of information about product, promotion in every month, and Hajj, Umrah and Wedding Package.

Along with development of technology, press release delivery is no longer difficult. It is because public relations and media can interact quickly anywhere and every time. Public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo prefer email as media for sending release to journalist. This proves that sending release by email is more effective than conventional shipping services. It can also help journalists to rewrite press release. When there is an information which is less clear, the journalist will contact public relations as soon as possible.

The form of cooperation, especially in hospitality industry has smaller scale than government institution. Sometimes in activities, public relations did not need to cooperate with the media. Public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo is not in collaboration with media relations in special event because of several reasons such as: First, Public relations has the ability to observe and analyze an issue based on the facts of the situation, work planning, communication and be able to evaluate the problem. Public relations is still able to be Event Organizer for internal program. Second, however, public relations can still organize special event without involving media in event organizing. It means, public relations are still able to attract attention, through a variety of innovative and creative publications as public relations

function. Third, the ability to draw attention through a variety of innovative, creative, dynamic and interesting for public as the target object.

Public relations officials sometimes hold a luncheon for representatives of mass media or journalists. In this occasion, the press could meet with company's top management to listen to the company's development. (Ardianto, 2016)

In press luncheon, public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo invites journalists or representatives of mass media for having breakfast or lunch after press conference and press briefing. Nearly all activities, related to media relations are always packaged in friendly interaction familiarity among public relations with media relations is evident in almost every event.

One of purpose of this program is maintaining good relations between public relations and media. This will create a close relationship, mutual understanding, to know each other, support and respect each other's profession as a positive partner

Press Interview, Interview with the press may happen spontaneously or planned. Spontaneous interviews could happen at the legislative assembly or seminar, inauguration, marriage, or any other occasion. (Rosady, 2014)

Press interview includes the capabilities and techniques to communicate (skill of communications). General Manager or public relations ought to prepare themselves as a resource to be interviewed. They must always follow developments of information and always be a reliable resource, either in spontaneous interviews or ask for interviews beforehand agreement. It is so far not very influential because public relations of Syariah

Hotel Solo only asked an opinion and future prospects after receiving the award and the hope for Lor In Solo Hotel.

Syariah Hotel Solo also implemented media visit. Media Visit is an activity of visiting media partner office in order to create relationship (Monica, 2012). One of specific purpose is to strengthen the cooperation with local or national media. This especially for several media which are already partnering with public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo in the form of renewing the contract. Usually, this activity is carried out together with the team by giving the brochure, and merchandise of Syariah Hotel Solo.

Greeting Media Partner's anniversary, in this activity usually Head of Sales and Marketing department of Syariah Hotel Solo prepares a birthday cake as Greeting Media partner's anniversary. In order to maintain the relation as partner in work, public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo give wish or heartfelt speech representative as expectations for prosperous future of the media.

#### Syariah Hotel Solo Constraints in Media Relations Activities

In every media relations activities of Syariah Hotel Solo, it cannot be denied that some constraints are found. It can be sourced from external or internal factors. The constraints faced by public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo are as follows:

In press conference, for example, public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo sometimes find difficulties in the determination of the appropriate date & time with the journalists.

Public relations can choose a date that corresponds to date of the journalists and activities of the hotel, in order to be present in press conference activity. Besides, public relations should advise General Manager

on that issue. However, General Manager determine the date of the activity only in accordance with his availability. For example, when he asks to organize a press conference in the afternoon at 16.00 O'clock, where it is time to reporter's deadline. Several journalists will refuse to be present in activities, especially if the information is only about internal issue. Therefore, public relations should cleverly adjusting the hotel and journalist schedules. Most of the journalist will always ask for holding press conference or briefing at morning time. It is because journalist can come immediately to hotel before going to his or her office.

Other barriers are after public relations deal with journalists. There are some of them who did not come not on time or were unable to attend to event because of some reasons. But it is just some of journalist characters. Most of them will have commitment and present in press conference.

Public relations also should be able to adjust the exact date to journalists who wants to hold press tour. They also educate them, when there is the obstacle of press tour implementations. So far, it can still be resolved by communicate it with journalist.

Not only in press conference and press tour, in other activities such as Press Briefing and press luncheon, timing is crucial. In several activities, public relations are faced with similar obstacles in determination of the date to fit both company and media schedules.

Several obstacles of media relations above are different with press release. In order to establish good relations with media, it is not infrequently found the obstacles faced by public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo such as the challenge when Syariah Hotel Solo's news have to compete with another news from



another hotel. The situation is getting severe when the hotel has an access to higher rank of people in media's editorial board.

### Conclusion

Media relations activities performed by Syariah Hotel Solo in order to improve corporate image are: Press Conference, Press Briefing, Press Tour, Press Release, and Press Luncheon at a press Interview. All the activities are organized regularly and has been deemed efficient. Some of the activities implemented formally when it is attended by the General Manager and informal when it is only attended by public relations. All the activities aim to build personal relationships with journalists. Syariah Hotel Solo also has other media relations activities such as; Media Visit and Greeting Media partner's anniversary. The approach was done by public relations Syariah Hotel Solo to media with personal relationship. It is always reflected in every activities such as providing facilities and convenient and adequate service to journalists, so that will form a "friendly "means public relations provides true information of its credibility to journalists. Then, when news and information are loaded in the media, the public consumed true news. This will have an impact on the image of company in which the image is depicted by "Libasut Taqwa" as the clothes. It will be good when it reflects with Islamic values and bad. If it reflects the value that is contrary to Islamic teaching, the company image will be reflected from public relations activities to media.

Constraints in conducting Press conference, Press Briefing, Press Tour and Press Luncheon activities at Syariah Hotel Solo are in determination of dates to adjust internal hotel activities and media's schedule. Public relations tried to overcome it by doing

intense communication in whatsapp group with media. As for the press release, usually the obstacle is competition with another hotel's news. The competitor has higher access in media, which gives them higher priority in publications of news than public relations of Syariah Hotel Solo.

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