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## Communication Strategy of Alfamart Corporate Communication Department in Maintaining Positive Company Image

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### A B S T R A C T

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**Keywords:**

*Communication Strategy, Corporate Image, Alfamart, Corporate Communication, Image Recovery Theory*

This study explores Alfamart's communication strategy for maintaining a positive image amidst the challenges of the digital era and tight business competition. This study's background discusses the negligence of Alfamart store cashiers in providing prices that went viral in 2020. The study focuses on the importance of a strong corporate image as a strategic asset in maintaining consumer loyalty and managing public perception. The purpose of this study is to understand the strategies implemented by Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department, especially in responding to issues that can damage the company's reputation. This study uses a qualitative-descriptive approach with interviews, observations, and documentation. The primary informants are the staff of Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department, supported by store personnel as secondary informants. The data were analyzed using the Image Repair Theory by William L. Benoit and communication strategies by Scott M. Cutlip et al. The results of this study indicate that Alfamart implements communication strategies such as

clarification through social media, two-way interaction with consumers, and strengthening positive messages through marketing campaigns and CSR programs. This strategy has effectively improved the company's image since the viral issue. However, this study also found that similar problems recurred in 2024, thus indicating the need for continuous evaluation and improvement in future communication strategies. This study emphasizes the importance of a structured communication strategy and periodic assessment to maintain a positive company image in the digital era.

## **Introduction**

The growth of information and communication technology in this modern era has significantly changed the business order (Astuti dkk., 2023). One of the significant changes that has occurred is increasing the effectiveness, efficiency, and ease of communication between companies and consumers (Cholik, 2021). However, modernization also brings competition between businesses that has never happened in previous eras. Therefore, competition between businesses is regional and global, with the same market reach (McCausland, 2022). Thus, various companies must maintain their business processes, especially in communication, to build a favorable profile in the public eye.

Amid this situation, the company's image is one of the most important elements to maintain through various communication strategies. According to Dornberger (2018), the digital era accelerates the spread of information that can be both an opportunity and a threat through negative news that is easily spread and can influence public perception of the company (Dornberger, 2018). Therefore, public relations is significant in maintaining the company's reputation.

This is also done by Alfamart, one of the largest retail companies in Indonesia. PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk, or Alfamart, is a retail company that provides necessities in locations that are easily accessible to the public. The company, which has spread to 33 branch offices and a head office, has not failed to echo the positive image of its company through the role of public relations. The Corporate Communication Department, which works under the auspices of the Corporate

Affairs division, performs public relations as a liaison between the company and consumers or the public (Pavlović, 2023).

Public relations is the company's vanguard in shaping the public image with various strategies. Therefore, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department holds important control to realize a positive image of the company by implementing various communication strategies. One of the challenges faced by Alfamart in maintaining its image as one of the retail companies that is popular with the public is when a viral case appears. The case in 2020 showed the negligence of the cashier regarding the difference in the price of goods between those listed on the shelves and on the payment receipt. The case spread on social media, potentially influencing consumer perceptions of Alfamart (Djaman, 2020). Based on a report released at the end of 2020, Alfamart experienced a profit decline of IDR 50,441 billion (Alfamart, 2020).

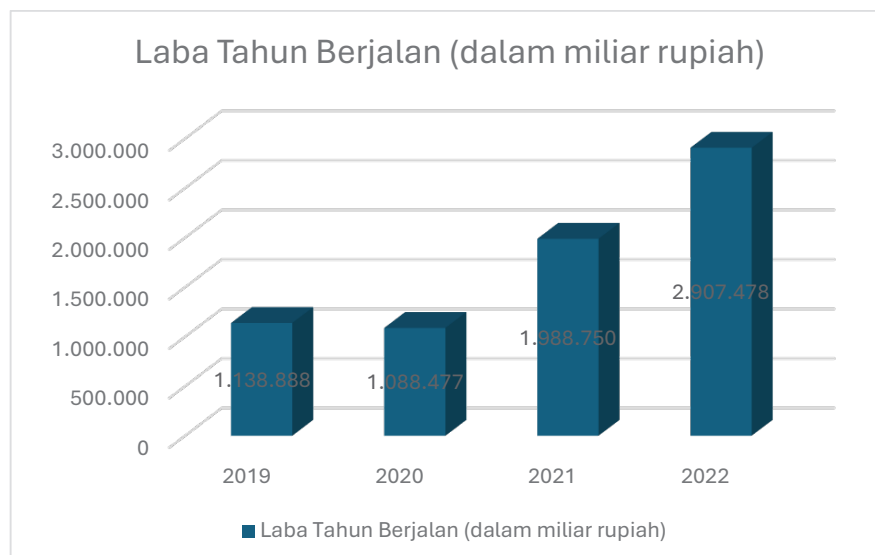


Figure 1: Alfamart's Current Year Profit Graph

Source: [www.alfamart.co.id](http://www.alfamart.co.id)

However, it turns out that Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department has successfully handled the case as the authorized party to realize a positive company image through its various efforts. This is marked by the increase in Alfamart's current year profit in the following period and the receipt of various awards in the field of Public Relations, one example of which is at the 2023 Public Company Entrepreneurial Marketing Award in Jakarta, Alfamart won an award in the Food and Staples Retail Industry category (AlfamartTV, 2023)

Although the company has succeeded in improving its image through various communication strategies, a similar case reappeared in 2024, indicating that some aspects of the communication strategy implemented may not have been fully effective. This then becomes a reason why this study needs to be conducted, namely to find out how the communication strategy carried out by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department in handling the case of negligence of the store cashier in 2020 and to predict the ineffectiveness of several things in it which resulted in the recurrence of the problem in 2024.

Various studies have been conducted on the company's communication strategy towards the consumer public. A study entitled "Corporate Communication Strategy through Social Media at PT Angkasa Pura I (Persero) Juanda Surabaya" by Thousani and Setiyawan describes the form of corporate communication strategy carried out by PT Angkasa Pura I (Persero) Juanda Surabaya. In this study, the company produces positive social media content, especially Instagram, establishes persuasive communication and provides feedback to its audience (Thousani & Setiyawan, 2021).

A similar study was also conducted by Putri and Amalia and was titled "Corporate Communication Strategy in Rebranding PT Semen Indonesia (Persero) Tbk." The findings of this study state that the company's rebranding efforts by displaying and offering new products are sustainable. The rebranding process was carried out holistically, from the logo to promotions on social media (Putri & Amalia, 2023).

If previously it told the story of the company's rebranding, then in the study entitled "Strategy of the Corporate Communication Division of PT Krakatau Steel in Efforts to Improve Image Through CSR Programs" by Hawali and Andiyansari, they tried to explore the role of CSR. The findings of this study state that the Corporate Communication Division of PT Krakatau Steel (Persero) Tbk utilizes the CSR of the UKM Bebek Ihat Sulihat Livestock Sector Fostered Partner as an effort to improve its image (Hawali & Andiyansari, 2022). Anggriyani and Ramadhan also carried out the same tone in a study entitled "Crisis Management Strategy in Corporate Communication Studies: Case Study of Crisis Management of the Marsipature Program at Mining Companies in North Sumatra." The findings of this study tell how the company carries out its crisis management when facing a problem concerning its image (Anggriyani & Ramadhan, 2023).

Of the various studies conducted so far, none have discussed the strategy of the Alfamart retail company. Therefore, this study explores how Alfamart is viewed from the perspective of corporate communication studies. In addition, this study also presents various findings related to corporate crisis management, covering Alfamart from the perspective of corporate communication.

## Method

The research method used in this study is qualitative research with a descriptive approach. This study collects, sorts, interprets, and examines the communication strategies carried out by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department based on the four stages of communication strategy according to Cutlip et al. (2006), namely situation analysis, program planning, action implementation, and evaluation (Dwianti, 2022). The key informant in this study is the Corporate Communication Department under the Corporate Affairs division of PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk, which was selected theoretically and deliberately. In addition, as supporting data, secondary informants were randomly selected in the form of Alfamart store cashier personnel who are members of the Operations division.

No	Nama	Position	Division	Department
1.	Budi Santoso	Regional Corporate Communication	Corporate Affair	Corporate Communication
2.	Eko Mujiyanto	Branch Corporate Communication	Corporate Affair	Corporate Communication

Table 1. Interview Informant Data at Alfamart

Source: Processed by the author

This research was conducted in September - October 2024 at the Alfa Tower Head Office, 12th floor, Jl. Jalur Sutera Barat, Kav 7-9 Alam Sutera, Panunggan Village, Pinang District, Tangerang City, Banten. The researcher conducted structured interviews with key informants to obtain credible data according to the title's position, competence, and relevance. In addition, this study also uses secondary data in the form of statements from brief interviews with several Alfamart store personnel. In addition, secondary data is also obtained through observations of specific programs or activities and supported by related documentation.

This study describes and presents the study's results in the form of stages

of communication strategy, according to Cutlip et al. (2006). Validity is measured using source triangulation, namely comparing the consistency of the findings in one qualitative research method from observation, interviews, and documents, then analyzing the conversation and matching it with existing general data. This study has several limitations. Based on its scope, this study only examines Alfamart's communication strategy in handling cashier negligence cases in 2020. Therefore, the issue of communication strategy in resolving cashier negligence cases in subsequent years will not be discussed. The analysis used in this study only captures communication strategies with dimensions determined in the research concept in stages of situation analysis, program planning and formulation, implementation of actions and communication, and evaluation.

In addition, the study uses the image restoration theory developed and popularized by William L. Benoit, a professor of communication at Ohio University. This theory defines the purpose of maintaining a positive image for an object, such as in an agency or company. Through his book entitled *Account, Excuses, and Apologies* (1994), Benoit builds his theoretical assumptions, which state that as a result of a bad image, the communicator will be motivated and make maximum efforts to restore his good name or image to the level as expected (Benoit, 1994).

## **Results and Discussions**

Corporate image is a valuable asset that can provide various benefits, ranging from increasing market opportunities and helping the effectiveness of the company's marketing to protecting the company during times of crisis. The image of the company, especially PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk or Alfamart, is not formed by itself. However, this image must be pursued with a unique strategy to maintain it well. This is because Alfamart's image will be formed by the perceptions of its consumers, which can then influence the company's business processes.

To support the main objectives to be achieved by the Corporate Communication Department, based on the data presented by Mr. Budi Santoso, as Alfamart's Regional Corporate Communication Manager, an appropriate communication strategy is needed to increase and maintain the company's positive image. The four stages of communication strategy, according to Cutlip et al. (2006), consisting of Defining the Problem, Planning and Programming, Taking Action and Actuating, and Evaluating the Program, are then used in this study to discuss further how the

communication strategy carried out by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department in handling the case of negligence of store cashiers when giving prices to consumers that occurred in 2020.

### **Defining Problem**

The first step in developing an effective communication strategy is to conduct a situation analysis related to the current issue. At Alfamart, situation analysis is routinely performed by the Corporate Communication Department through media monitoring, both on social media and mainstream media such as online and print media. According to Eko Mujiyanto, Semarang Corporate Communication Branch, media monitoring is conducted daily to detect negative issues circulating so that anticipatory action can be taken immediately. After filtering various information, if a negative issue is found, it will be followed up as soon as possible by coordinating with other related departments. After that, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department will conduct a direct investigation to get to the root of the problem in more depth. These steps aim to collect various data and information related to an issue that has great potential to influence or even damage Alfamart's image in the eyes of the public.

With this situation analysis, the Corporate Communication Department gained a deeper picture of the store cashier's negligence in giving prices to consumers that went viral in 2020 at Alfamart Sukaratu, Pandeglang Regency. The incident began with a consumer who was buying a drink at Alfamart, and he recorded the activity using a cell phone. However, after he paid and was given a receipt, he realized that there was a price difference between the receipt and the item display. In the video, he also showed that the price on the display rack was IDR 4,500.00, while the price listed on the receipt was IDR 4,800.00. He was not complaining because the price difference was only IDR 300.00. Still, he was more concerned about the integrity of the cashier while working because this case did not only happen once or twice. Knowing this, the man complained and uploaded the video to social media, and it went viral with more than 17,000 shares and more than 6,000 comments. Many online news media and other social media accounts have also spread it.

As a result of this incident going viral, many netizens also reported the same incident related to their shopping experiences. Not a few comments were

found on social media containing customer complaints regarding the price difference between the shopping receipt and the item shelf. The incident became a negative issue and a threat to the company's image, slowly influencing the public's perception of Alfamart consumers, who were reluctant to shop again. Therefore, the case will indirectly affect Alfamart's business process and become one of the indicators of Alfamart's current-year profit decline in 2020 based on the annual financial report data accessed through Alfamart's official website.

After conducting a comprehensive situation analysis and investigation and coordinating with related departments, Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department obtained an overview of an issue in various regions with media monitoring assistance. Based on this analysis, Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department can follow up further if a similar incident occurs. This has shown the company's initial strategy to achieve its goals by maintaining a positive company image. The steps taken by Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department in analyzing the situation are also in line with what Widowati (2019) explained in her research, which states that by verifying sources, a company can be helped to resolve issues because accurate and reliable information is an essential basis for making the right decisions (Widowati, 2019). The accuracy of the information in a problem is critical to maintaining the company's image and preventing misinformation that can worsen the crisis.

## **Planning and Programming**

After the situation is described in more detail by considering various perceptions of an issue, the Corporate Communication Department prepares the proper steps to be implemented together with related departments to coordinate. One of the main principles the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department applies in planning communication strategies is to maintain calm and not rush in responding to public pressure, such as demands for clarification or quick action against employees involved. This effort is made so the crisis team can consider several things carefully.

First, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department aimed to increase public understanding so as not to cause misperception. This effort is the first step toward changing public perception over time. The faster the graph slopes, the better the indicator for handling the issue faced by the Alfamart Corporate



Communication Department. Therefore, by providing understanding to the public, the main goal of increasing public awareness is to improve public perception and minimize image damage (Maulana, 2024).

In the case of negligence of the Alfamart store cashier, the main goal formulated by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department was to restore the company's positive image, which was attempted through clarification. This effort was made to straighten out various information about the incident to reduce the spread of negative sentiment. Through this clarification, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department attempted to measure success by looking at changes in the public response to the issue through the social media comment feature.

Based on data from the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department, if many people still express negative sentiments above 50% of the total responses, the goal of changing public perception has not been achieved. However, on the other hand, if there are not many negative perceptions emerging or the remaining negative sentiment is at a figure below 50% of the total response, then it can be said that the clarification issued has diverted attention and provided understanding to the public so that the virality graph of an issue has decreased. The Alfamart Corporate Communication Department carried out the time to analyze the public response within 3-4 weeks after the emergence of the issue of the negligence of the store cashier.

Second, designing actions. The cognitive actions the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department took began with coordinating with other related departments and parties to formulate the steps taken carefully. This coordination is also carried out so that designing the action produces actions that are fair to all parties or no one is harmed. In addition, the coordination also serves as a joint evaluation material in improving Alfamart services.

In addition, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department took effective action to handle the case of the store cashier's negligence by compiling a statement describing the incident, why the incident could occur, and Alfamart management's response to the case and subsequent solutions. The statement was then arranged through precise, coherent, and easy-to-understand words to be formed into a clarification poster. The clarification was then disseminated through Alfamart's social media, especially Instagram.

The statement and response in clarification are also included in the conative actions taken by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department in handling

the case of the Alfamart store cashier's negligence. The Alfamart Corporate Communication Department communicates an event to the public through selected media. The design through the three aspects, namely cognitive, affective, and conative, carried out by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department is intended to restore the public's positive perception of the company's branding.

Third, determine the strategy and tactics. Alfamart's Corporate Communication Team carries out several strategic aspects as follows:

- a. Presenting good branding visually through various media.
- b. Increase awareness of Alfamart consumers regarding this issue.
- c. Improving the quality of Alfamart's internal Human Resources to help optimize the company's image.
- d. Changing the mindset or perception of the community regarding negative issues circulating. To support the success of the strategy that has been prepared, the Corporate Communication team also uses several tactics in its primary goal of maintaining a positive company image, namely:
  - Cooperating with various local media
  - Educating through social media content and directly for consumers and internal company employees
  - Reducing negative responses from netizens to issues that occur
  - Providing an understanding to the public about the actions taken by Alfamart as a solution that has been taken
  - Approaching the community through CSR programs

The Alfamart Corporate Communication Department used specific strategic and tactical aspects in handling cases of cashier negligence by reducing negative responses from netizens and providing an understanding to the public about the actions taken as a solution. The consideration of using the two main tactics is due to the various negative sentiments arising from the viral issue that shakes Alfamart's image. Therefore, the main tactic used to change public perception from negative to positive is through a statement of clarification issued by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department via Alfamart's official Instagram social media. The selection of these two main tactics aligns with the objectives of the leading indicators to be achieved, namely, to maintain Alfamart's positive image so that it does not turn into a bad one.

Thus, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department begins by

determining strategies and tactics for effective media, and Alfamart chooses Instagram. In addition, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department also categorizes social media users so that the strategy and tactics used are right on target. Instagram was chosen because the case started going viral on the same platform.

Overall, the planning and programming stages that are part of the communication strategy by Scott M. Cutlip, Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom have been carried out by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department by providing the best service to the public. One aspect of achieving the goal for the company's image requires openness of information through coordination and external communication carried out by the PR team in a company. This is as explained by Jim Lukaszewski (in Datuela, 2013), who stated that communication strategy has become a driving force in the company's business process that helps organize, prioritize, and provide energy for the entire company through an operational approach, a persuasive and educational approach, a social responsibility approach, and a cooperative approach (Datuela, 2013).

### **Taking Action and Communicating**

After going through the stages of determining the plan that is prepared based on the analysis of the problem situation, the next step is the implementation of the programs. In this stage, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department, as the communicator, has acted and communicated the previous planning. The communication strategy that has been prepared is then used as a basis or reference in implementing the program. However, the Corporate Communication team also looks at the field conditions further to consider the various dynamics. If, in the field, there are things that require other policies later, the Corporate Communication team will adjust these things flexibly. This is because cases such as the cashier's error when giving consumer prices are field cases, not theoretical cases.

The Alfamart Corporate Communication Department manages communication strategies and several other considerations. From media use to message content and who the target is. According to Budi Santoso, Alfamart's Regional Corporate Communication, Instagram media is also considered a relatively neutral social media for communicating something.

The stages of taking action and communication carried out by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department can be further linked using communication

techniques proposed by Arifin (1994) in the form of Redundancy, Canalizing, Informative, and Persuasive (Arifin, 1994). Melalui strategi *Redundancy* dan *Canalizing*, Departemen *Corporate Communication* Through the redundancy and canalizing strategies, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department continuously uses mass media as a channel to communicate messages by adjusting the type of media and the characteristics of its users. In addition, to ensure that the messages conveyed through the media are consistent, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department will always provide reminders on social media in the following days.

as understood the concerns experienced by the public, especially regarding the issue of price differences in stores. Alfamart has also sanctioned the relevant individuals so that they can be a lesson for the future. In communicating this strategy, the Corporate Communication Department often uses “Alfamart Management” as the communicator. In other words, the strategy and steps taken are not just decisions from one party but are the results that have been formulated together.

In the case of the Alfamart store cashier’s negligence when serving consumers, the communication technique that is often used is the persuasive technique. According to the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department, they aim to convey the message so that they can change the attitudes, opinions, and behavior of the community based on their respective awareness. This persuasive technique is carried out by producing clarification content distributed to Alfamart’s internal and external media, such as being distributed on Instagram when the problem arises. The clarification content is a statement that Alfamart cares about the reports on social media and that Alfamart’s management apologizes for the incident. In addition, the content of the clarification also emphasizes that Alfamart has followed up on the reports that were spread by trying to contact consumers and giving sanctions to employees according to company regulations. The Alfamart Corporate Communication Department prepared the clarification by paying attention to the informative side of the message so that the audience could easily understand it.

The communication activities carried out by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department are in line with what was written by Rex Harlow (in Raturahmi et al., 2021) that the function of Public Relations is a unique management function and supports the development and maintenance of good relations with the public which consists of communication and cooperation activities. In

addition, it also involves management when facing problems, helps management respond to public opinion, and supports management in managing healthy and ethical communication techniques (Raturahmi, Dewi, & Meisani, 2021). This is by what is carried out by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department, which is then expected to be able to create a good reputation for the company's image and ultimately unite the attitudes and behavior of the community towards the positive image of PT Sumber Alfaria Trijaya Tbk.

### **Evaluating the Program**

In the final process of implementing the program in the communication strategy, an assessment of the implementation and results of the program that has been carried out is required. The evaluation results will later be used to search for information in the early stages so that further planning can improve. In ensuring that the message or information previously conveyed is by the objectives, the Corporate Communication Department will continuously monitor the distribution of the event in all media, both online and social media. In addition, in Alfamart's internal employees, the Corporate Communication Department will always remind employees that similar things can be minimized, for example, in customer service at the cashier, compliance with SOPs, and so on.

Thanks to the case of cashier negligence that went viral in 2020, the Corporate Communication Department also evaluated it by collaborating with the Learning Operation Division under the auspices of the Human Capital Department, which has more authority to train Alfamart employees. The evaluation carried out was to educate more store cashiers about customer service and employee communication standards at the cashier, especially when there were complaints, improve SOPs for customer service, prepare price tag installation policies, and check prices regularly to prevent such price errors.

In addition, the evaluation conducted by the coordination between the Corporate Communication department and Human Capital has resulted in updates in the service SOP, especially regarding price differences if found in the Alfamart store area. As also explained by Ambar, Assistant Chief of the Store or deputy head of the Alfamart Lawu store in the Karanganyar area, thanks to the written SOP, if consumers find a price difference on the shelf and the shopping receipt, then they are entitled to the lowest price.

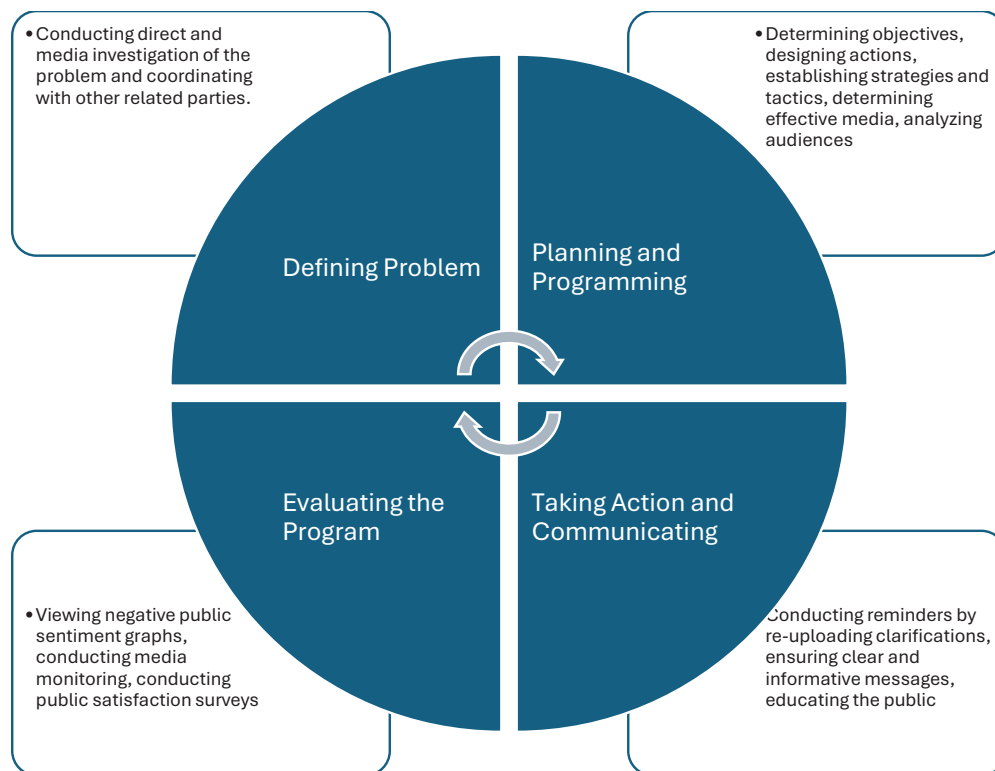


Figure 2: Media Crisis Management Flow by Alfamart Corporate Communication Department

Source: Processed by the Author

## Evaluation of Communication Strategy in Case in 2020

Of the four stages of communication strategy carried out by Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department, things still have not been done comprehensively in handling the case. This is done in order to mitigate the risks that may arise in the future, especially those that may impact Alfamart's corporate image. For example, in the situation analysis stage, Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department should have its instrument to identify potential crises in the community. This can be done by conducting consumer survey research that will be managed by Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department itself so that it will be easier to analyze public perceptions. Thus, it is hoped that the public can directly provide opinions and assessments to Alfamart and, simultaneously, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department team can collect their aspirations. This is what Coombs (2007) explained in his research, which shows that by understanding the reactions needed by various stakeholders and carried out by an organization comprehensively, it will be

more possible for the crisis team to anticipate the level of threat to the image caused by a crisis (Coombs, 2007).

In addition, in the planning and programming stages, Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department more often considers distributing communication strategies through Instagram social media. However, it is better to consistently disseminate the message on other media. As an example, Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department should be able to use Media X (Twitter) more often in its distribution considerations because based on a research journal by Rizqi (2023) shows that Media X is a platform that is very responsive to current events (Rizqi & Heriyanto, 2023). In addition, based on a report from the Reuters Institute (2023), around 25% of respondents use media X to search for the latest news; this figure is the highest compared to other social media such as Facebook and Instagram (Naurah, 2023). Thus, accelerating information and interactions on social media X will further assist Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department in disseminating clarification or responses to an issue. In 2024, the case of negligence of the Alfamart store cashier went viral because it started from social media X through one of the consumer's tweets, which then garnered much interaction.

In the next stage, taking action and communicating with the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department should also be able to maximize the use of various existing media. In other words, this maximization can be done by collaborating with various local media to help produce positive news related to Alfamart. This can be done to reduce the negative perception caused by the public due to an error that occurred. Cooperation to communicate the contents of the message can be done with various parties, such as journalists, NGOs, and various communities in society. This effort is expected to be able to cover the "wounds" caused by the viral case of negligence of the store cashier in 2020 by spreading positive news about Alfamart. This media relations concept is explained by Meglian et al. (2016) in their research, which states that a good media relations strategy establishing relationships with local communities and providing transparent information to the media will help companies maintain their positive image even when facing public resistance (Meglian, Nugraheni, & Djoko, 2016).

However, the case of negligence of Alfamart store cashiers boomed again in April 2024. Based on Alfamart's statement through interviews and observations, the case's recurrence is undeniable. In every business operation process in the

store, there are still several things that are factors that can potentially cause similar problems to arise, including because the price label has not been entirely installed; there are other activities such as serving consumers or unloading goods so that replacing the price label is not focused and various other activities.

Nevertheless, Alfamart, through the Corporate Communication Department, should be able to evaluate in the long term so that if the issue booms again, at least Alfamart's image will not be too affected. The repeated cases show that Alfamart does not yet have a communication strategy in the form of a campaign for consumers to always check their shopping receipts after each transaction at the Alfamart store. Several efforts can be made; for example, Alfamart can tighten the appropriate time for installing price labels and product discounts in full before the store operates. These steps should be taken to mitigate negative perceptions when similar cases occur.

### **Implementation of Image Recovery Theory**

The Alfamart Corporate Communication Department has successfully handled the case of cashier negligence that went viral in 2020 by disseminating a Press Release in the form of clarification on social media. The 2020 case is a lesson for Alfamart so that the crisis can be overcome and passed well. However, restoring conditions takes time in stages involving all management and employees of the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department to always try to strengthen each other, rebuild the determination to rise, and continue to support top management policies to take positive steps for the company.

When viewed as a whole, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department, as a system for organizing and managing all forms of communication in a company, both internally and externally, has carried out the Public Relations function. This is explained by Ardina (2022), who states that corporate communication is like an 'umbrella' that oversees various communications based on the public relations function (Ardina, 2022).

According to the image restoration theory developed by William L. Benoit, the communication strategy designed by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department reviewed from the four stages proposed by Scott M. Cutlip, Allen H. Center, and Glen M. Broom has been by its assumptions. The image restoration theory or Image Repair Theory defines the purpose of maintaining a positive



image for an agency or company. The theory's assumption states that due to a bad image, the communicator will be motivated and make maximum efforts to restore his good name or image to the expected level (Benoit, 1994). This is what the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department did in its efforts to maintain the company's positive image due to negative issues that were spread, one of which was the issue of the store cashier's negligence in giving prices that went viral. Therefore, from this case, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department prepared an appropriate communication strategy to be implemented in order to maintain the company's positive reputation or image as its primary goal.

In addition, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department carried out several basic strategies to maintain the image according to Benoit's explanation in the Image Repair Theory. First, Corrective Action. In this approach, the guilty communicator will try to correct the error and take steps to prevent similar incidents from happening. This is intended to show commitment to improvement and responsibility for an error. Likewise, what the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department does to maintain a positive image of its company will constantly evaluate a phenomenon that occurs. The Alfamart Corporate Communication Department carries out this Corrective Action strategy, which begins with identifying the phenomenon in depth to obtain verification from various parties involved.

After that, the Corporate Communication Department will discuss it with other related departments or parties to formulate a common goal that can improve and evaluate the problem. The evaluation and improvement can be proven by improving employee SOPs and the education provided to prospective store personnel before entering the field. To maintain a positive image of the Alfamart company in the eyes of the public, an SOP was formed, which states that if consumers find a difference in the price of their purchased goods, they have the right to get the lowest price. In addition, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department continually educates and reminds employees and the public to be wise in using social media because often, the information spread on social media cannot be proven true.

Second, Mortification. This strategy of admitting mistakes is often considered the sincerest step to take and can restore public trust effectively, especially if followed by real action to correct the mistake. Alfamart's Corporate Communication Department, in taking initial action in its communication strategy, issued a statement or clarification regarding a phenomenon. Not

infrequently in the statement, Alfamart apologized to the public for the occurrence of a phenomenon. After that, Alfamart will always try to correct mistakes and prevent such things from happening again, as stated in the previous Corrective Action strategy.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the research and data analysis results, it can be concluded that the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department can be said to be quite good at dealing with the store cashier's negligence that went viral in 2020. This is indicated by an increase in current-year profit in the following year, increased public trust, and the receipt of various awards in the field of Public Relations.

In addition, the communication strategy of the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department to maintain a positive company image when facing the issue of cashier negligence in 2020 is divided into four stages. First, Defining the Problem analyzes the situation by conducting media monitoring to filter and monitor issues in the media and verifying by investigating further to get a deeper picture. Second, planning and programming are done by compiling communication strategy steps, starting with formulating significant goals, then considering effective and efficient media use, and designing actions by determining communication tactics.

Third, Taking Action and Communicating in implementing the programs that have been prepared, the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department always moves based on the previously prepared communication strategy but also acts adaptively to changes that may occur in the field. This implementation is carried out using communication tactics in the form of Redundancy, Canalizing, Informative, and Persuasive. The steps taken by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department often begin with providing a statement or clarification to provide public understanding so that there is no misperception in the future. The clarification contains a coherent and firm message so that information can be adequately conveyed to the public and is consistent in being re-uploaded within a certain period. The dissemination of the clarification utilizes Alfamart's internal social media, such as Instagram as the primary target, TikTok, X, and Facebook. It is also assisted by local media, both online and print media.

Fourth, the program is evaluated by evaluating the steps that have been implemented previously. The Alfamart Corporate Communication Department collects feedback directly and through social media to assess whether the public is satisfied with the services provided by Alfamart when handling issues. Furthermore, the evaluation results are discussed with the relevant departments so that similar things will not happen again.

Of the four aspects of the strategy stages, several weaknesses are still indicated by the repetition of the case of negligence of the store cashier in 2024. Several things that should be improved in the communication strategy when handling cases in 2020 include conducting surveys or research on public satisfaction more routinely and directly monitored by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department. In addition, the use of media for communication facilities should be able to consider social media X because the acceleration of information exceeds other social media. They can also collaborate with several other stakeholders to create positive news in society as an act of “healing” from a crisis.

In the aspect of the communication strategy carried out by the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department to maintain a positive image of the company has several objectives, namely 1) creating public understanding through clarification, 2) producing optimal translation of information using narratives and visuals that are clear, coherent, firm, and informative for all levels of society, 3) motivating two-way communication with the public through feedback provided by the community, 4) restoring the company’s positive image. The communication strategy designed by the Corporate Communication Department is based on the Image Repair Theory proposed by Benoit, which is characterized by the characteristics of a communication approach in the form of corrective action (correcting mistakes) and mortification (apologizing).

This study recommends that the Alfamart Corporate Communication Department present a campaign to consumers to always check shopping receipts after purchasing. This is intended to provide an overview to the public that Alfamart always strives to provide appropriate prices so there is no price difference between those on the receipt and the shelves. In addition, this study has limited years and has not touched on Alfamart’s crisis management, mainly when a similar case occurred in 2024..

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