

# **PUBLIC RELATION STRATEGY IN IMPROVING BRAND AWARENESS OF BRIGHT GAS 5,5 KG AT PT PERTAMINA (PERSERO) MOR III**

**Handy Martinus<sup>1</sup>; Dinda Angelina<sup>2</sup>**

<sup>1,2</sup>Marketing Communication, Faculty of Economic and Communication, Bina Nusantara University  
Jl. K. H. Syahdan No. 9, Palmerah, Jakarta 11480, Indonesia  
<sup>1</sup>handy.martinus@binus.ac.id; <sup>2</sup>dindaangelina0@gmail.com

## **ABSTRACT**

*The purpose of this research was to know the strategies used by public relations of PT PERTAMINA (Persero) MOR III to improve brand awareness of 5,5 Kg Bright Gas product, which was new. The research used a qualitative descriptive method by case studies, which had restricted clearly through the existing focus research. The technique of data collection also acquired through a semi-structured interview, observation, documentation, and research reference. This research would respond to the strategy of public relations of PT PERTAMINA (Persero) MOR III to improve brand awareness of 5,5 Kg Bright Gas product. Attainment from this research told that public relations of PT PERTAMINA (Persero) MOR III have done PENCILS strategy to improve brand awareness of 5,5 Kg Bright Gas product. It concludes that public relations have done all of PENCILS strategy, however, the implementation of the strategy is not yet fully maximum. There are still many things that need to be considered related to planning strategy which is more complete and ready.*

**Keywords:** *public relations, public relations strategy, brand awareness*

## **INTRODUCTION**

Public relations is needed and entrusted by many companies to support the performance and success of the company. Public relations becomes a bridge between corporate liaison with its stakeholders such as government, public, and media. With the establishment of good communication, relationships between companies and communities through public relations are expected to create a mutual connection for both parties. Public relations is deliberately planned effort on purpose, in order to establish and maintain mutual understanding between the organization and its people. Not only establishing good communication, Cutlip, Center, and Broom (2006) have also mentioned that the function of public relations is to support management activities and achieve organizational goals.

As the locomotive of the nation's economy, PT Pertamina (Persero) is a state-owned company engaged in the energy sector including oil, gas, new/renewable energy that is divided into eight Marketing Operations Region (MOR); one of which is MOR III located in Jakarta and becomes the object of this research. PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III covers the working areas of Jakarta, West Java, and Banten. Along with the current technological development, the company strives to provide the latest innovations to meet the needs of a growing society. One of the innovations issued by PT Pertamina (Persero) is a Bright Gas 5,5 kg. The presence of this product will complete the 12 kg bright gas packag, which previously already on the market. Pertamina seizes the opportunity of consumers with low usability character that is quite large. With the presence of Bright Gas 5,5 kg, people have a variant of choice in choosing a gas product. Bright Gas 5,5 kg can be regarded as a middle product between 3 kg subsidized LPG and 12 kg of LPG, targeting middle to upper class of career woman, dynamic housewife or small family, and apartment dweller. The problem is many people do not know

about the current 5,5 kg Bright Gas products. Related to the problem, public relations strategy is needed to increase public awareness of the product brand Bright Gas 5,5 kg.

The purpose of this research is to look more deeply about the public relations strategy of PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III in increasing brand awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 kg. To attract the retailers, the brand managers have to work more on enhancing the purchase intentions and quality for more demand of the brand (follow pull strategy). Moreover, purchase intention also mediates the relationship of the quality and profitability so the brand manager must also focus on relationship to get more desirability from retailers to demand their products (Yaseen et al., 2011). Public relations (PR) is one of the sub-areas of communication science that is the backbone of PR activities. Another concept of PR is as a bridge between the company or organization and its public, especially the achievement of mutual understanding. It is necessary to have a PR strategy to enhance the brand awareness of this company, so the public is able to know this company better in order to understand the function and benefits (Meuthia, 2015).

PR can be mix or abbreviated as PENCILS. It is a strategic PR in carrying out tasks, roles, and functions according to the path, and this concept has components that are interconnected in the practice of PR work. According to Ruslan (in Soemirat & Ardianto, 2008), PENCILS component is as follows: (1) *Publications and publicity*; each function and task of PR is to organize publications or disseminate information through various media on the activities of companies or organizations which deserve to be known by the public. In addition, PR also generates publicity to gain a broader positive response from the public. (2) *Event* (programming preparation); PR also designs selected events within specific periods, places, and object that specifically affect the public. Usually, there are several types of event, including; (a) calendar events (regular events) that are routinely held on a particular month throughout the year; (b) special event, which is held at a certain moment outside the regular event of PR work program; (c) moments events. (3) *News* (creating news); efforts to create news through press releases, newsletters, bulletins, and others usually refer to the technical writing of 5W + 1H. The writing system is an inverted pyramid, where the most important points are placed in the middle of the news stem. (4) *Community involvement* (community awareness); the daily task of a Public Relation Officer (PRO) is to establish social contacts with specific community groups, as well as maintain good relations (community relations and humanity relations) with the organization or institution it represents. (5) *Inform or image* (notify or grab the image); there are 2 PR's main functions, i.e., inform something to the public or attract attention so hopefully will get a positive image response. The process of nothing becomes something, from do not know to know, after know to be like and then expected to arise something that is the image of a brand. (6) *Lobbying and negotiating* (approach and negotiation); skills for personal lobbying and negotiating are necessary for a PRO, so that all plans, ideas, and agency's activities receive support from influential individuals and institutions, resulting in a win-win situation. (7) *Social responsibility*; the aspect of social responsibility in the world of PR is very important not only think about the benefits for the institution or organization and the figures it represents, but also the concern for the community. This is important to get sympathy or empathy from the audience. This is what in public relations theory is called social marketing.

Brand awareness is the power of brands to stick in public memory, which can be measured by their ability to identify a brand in a situation. Brand awareness is one of the stages that can help strengthen brand equity and loyalty (Keller, Parameswaran, & Jacob, 2015). Thus, a customer who has an awareness of a brand will automatically be able to decipher the brand elements without being helped. The highest brand awareness is characterized by marking of a brand at the highest level in the customer's mind. It is very important for customers' expectations in the market with a verbal and informational message. The success of the service brand begins with the careful relationship between employees and customer (Aluregowda, 2013).

Briefly, Aaker (2015) describes the level of customer awareness of the brand in the form of a pyramid; first is the unaware of the brand is the lowest level. In this position, the customer simply does

not recognize the brand mentioned through the tools, such as showing the picture or mentioning the brand's name. Second is brand recognition or recall with help. In this level, the customer will remember the brand after being provided with help showing certain images or traits. The third is a brand recall is a level of unaided recall. This level reflects brands that customers can remember well without help. Fourth is top of mind is the highest level and the ideal position for all brands. At this level, the purposes of this research to customers are very familiar with and recognize the elements that a brand has; (1) describe the strategy used by PR PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III in increasing brand awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 kg. (2) Describe the implementation of PR strategy in increasing brand awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 kg. (3) Knowing what obstacles are experienced in improving brand awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 kg.

## METHODS

This research uses a qualitative research approach which is a type of research that findings are not obtained through quantification procedures, statistical calculations, or other forms but using numerical measures. Quality, value, or word meaning can only be expressed and explained through linguistics, language, or words. After the data are collected, it is arranged in sentence form. The data are collected through interviews with informants. The purpose of the research is to understand participants' perspectives that become the source of data, the subject of interviews, observation, data giver, opinion, and perception. The case study method is a cumulative method. The cumulative method is designed to pull together information and aggregate it in such a way that it allows for better generalization. It has the advantage of saving time and money by not creating new and repetitive research and also the information from collected data is arranged into sentence form to know the perspective of this research. It uses case studies and has been clearly defined through the focus of existing research participant related to this research. The case study is a research method that uses a variety of data sources (as much as possible) to examine, describe, and comprehensively describe various aspects of individuals, groups, programs, organizations, or events systematically. This research will answer the PR strategy used by PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III in increasing brand awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 kg product.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

PR PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III runs PENCILS strategy that is in line with PENCILS concept. PR can mix or abbreviated as PENCILS, that is a PR strategy in carrying out tasks, roles, and functions according to the path and in this concept has components that are interconnected in the practice of PR work. According to Ruslan (Soemirat & Ardianto, 2009), PENCILS component itself is as follows; First is doing *publications and publicity*. Each function and task of PR is to organize publications or disseminate information through various media about the activities of companies or organizations, which deserve to be known by the public. In addition, public relations also generate publicity to gain a broader positive response from the public. PR of PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III provides information related to activities undertaken by the company through publications by utilizing print media such as making press releases submitted to various media, online media, electronic, and social media. Publications conducted by PR PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III is decent information to be known by the community so people can be aware of the existence of Bright Gas 5,5 Kg. However, the publication that is done needs to be intensified again, especially to increase brand awareness because basically, people will be aware if given stimulus continuously.

The second is *the event*. PR also designs selected events within specific periods, places, and object that specifically affect the public. Usually, there are several types of event, including; (a) calendar events (regular events) that are routinely held on a particular month throughout the year; (b) special event, which is held at a certain moment outside the regular event of PR work program; and (c) moments events, is one of the strategies that can attract the attention of the public, through the event the company that can introduce and form public opinion of the products offered like Bright Gas 5,5 kg. It includes launching, special internal corporate events, socialization, and also sponsoring events that are in accordance with segmentation and target of Bright Gas 5,5 kg. Through this event, the community can be educated and knows the difference and advantages of Bright Gas 5,5 Kg.

The third is *the news*. It refers to the efforts to create news through press releases, newsletters, bulletins, and others that usually refer to the technical writing of 5W + 1H. The writing system is an inverted pyramid; the most important points are placed in the middle part of the news. The news is a collection of information packaged based on events that have value and then disseminated to the public through the media. The news is generated by PR to increase the brand awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 kg through internal energy company bulletin, then Pertamina's official website sends press release related to the ongoing activities, excellence, and promo of bright gas 5,5 kg to the media, which will be published through print and online. Internet marketing positively influences brand awareness and word of mouth, but it does not directly give positive influence the intention to buy. Brand awareness also does not give positive influence to word of mouth. Both brand awareness and word of mouth do influence positively to the formation of the intention to buy (Andriyanto & Haryanto, 2010).

The fourth is *community involvement*. The daily task of a PRO is to establish social contacts with specific community groups, as well as maintain good relations (community relations and humanity relations) with the organizations or institutions it represents. The form of community involvement conducted by Bright Gas 5,5 kg is in cooperation with Hiswana Migas, Mommies Daily Community, and The Urban Mama. The form of cooperation is the endorsement of Bright Gas 5,5 kg to community activities. Furthermore, Bright Gas 5,5 kg becomes the product that two communities carry in the discussion activities to the mothers.

The fifth is *inform or image*. There are two main functions of PR, i.e. inform something to the public or attract attention, so hopefully, it will get a positive image or response. The process of nothing becomes something, from do not know to know, after know to be like and expected to arise something that is the image of a brand. One of the activities undertaken by PR is to provide information and create a good image in the public eye. The way PR shapes the image of the 5,5 kg Bright Gas product is by activating such activations as socialization on various occasions, publications through print, online, electronic, all media are informed either through interviews, or releases. Bright Gas 5,5 kg itself also has its own image that can attract the attention of the public, especially from the shape, color, and its advantages.

The sixth is *approach and negotiation*. These are the skills for personal lobbying and negotiating are necessary for PRO, so that all plans, ideas, and agency's activities receive support from influential individuals and institutions, resulting in a win-win situation. Lobbying and negotiation are an attempt by the approach of one party with interest in obtaining support from another party deemed to have influence or authority. This is to achieve the goals of the organization. Based on observations and interviews, it can be concluded that there is no form of lobbying/negotiation activities that are conducted by PR related to Bright Gas 5,5 kg activity. Both informants have stated that the activities carried out more towards cooperation.

The seventh is a *social responsibility*. The aspect of social responsibility in the world of PR is very important by only thinking about the benefits for the institution or organization and the figures it represents, but also the concern for the community. It is important to get sympathy or empathy from the audience. This is what in public relations theory is called social marketing. PT Pertamina (Persero)

MOR III provides help in Bandung through 5,5 Kg Bright Gas product by providing assistance in the form of Bright Gas 5,5 kg in flood refugee in Bandung regency last March. Assistance is given to the area because it belongs to the territory of PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III covering Jakarta, West Java, and Banten.

From overall PENCILS strategies, PR of PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III has run the whole strategy, although the activity is still small. It can be seen based on the results of interviews and observations that the most widely implemented strategy to increase brand awareness Bright Gas 5,5 Kg is currently the publication and event. Implementation of the strategy has not been implemented maximally due to several factors that are the product is still new, and the availability of the product is still gradually. In addition to obstacles experienced by PR in carrying out the strategy is the consumer Bright Gas 5,5 kg almost the same as consumers 12 Kg, which in fear will disturb product 12 Kg itself and also the subsidized product that is LPG 3 Kg which cheaper than Bright Gas 5,5 Kg. So basically it is difficult to change society habit to switch using Bright Gas 5,5 kg. The level of brand awareness of the Bright Gas 5,5 kg that is a new product, of course, it has not reached the top of mind, and the brand awareness will be in line with the level of sales.

## CONCLUSIONS

After doing research on PR strategy analysis of PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III in improving brand awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 kg product hence can be drawn conclusions; First is the PR strategy undertaken in improving brand awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 kg product is PENCILS strategy. *Publication* is done by utilizing various media, ranging from traditional media (print), electronic media of radio activation, online media through Pertamina's official website, and also through social media (Instagram). The event conducted by Bright Gas 5,5 kg is targeted and can directly educate the target such as launching, talk shows on various radio, and sponsoring the food bazaar event, where the participants can feel the immediate advantages provided by Bright Gas 5,5 kg. The form of news (*news*) conducted by Bright Gas 5,5 kg is to create and send press releases to the media related to the activation event. The form of *community involvement* undertaken by Bright Gas 5,5 kg is currently working with Hiswana Migas, Mommies Daily, and The Urban Mama. The cooperation is in the form of endorsement from Bright Gas 5,5 kg to community activities. Bright Gas 5,5 kg is also promoted by the two communities in discussion activities to mothers. *Inform/image* is formed through socialization activations on various occasions, publications conducted through print, and electronic/online media. Bright Gas 5,5 kg does not have any form of *lobbying/negotiating* activities but more towards in cooperation such as cooperation with the mayor of Bandung, Ridwan Kamil, to support Bright Gas 5,5 kg when it is launched in Bandung and with related communities. Last is a *social responsibility*, CSR conducted by PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III is to provide assistance in the form of Bright Gas 5,5 Kg to people who got a flood that hit Bandung Regency in last March. Based on the results of interviews and observations, the activity strategy is still very little, among the PENCILS strategy, the most widely done is the publication, as well as the event. Both of these are very important to improve the awareness of products, especially new products, because the public basically likes everything that can attract attention. Continuous and constant publication may lead to the person receiving it either directly or indirectly.

Second is the implementation of strategies undertaken by PR of PT Pertamina (Persero) MOR III can be said not fully run maximally. There are still many things to be considered related to planning strategy deeper and mature, especially because the product is still new. Pertamina also already has popular products of LPG 3 kg and 12 kg. In addition, the problem of product availability that PR cannot do strategy in a vigorous.

The third is the obstacles experienced in increasing brand awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 kg product are LPG 3 kg subsidized, which is much cheaper, so it is very difficult for the community to switch to 5,5 kg Bright Gas. Basically, as long as there are still products that have the same benefits and in terms of much cheaper, people will tend to be indifferent to the new product even though the product has more advantages. In addition, consumers Bright Gas 5,5 kg with LPG 12 Kg is almost the same for middle to upper-class society. It cannot be pushed because it will turn off consumers 12 Kg.

Moreover, this research can be used as a reference for further research by looking at from different perspectives, such as the main focus and purpose of this research are to know the PR strategy in improving the Bright Gas 5,5 kg product, how the implementation, and what are the obstacles faced in carrying out the strategy. In future research, it is expected to explore the broader scope of this research as the effect of the strategy has been done whether it has a significant impact on brand awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 Kg. Further research can search deeper trademark owned by PT Pertamina (Persero) others, for example, Dexlite which is a new diesel fuel from PT Pertamina (Persero). To build brand awareness is not easy and requires a long process. PR needs to do more consistent PENCILS strategy in order to increase the awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 kg, although many obstacles are found in the implementation, and the strategy must still run continuously. When seen so far activities conducted PR fairly little, it can be seen through the observations and also the exposure of data from the two informants.

For the efficiency of PR can maximize the use of existing social media by continuing to update news and campaigning Bright Gas 5,5 kg through the making of content and video that can educate the public. The need to conduct a survey on product awareness when the product is mature enough. It is necessary to measure the level of public awareness of Bright Gas 5,5 kg product. The survey can also be used as a benchmark strategy that has been done. With this research, it is expected to provide knowledge for the community of Bright Gas 5,5 kg and also provide input for other industries about the importance of brand awareness for a product and service. Purchase of gas decision is made from women/housewife; therefore Pertamina should create some programs to attract women/housewife to purchase Bright gas, which is fancy color, discount program, availability/easy to buy, etc.

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