


The Role of Public Relations in Maintaining Airline Image Amidst Schedule Delay Issues

Nova Gautami Putri

LSPR Communication & Business Institute

Article Info	ABSTRACT
<p>Keywords: Public Relations, Airlines, Schedule Delays</p>	<p>The term delay was first interpreted as a situation where the flight schedule is delayed to the point where the plane cannot depart or arrive at the scheduled time. The crisis of schedule delays that hit the airline industry is certainly a serious problem that must be resolved quickly and transparently, for that the airline appointed a public relations practitioner to resolve this situation so as not to cause losses to both parties. The purpose of this study is to determine the role of public relations in maintaining the image of the airline amidst the issue of schedule delays, then this research method uses qualitative studies to obtain results in the form of words or writings from people who have been observed, and the results of this study describe that, issues surrounding schedule delays have indeed been heard for a long time in the aviation world in any part of the world, the airline appointed a public relations practitioner to resolve this crisis by forming a team, compiling information, managing the media, and conveying it to the relevant parties. The role of public relations is required to work according to the norms of justice, convey information accurately and restore the name of the airline organization to be fragrant in the eyes of the public.</p>
<p>This is an open access article under the CC BY-NC license</p> 	<p>Corresponding Author: Nova Gautami Putri LSPR Communication & Business Institute Nova.gputry@gmail.com</p>

INTRODUCTION

The airline industry in Indonesia is growing rapidly day by day, this process certainly does not just happen, because it involves many parties who work together and work hand in hand in building this industry so that it can be enjoyed by all elements of society (Abinowo et al., 2021). According to Asnita et al., (2024) an airline is an organization or company which provides air transportation service products for both passengers and goods using aircraft that they rent or own independently. In Indonesia itself, air transportation has indeed developed rapidly over time, this can be proven by the direct encouragement given by the government in building many new airports to meet the needs of the community, in addition, the government also does not forget to fix and improve all facilities in the airport area so that it looks modern and comfortable for all users (Dewi, 2021).

Based on Law No. 1 of 2009 concerning aviation, an airport is an area designated on land or waters through a number of special boundaries, where aircraft can land and take off, passengers can board and disembark, and goods can be loaded and unloaded, and

functions as a center for transferring means of transportation with safety, security, and basic facilities and other supporting facilities. In the journal Jessica & Ilfandy, (2018). In an era like today, airlines continue to innovate and pamper their users, one of which is by carrying low cost carriers or very affordable flights through several ticket promotions offered both during peak season and low season. However, according to Kamandang & Yang, (2023). It is undeniable that each airline management implements various strategies in order to be able to compete and continue to develop in line with consumer demands. Each airline management tries to gain public support through a positive image displayed by the company, both in terms of facilities and services offered. This positive image is expected to influence the number of consumers of each airline.

As one of the government organizations that is very close to the public, airlines are required to always be professional and build good relationships with their customers. The image of an organization is very important because from this image the public or society can have an opinion about an agency or organization. Based on the image formed by the agency or organization, the public or society can provide an assessment of the agency or organization openly and without any coercion at all. Building an image is a very urgent demand and must be considered by every private organization and government institution. The image is formed by the information received by the individual, if the information is positive then the image is positive, conversely if the information is negative then it will form a negative image among the wider community (Purwo & Puspasari, 2020).

Based on the research results of Raida et al., (2024) The company's reputation is an intangible asset that can produce a number of benefits, such as increased customer satisfaction and loyalty, high premium prices, and competitive advantage, therefore every company organization should improve and provide its best service to the community. However, as we know, every organization, whether private or government-managed, has different dynamics and crises. The dynamics of the organization are colored by things that have been planned in advance or unexpected things that happen in the midst of running its business. The complexity and speed of change that affect the company can cause a crisis for the company (Sari, 2021).

As discussed above, in essence, no organization can avoid a crisis throughout its existence, and the crisis that occurs challenges the organization to its reputation and credibility, including in this case the airline organization which is often hit by various crises and issues, throughout its journey in navigating the world of aviation in various parts of the world (Syahputra et al., 2018). However, one of the hottest issues that hit the airline organization the most is the issue of schedule delays, where this topic is often discussed among passengers because it can be detrimental both in terms of time and material. It is undeniable that schedule delays can give a bad impression to an airline, on the other hand this incident can also be a bad experience and greatly disrupt travel plans for everyone. For information, the word delay, or schedule delay is often interpreted as a delay or arrival of a plane that is late for more than 15 minutes than the previously scheduled time. This phenomenon can actually be caused by several factors such as bad weather, technical problems, to air traffic congestion that can have an impact on passengers and airlines. In

responding to this indeed bad issue, the airline must of course try as early as possible so that the image that it has built so far does not collapse suddenly due to disruption from the schedule delay. Therefore, airlines are required to continue to develop in order to increase customer satisfaction, one of which is by presenting the role of public relations (PR).

In the issue of schedule delays, the role of an airline public relations officer is required to work optimally so that communication between the airline and consumers can be maintained so as not to cause negative effects for both parties. Public relations must act transparently, quickly, empathetically and most importantly be able to manage crises effectively, the goal is that public trust can be maintained as well as possible so that the relationship between the two runs harmoniously. Public relations is not just making strategic plans, as a company spokesperson, but almost 70% of public relations activities are writing activities, including news letters, wall magazines (message boards), company profiles, press releases, annual reports, speech scripts and corporate advertisements.

So we can describe that the role of public relations is very crucial in maintaining the image of an airline organization, because they are very responsible for building and maintaining good relationships, especially with the public, including in this case customers, employees, communities through maintaining effective communication and being able to reach the desired targets. However, of course public relations must also be able to manage crises and communicate them to the public so that the image of the organization can be maintained and the public is satisfied with the performance that has been built so far. Therefore, based on the description and elaboration of the background that has been presented above, the researcher is interested in further researching the role of public relations in maintaining the image of airlines amidst the issue of schedule delays.

METHOD

Researchers use descriptive analysis as a research method, using a qualitative approach. According to Sugiyono (2001:86), descriptive analysis is intended as a way to summarize a situation that is ongoing at the time the research is conducted. Meanwhile, Moleong (2009:3) defines qualitative research as "a research process that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior". Qualitative strategies are chosen with the understanding that this research is intended to collect actual data and to explore research problems in order to obtain the expected results. The use of qualitative research is considered very relevant in social studies, especially research that tries to evaluate and understand society.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Flight delays in Indonesia are not a new thing where according to data from the Public Communication and Information Bureau, several airlines that have reported the causes of delays include Garuda Indonesia, Lion Air, Wings Air, Batik Air, Sriwijaya Air, AirAsia, Trigana Air Services, and Super Air Jet, and in general, airline operators state that external factors are the main cause of flight delays, in this case, airlines usually attribute delays to weather conditions and operational problems at the airport.

Regarding flight delays, in Indonesia there is no guarantee of law enforcement for flight delays even though consumer interest protection is regulated in the consumer protection law and aviation law. Responsibility is generally regulated in the Civil Code, especially article 1368, law number 8 of 1999 concerning consumer protection and article 1365 specifically regulated in law number 1 of 2009 concerning aviation.

Flight delays, or commonly known as delays, occur when a plane does not depart or arrive according to the scheduled time, meaning that in this condition, passengers must wait for departure, which in some cases can last for hours and require them to stay overnight at the airport. Flight delays can be influenced by various aspects, including airline punctuality, constraints in aircraft scheduling, limited fleet size, clashing flight schedules, problems with cabin crew scheduling, and unfavorable weather conditions. The impact of this schedule delay can be detrimental to both the airline and the passengers, where the airline can experience financial losses, especially due to the obligation to provide compensation to affected passengers. In addition, delays can also disrupt the next flight schedule, causing inconvenience, wasting time, and disrupting passengers' travel plans. As a result, airlines must provide compensation to customers who experience flight delays as stipulated in existing laws.

The problem of flight delays requires serious handling, because this is closely related to the company's reputation in maintaining the highest level of service quality to the public, all airlines should increase their commitment to evaluate and improve any deficiencies that exist, because this will greatly affect their image in the future. Good or bad service quality will leave a lasting impact on consumers, indicating how satisfied or dissatisfied they are with the airline they use. If the service provided exceeds expectations, customers will later feel satisfied and even very happy.

Therefore, airlines must be committed to providing the best service in order to maintain their existence in the aviation industry. The issue of schedule delays is one of the crises faced by an airline company. Of course, this is a tough task for airline public relations practitioners to restore the company's reputation in the midst of the crisis that occurs, by forming a team to identify issues, prepare a crisis communication plan and coordinate it with internal and external parties. In addition, public relations practitioners are also required to monitor negative issues that come from various news such as social media, and convey the results of their investigations to the public transparently and accurately. In short, public relations has a function to help, build and maintain joint communication, understanding, support, cooperation between the organization and the public, involving management issues, helping management to know and respond to public opinion.

Then Public Relations can also explain and emphasize management's responsibility to serve the public interest. Public relations practitioners in airlines have a reciprocal function, namely outward and inward, where the outward (external) function is to strive for the growth of positive public attitudes and images towards all actions and policies of the organization or company. The inward (internal) function is to try to recognize and identify things that can cause negative attitudes and images (less favorable) in the public before an action or policy is implemented. So in other words, the purpose of airline public relations is

actually very diverse, ranging from persuading the public, investors, partners, employees, and other stakeholders to maintain a certain point of view about their leadership, products, or political decisions. However, public relations is not only about leading public opinion, but also to maintain a point of view accompanied by providing information based on reality, truth and detailed, and complete knowledge.

Public relations as a party that has an interest in handling the crisis, can use the 3P strategy, including the following (1) Prevention strategy is a preventive action through anticipation of a crisis situation. In this case, public relations is required to be sensitive to the symptoms that arise early before the crisis occurs, and is required to have the ability to think strategically in analyzing and at the same time positioning the crisis problem so that it can be prevented early. (2) Preparation strategy, including the formation of a team by carrying out communication actions so that the crisis atmosphere can be monitored, then continued at the stage of conveying information on the development of the issue being faced, and does not deviate from the actual situation. (3) Mitigation strategy, namely if the prevention and preparation strategies are not implemented, the last step taken by the mitigation strategy is the curative period. In the mitigation strategy there are steps that must be taken according to the situation and conditions.

Crisis management must be addressed immediately, because this is done so that the crisis does not spread and develop into other sectors. In addition, in the issue of schedule delays, public relations can play a role in providing accurate and up-to-date information to consumers regarding what causes schedule delays that disrupt the company's operations, to informing future steps that will be taken after the disruption. Public relations can also use various communication channels such as social media, websites, airport announcements so that information about schedule delays can reach all passengers, because this process is important to ensure that passengers get sufficient access for the sake of justice between both parties. Usually after clear information, the airline will provide a realistic solution by offering several options such as cash withdrawals, alternative flight offers to compensation costs in accordance with the rules that have been implemented.

Public relations practitioners in the airline sector not only serve as company spokespersons, but also as the main liaison between the airline and its stakeholders, including passengers, investors, government, and the wider community. In an industry that is highly dependent on public trust, a company's reputation is key to ensuring business sustainability. Airlines are required to maintain good relationships with customers, handle complaints professionally, and respond to crises quickly and appropriately. For example, when a technical incident causes a flight delay, the public often looks to how a company communicates information to passengers as an indicator of professionalism and transparency. Failure to manage this communication can have a negative impact on customer perception, even triggering a broader reputation crisis.

By issuing an official statement explaining the cause of the delay and the corrective actions taken, the airline's PR department is trying to calm customer concerns while demonstrating a real effort to improve service quality. In addition, the company's PR really uses social media as a direct communication tool with consumers, responding to complaints

responsively, and providing solutions through digital channels to facilitate the customer experience. In situations like this, airline PR routinely issues official statements through their official websites and social media channels to provide customers with an explanation of the cause of the delay, corrective steps, and efforts to ensure that similar things do not happen in the future, of course this step shows the company's commitment to transparency while mitigating negative impacts on public perception.

Airline PR must adhere to points of fairness and focus on creating communication patterns that can have an impact on increasing public trust. The main function of public relations must be able to issue statements or press conferences to convey messages and information to the public, in accordance with the reference of the Public Relations Professional Code of Ethics, the points include conveying information accurately and trying to avoid negative information and attract public attention, meaning that information that is negative and unfavorable in nature has no right to be conveyed, then public relations must avoid statements that can cause misunderstanding, connotation, controversy, and polemics with other parties.

A positive image is very important to be built by airline public relations practitioners so that it can stick well in the eyes of the public and in the eyes of other organizations. In an effort to build a positive image, communication and openness are important. In building a positive image, public relations can utilize the help of the media, to channel the flow of information quickly and in a structured manner, including through several types of media, namely print media, for example newspapers and magazines, electronic media, for example radio and television, and new media that is most widely used by people today, namely the internet, especially in the era of globalization where technological developments are increasingly rapid so that the flow of information flows quickly and makes it easy for people to access information, especially in cases of schedule delays.

CONCLUSION

In the modern era like today, the airline industry has become an important part and even inseparable from human life, high mobility and time efficiency are the main attractions of this mode of transportation that is able to exist in the midst of the dense hustle and bustle of human activity. However, behind its speed there are also obstacles that have a significant impact on its reputation and image in front of its consumers, one of which is the issue of schedule delays. The crisis of schedule delays that often hit the airline industry is certainly very disturbing and can destroy its own image, for that the airline moved quickly by appointing public relations practitioners as the front guard in solving this problem, where the role of public relations is very crucial and is expected to restore its name in front of the public. The function of public relations must of course be clear and convey information transparently and accountably, starting from managing messages, conveying messages, maintaining the company's image to becoming a mediating actor between the airline and its consumers.

REFERENCES

1. Abinowo, O., Suryadi, S., & Nuraini, L. (2021). Kewajiban maskapai penerbangan atas kompensasi keterlambatan penerbangan oleh pt lion air area tanjungpinang dalam perspektif perlindungan konsumen. *Student Online Journal (SOJ) UMRAH-Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*, 2(2), 1648-1655.
2. Asnita, R., Artis, A., Tessa, N., Azzura, I. P., Saragih, M. F., Zikri, F., & Qanita, A. (2024). Strategi manajemen public relations dalam membangun reputasi korporat di industri penerbangan Indonesia. *Bundling: Jurnal Manajemen dan Bisnis*, 1(1), 24-35.
3. Dewi, N. M. T. (2021). Perlindungan Hukum Bagi Penumpang Pesawat Udara Jika Terjadi Keterlambatan Jadwal Penerbangan Menurut Undang-Undang Nomor 1 Tahun 2009 Tentang Penerbangan. *Kertha Wicaksana*, 15(2), 122-129.
4. Fitri, A. N., Fitri, F., Karim, A., & Rachmawati, F. (2021). Strategi komunikasi Krisis Maskapai Penerbangan di Indonesia (studi analisis komunikasi krisis Adam Air, Air Asia dan sriwijaya air dalam menghadapi Krisis Kecelakaan pesawat melalui prespektif komunikasi Islam). *Jurnal Ilmiah Media, Public Relations, dan Komunikasi (IMPRESI)*, 1(2), 89-104.
5. Jessica, S., & Ilfandy, A. (2018). Aktivitas Public Relations Angkasa Pura II Dalam Menangani Pemberitaan Negatif Terminal 3 Bandara Soekarno-Hatta. *Profesi Humas*, 2(2), 119-135.
6. Kamandang, Z. R., & Yang, J. B. (2023). Implementation Guideline to Solve Obstacles in Construction Delay Analysis: An Empirical Study of Indonesia: Pedoman Pelaksanaan Untuk Mengatasi Kendala dalam Analisis Keterlambatan Proyek Konstruksi: Studi Empiris di Indonesia. *Media Teknik Sipil*, 21(1), 1-10.
7. Purwo, R. H. S., & Puspasari, D. (2020). Peran Humas Dalam Meningkatkan Citra Positif Pada Badan Pengembangan Sumber Daya Manusia (BPSDM) Provinsi Jawa Timur. *Jurnal Pendidikan Administrasi Perkantoran (JPAP)*, 8(3), 458-467.
8. Raida, A. M., Salsabilla, S., Mansoer, F. K., & Patrianti, T. (2024). Peran Manajemen Public Relations PT. Airasia Indonesia Tbk. dalam Mempertahankan Citra Perusahaan. *Innovative: Journal Of Social Science Research*, 4(1), 7865-7878.
9. Sari, V. Y. (2021). Analisis Respons Pemerintah Indonesia dalam Menangani Risiko Covid-19 dan Upaya Penanganannya Menuju Era New Normal. *Jurnal Sudut Pandang*, 2(9), 7-23.
10. Sugiyono, D. (2010). Memahami penelitian kualitatif.
11. Sugiyono, D. (2013). Metode penelitian pendidikan pendekatan kuantitatif, kualitatif dan R&D.
12. Syahputra, D. I., Hendra, Y., & Hidayat, T. W. (2018). Peran Humas Dalam Membangun Citra Pemerintahan Sumatera Utara Pada Kantor Biro Humas Gubernur. *PERSPEKTIF*, 7(1), 24-29.