



## PENCILS PUBLIC RELATIONS STRATEGY ASTON KARTIKA GROGOL HOTEL & CONFERENCE CENTER DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Lichya Apriliana<sup>1</sup>  
Siti Meisyaroh<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Communication Study Program, Institut Bisnis dan Informatika Kwik Kian Gie, Jakarta, Indonesia 14350. E-mail: [69180320@student.kwikkiangie.ac.id](mailto:69180320@student.kwikkiangie.ac.id)

<sup>2</sup>Communication Study Program, Institut Bisnis dan Informatika Kwik Kian Gie, Jakarta, Indonesia 14350. E-mail: [siti.meisyaroh@kwikkiangie.ac.id](mailto:siti.meisyaroh@kwikkiangie.ac.id)

### Abstract

Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center is one of the most trusted and five-star hotels in West Jakarta which has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. Which also has an impact on the level of decline in tourists in the city of Jakarta. Therefore, a strategy is needed to promote Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center so that people are more familiar with the hotel. Seeing the increasingly difficult competitive conditions, Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center requires hard work from Public Relations to optimize its role and function in its efforts to assist marketing activities and attract visitors.

### Keywords:

*Covid 19, Hotel, Public Relations*

### INTRODUCTION

At the beginning of 2020, almost all parts of the world were hit by a pandemic called Corona Virus Disease or COVID-19. This virus was first discovered in the city of Wuhan, China at the end of December 2019. This virus spread very quickly to almost all countries, including Indonesia, in just a few months. COVID-19 is a virus that attacks the immune system in the lungs. Various activities that involve many people are eliminated and shifted to all online activities. Many human resources are forced to be laid off or even laid off because the company is making a loss. Many industries are unable to operate due to this pandemic, some of which are Tour & Travel, Sports, Event Organizers, Film Production, Malls and many more. This means that almost all sectors are affected by the losses caused by the outbreak of this disease. Not only in terms of health and medical, the economy has also been hit hard by this pandemic.

Even Indonesia, which has great potential in the economic market, cannot avoid the threat of a national economic crisis due to Covid-19. Restrictions on carrying out activities on a large scale will automatically result in increasingly difficult economic conditions. With the cessation of most economic activities, PPKM policies have also had an impact on the interaction of social

#### Corresponding Author:

Lichya Apriliana

#### Email:

69180320@student.kwikkiangie.ac.id

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relations. Restrictions on activities and interactions between humans have become a social problem because of the boredom and boredom that hit while following the provisions, one must stay at home.

Another problem is the increasing number of poor people which significantly increases the number of beggars, street children, the homeless and the homeless. The impact of the implementation of social distancing and physical distancing has also resulted in many companies limiting their business activities and adjusting to government policies, namely the Lockdown policy. This also results in people not being able to work outside their homes.

Many parties have felt the impact of this pandemic, one of which is the hotel industry, which has resulted in a decline in occupancy (used units) in several areas because tourists are reluctant to travel to avoid COVID-19 transmission and there is no clarity about when this pandemic will subside.

We all hope that this virus can be resolved soon and the lives of Indonesian people will run normally as before. Therefore, let's make efforts to help the government in dealing with this outbreak by starting with small things such as wearing masks when outside the house, Always wash your hands, keep your distance and stay at home.

During the COVID-19 Pandemic, Public Relations plays an important role in making strategies to keep hotels busy with visitors. Public Relations also strives for persuasive and informative communication. This is done by Public Relations so that employees are more motivated in doing their work, employees feel the situation and conditions of the workplace are comfortable and pleasant because of the need through means of communication.

Currently, the development of the world of tourism in the big city of DKI Jakarta makes competition in the hotel sector increasingly tight and aggressive in promoting their respective hotels. The Public Relations strategy within a hotel has an important role in dealing with business competition and the current COVID-19 pandemic conditions in the hotel service sector, in this case also having an impact on the Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center.

Hotel Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center is one of the five-star hotels in the city of West Jakarta. The standard of service and facilities offered by this hotel is able to meet every guest's needs. Restaurant, rooftop pool and lounge, club and bar, fitness center, some of the facilities offered by Hotel Aston Kartika Grogol. This hotel is well known to the hotel community for "B to A+" circles and modern travelers. This hotel is open to the public, both domestic and foreign guests.

The Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center is trusted by many as a hotel that has earned an impressive and enviable reputation for its achievements. Although this hotel is still relatively new in 2018, there are many positive responses that can be seen from the criticism and suggestions that visitors give to the hotel. Because it is still a new hotel in DKI Jakarta City, therefore Public Relations is very much required to be able to innovate in forming programs well in order to gain trust and be accepted by visitors, so that they are able to compete and survive during the Covid-19 pandemic in DKI Jakarta. especially regarding the Public Relations strategy of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center which will start in 2020 until 2021.

The reason the author chose "Public Relations Strategy PENCILS Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center During the Covid-19 Pandemic" as the title of this research, is based on the curiosity and interest of the author to find out the PENCILS strategy used by Public Relations Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center in during the COVID-19 pandemic as desired by this Hotel.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

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## Communication and Public Relations

Based on The Transactional Model of Communication from Barnlund (1970) communication can be categorized as effective if there is a shared field of experience between the sender and receiver (West and Turner, 2014:13).

According to Robert D. Ross in Ruslan (2008:83) communication is an important tool in the function of Public Relations. The public overshadows and appreciates a good performance in effective communication activities and at the same time good performance is to attract public attention and other important objectives of the Public Relations function.

As a communication tool, Public Relations has a role as a manager of communication flows where its activities are aimed at increasing employee productivity through reciprocal two-way communication, fostering an image and establishing good relations with relations and the public so as to increase sales, and increase public loyalty to products and services offered. offered by the company.

Based on the above definition, the researcher concludes that Public Relations functions as a communication tool, because if a message is not achieved it can be seen how far a Public Relations person understands this message conveyed. The message can be in the form of symbols that have an understandable meaning.

## Public Relations

A Public Relations must realize that change is necessary and is a necessity so that we can develop forward. We must also be aware that any process of change can move towards complexity and complexity. Likewise in internal and external communication, the working group must take into account the current situation, as well as the strategy for solving the problems to be faced. The organization itself in carrying out its functions must be open to negative inputs, all of which are needed by the organization. Likewise, norms are integrated with the needs, desires of the public internally and externally, so that products or services can be balanced and in accordance with effective services for their environment.

The definition of Public Relations put forward by Cutlip (2015: 3) in the field of Public Relations in his book "Effective Public Relations", namely

Public Relations is the management functions that establishes and maintains a mutually beneficial relationship between an organization and the publics on whom its success of failure depends.

Meanwhile, according to Scott M. Cutlip in (Nova 2011: 35), Public Relations is a management function that establishes and maintains mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and society, on which their successes and failures depend.

It can be explained that the implementation of Public Relations activities is known as stages to achieve effective goals. These stages are a pattern of communication activities or the process of Public Relations. The Public Relations Process according to Cutlip and Center in Rahmadi (2010:83-85):

### 1. Fact Finding

This stage is the stage where the activities are more focused on finding out whether the situation and public opinion on a step to be taken, or what is being implemented can support or even hinder the activities of the organization or company. Data and facts can be obtained through opinion surveys, both internal to the public using several approaches. In this phase of searching and finding data or facts, Public Relations consultants are required to do the following:

- a. Always pay attention to various social, political and economic events or developments that will directly or indirectly affect the organization or company.
- b. Collect various kinds of data to be processed into information.
- c. Analyze the information to suit the needs of the organization or company.
- d. Always ready to provide sufficient information to each organizational unit or company.

- e. Complete all kinds of information that is still not complete and adequate.
- f. Completing the storage of data and information, among others by organizing documentation and clipping all information from the considered mass media (press clipping).

## 2. Planning

Planning or planning is an important part in obtaining favorable public opinion. This planning is an area that is quite important for the Public Relations, because it is a very decisive part for the success of the organization's goals, especially the goals of Public Relations itself. The task of Public Relations is to link communication activities with the interests of the company.

## 3. Communication

At this communication stage, it is an active delivery of information to the public, both internal public and external public regarding what has been prepared and programmed. In the process of delivering information, Public Relations uses various forms, types, and also communication techniques in order to create certain effects as expected.

## 4. Evaluation

After the communication is carried out, the company is certainly interested in knowing the impact and influence of the communication stage on the public. To find out, evaluations are carried out. Based on the above definition, the researcher concludes that Public Relations is one of the management functions which is communication to generate understanding and acceptance from the public.

In this public acceptance process, companies need to pay attention to harmonious relationships with their communities, such as being open, honest, fair, and consistent. Thus, a goal desired by Hotel Aston Karika Grogol in increasing the number of visitors during the pandemic can be achieved with the expected results.

## PENCILS Strategic Public Relations

The specific theory that the researcher uses in this research is a theory that relates to the previous general theories and supports the research to be discussed. To win the competition with competitors, one of the strategies to win the competition in the business world is to use Public Relations properly.

The Public Relations strategy or better known as the Philip Kotler Public Relations mix, namely the PENCILS strategy is as follows (Ruslan, 2012: 13):

### 1) Publications

According to Lesly Philip, publication is the dissemination of messages carried out for certain interests of organizations and individuals without payment to the media. Publication is also an important component both in the promotion mix and in the Public Relations mix because apart from being able to create a positive image for the company, it can also broaden the scope of consumers.

### 2) Events

Designing an event that aims to introduce the company's products and services and get closer to the public and further can inspire public opinion so that they can be interested in the activities held by the company.

Public Relations are people who participate in making events. When planning a particular event, a Public Relations must choose and consider various things, namely a certain period of time, place, and objects that specifically affect the public. Events consist of several types, for example: Calendar events, which are regular events that are held in certain months throughout the year, Special Events, which are special events, and which are held at certain moments outside the routine events of the Public Relations work program and the last moments event, namely or events that are momentary, or more specifically.



### 3) News

That is trying to create news through press releases, news letters, bulletins and others which usually refers to the 5W + 1H writing technique (Who, What, When, Why and How) with an inverted pyramid writing systematic, the most important being the lead or intro that less important is placed in the middle of the news bar. For this reason, a Public Relations must have the ability to write because most of his duties are to write (Public Relations Writing), especially to create publicity.

### 4) Community Involvement

That is, the involvement of a Public Relations' daily task is to make social contact with certain community groups in order to maintain good relations with the organization or institution it represents.

### 5) Inform or Image

There are two main functions of Public Relations, namely providing information to the public or attracting attention, so that it is expected to get a response in the form of a positive image from a process, nothing is strived to be something. From those who do not know to know, after knowing they become like, and then something is expected to arise, namely in the form of an image.

### 6) Lobbying and Negotiation

Namely the skills to lobby through a personal approach and the ability to negotiate is needed for a Public Relations. The purpose of lobbying is to reach agreement or gain support from individuals and institutions that influence the company's business continuity.

### 7) Social Responsibility

Namely having social responsibility in Public Relations activities shows that the company has a concern for the community. This will improve the company's image in the eyes of the public. Currently, many companies make social activities an activity that must be done. The forms are various, such as caring for floods, providing scholarships, compensation for orphans, free medical treatment, and many other activities. The aspect of social responsibility in the world of Public Relations is quite important, not only thinking about the benefits for the agency or company and the figures they represent, but also caring for the community to achieve success and gain sympathy or empathy from the audience.

## RESEARCH METHODS

The research subject research is the Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center which is the main informant in research regarding the increase in the number of hotel visitors during the Covid-19 pandemic, especially in 2021. The researcher also conducted a survey of informants who have links with the research subject so that the data needed in the research obtain accurate answers and can meet the answers to the identification and formulation of research problems.

This Research uses qualitative research methods. the research approach must be determined as early as possible so that the research has a solid foundation from the point of view of the research methodology in addition to understanding the research results which will be more proportional if the reader knows the approach applied. In general, research paradigms are classified into two groups, namely qualitative research and quantitative research.

In this study, the researcher used a qualitative research approach with a descriptive nature. A qualitative approach is a research procedure that produces descriptive data in the form of written or oral data from people and observed behavior. This qualitative approach views





that meaning is an inseparable part of a person's experience in his social life with other people (Bungin, 2007).

This qualitative approach views that meaning is an inseparable part of a person's experience in his social life with other people (Bungin, 2007). Because this study aims to describe, summarize, various conditions, various situations, or various phenomena of social reality that exist in the community that is the object of research, and seeks to draw that reality to the surface as a feature, character, trait, model, sign, or description. about certain conditions, situations, or phenomena (Bungin, 2013:68).

According to Moleong (2009:2), qualitative research is defined as research that intends to understand the phenomena of what is experienced by research subjects such as behavior, perception, motivation, action, et cetera. Holistically and by way of description in the form of words. Words and language, in a particular context that is natural and by utilizing various natural methods. While the qualitative approach, according to Sugiyono (2007:1), is a research method used to examine the condition of natural objects (as opposed to an experiment), where the researcher is the key instrument, the data analysis is inductive, and the results of qualitative research emphasize meaning rather than generalization.

According to Lofland and Lofland (in Moleong, 2013:157), the data sources in qualitative research are words and actions, the rest is additional data such as documents and others. The data of this study were obtained from primary data and secondary data.

1. Primary Data According to Imam Suprayogo and Tobroni in the book on socio-religious research (2012: 73), they emphasize that a very important source of data in research, especially naturalistic research, is humans who are positioned as resource persons or informants. And according to Sugiyono (2013:137), primary sources are data sources that directly provide data to data collectors. The type of data used in this research is using the results of in-depth interviews with two selected informants, namely Mrs. Shafana Zanubia and Mrs. Monika Sitorus.

2. Secondary Data The type of secondary data used in this research is a literature study. Literature Study is a data collection technique by examining theories, opinions, and main ideas contained in print media, especially print media that support and are relevant to the subject matter in research such as books. (Sarwono, 2012: 35) Data from the literature study is the initial data and is the first step for researchers in starting the research carried out. (Sarwono, 2012: 45). This literature study aims to collect theoretical and secondary data. Researchers obtained data through the library in the form of matters relating to strategy and Public Relations as well as research objects, internet, and official documents of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center.

In conducting research, data is needed that can support the research. To obtain data, the researchers used, among others, documentation and in-depth interviews.

According to Sugiyono (2018:476) documentation is a method used to obtain data and information in the form of books, archives, documents, written numbers and pictures in the form of reports and information that can support research. Documentation studies are complementary to the use of in-depth interviews and will be more reliable or have high credibility if they are supported by photographs or existing academic papers.

But not all documents choose a high degree of credibility. For example, many photos do not reflect the original condition, because photos can be made for certain purposes.

Interviews are one of the techniques used to collect research data. Interview is a two-way communication to obtain information from relevant informants. According to Yusuf (2014:372) Interview is an event or process of interaction between the interviewer and the source of information or the person being interviewed through direct communication or asking directly about an object under study.

According to Bungin (2013: 109), interviews can be conducted in two ways, namely undercover and open. Incognito is the interviewer disguised as a member of society in general and lives a normal activity with the interviewee, while the open interview is interviews conducted with informants who know the presence of the interviewer as a researcher in charge



of conducting interviews at the research location. In this study, the type of interview used was an open interview.

In-depth interviews in general are the process of obtaining information for research purposes by means of question and answer while face to face between the interviewer and the informant or interviewee, with or without an interview guide, in which the interviewer and informant are involved in a relatively long social life (Bungin , 2013:108).”

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. From the results of an interview with Mrs. Shafana Zanubia as Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol & Conference Center, the following results were obtained:

a. Public Relations plays an important role in increasing the number of hotel visitors and the following is some documentation regarding Public Relations activities carried out to increase the number of visitors during the COVID-19 pandemic throughout 2020 to 2021:

a. In making programs to increase the number of visitors to Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center, Mrs. Shafana Zanubia as Public Relations is not alone but is assisted by several other departments, namely the Sales & Marketing Department, Restaurant & Banquet Manager, and Front Office.

b. The results of the interview with Mrs. Shafana Zanubia above are also related to one of the Public Relations strategies, namely PENCILS

a. Publications

Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center has carried out the first strategy, which is to publish and disseminate information on new company product information using social media such as Facebook, Instagram, Tiktok and the official website of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center.

Mrs. Shafana Zanubia as Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center also conducted partnerships with the aim of collaborating with other companies. One of the benefits obtained by Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center is the dissemination of information on company activities through other companies and various media companies so that Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center can increase the number of visitors during the Covid- 19 pandemic

b. Events

Designing an event that aims to introduce products/services and by holding activities or events, Public Relations Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center has held events throughout 2021 starting in 2020. Events are usually carried out in partnership with Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center.

Mrs. Shafana Zanubia as Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center considers that the event is a must to be carried out to increase the number of hotel visitors. There is no specific schedule made by Public Relations in making events but events are made with hotel planning every year

c. News

Like Public Relations work in general, the media used is press releases, to provide information on companies and products using press releases. Mrs. Shafana Zanubia as Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center makes press releases every month. Press releases are usually made about activities that will take place at the hotel. Mrs. Shafana Zanubia invited the media via email by distributing the press release that had been made to various media parties such as Kompas, Mnc so that during the activity the media would come to enliven the event and make news of ongoing activities at Aston Kartika Grogol & Conference Center of course it must have a good and profitable impact for the hotel.

d. Community Involvement

Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center conducts Community Involvement online and offline. Public Relations circulates consumers in an effort to increase their loyalty by means of promotions and events, for now they are doing more promotions to

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partnerships. Mrs. Shafana Zanubia as Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center created a program aimed at creating community involvement or the surrounding community so that both of them benefit. Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center will hold a Festival bazaar in collaboration with Kul-ind, namely the Indonesian Culinary Alliance with MSMEs in 2021

e. Information or Image

Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center is very concerned about public opinion. Public Relations Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center uses social media to provide information and promote its products or services, Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center collaborates and makes partnerships with various Instagram influencers who directly make hotel products known to the public in an effort to maintain positive image of the hotel in the view of the wider community. Then Mrs. Shafana Zanubia as Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center while maintaining service quality, maintaining brand, and fostering good relations with consumers or hotel guests.

f. Lobbying and Negotiating

Approaching and negotiating is something that is definitely done by the Public Relations of a company, so that Public Relations is needed to have skills in negotiating. Carrying out approaches and negotiations with both internal and external parties to find a middle ground that benefits both parties is the goal of negotiating.

From the results of the interview delivered by Mrs. Shafana Zanubia as Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center, she did lobbying and negotiations with various parties, for example with various media companies, influencers on Instagram, banking, F&B platforms such as Jakupon and traveloka eats.

g. Social Responsibility

Social responsibility in Public Relations activities shows that the company has a concern for the community. This can increase the company's positive image in the eyes of the public. Mrs. Shafana Zanubia as Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center has not carried out social activities independently, but social activities are carried out in collaboration with partnerships which include collaborating with sports instructors and doing gymnastics activities together at the MSME Festival Bazaar which was held. The goal is a form of social concern. Creating programs that are beneficial to the interests and social welfare is an effort to gain public sympathy.

## CONCLUSIONS

The conclusion from the interviews and documentation, it is known that the Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center has implemented a PENCILS Public Relations strategy during the COVID-19 pandemic:

a. In increasing the number of visitors, the Public Relations Strategy of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center is to apply the PENCILS theory or concept (publications, events, news, community involvement, Inform or image, lobbying and negotiation, social responsibility). Everything related to the PENCILS strategy has been carried out by the Public Relations of Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center. In its activities, Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center utilizes social media by providing creative content, making promotions to increase sales and achieve Hotel goals. In addition, Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center holds many events, to attract public interest in the Hotel.

b. Several events held by Aston Kartika Grogol & Conference Center attracted many visitors and the local community so that it helped attract their attention and enliven the hotel again. If there is an event that must be carried out offline, the event is very limited in terms of the number of quotas, moreover the hotel must strictly follow health protocols. In addition, the sales call made by the Sales team is very helpful in attracting people's attention to this hotel.

c. The supporting factors of the Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center are in formulating and implementing strategies to increase the number of visitors. Public Relations has

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many partners who can assist in the hotel promotion process so that it can run well and be arranged according to the plan that has been prepared. Usually Public Relations cooperates with the Sales & Marketing, Front Office and Food & Beverage departments in running hotel promos. In addition, because hotels often hold collaboration events with partnerships, both influencers, media companies and banking companies. This of course can increase the hotel's positive image towards people who are not familiar with Aston Kartika Grogol Hotel & Conference Center.

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