

CHAPTER II

JASA MARGA PAST CRISIS RESPONSE

2.1 About Jasa Marga Persero TBK

Jasa Marga Persero Tbk is a state-owned enterprise that operates in the field of toll road construction and management. This company was previously known as PT Jasa Marga, when it was first built on March 1st 1978. Then in the year 1981, the government changed the name of the company to PT Jasa Marga (Persero). Until 1987, Jasa Marga was the only company in Indonesia to operate the national toll road system. One of their very first projects, started from the year 1978 was the famous Jagorawi (Jakarta - Bogor - Ciawi) Toll Road that still operates to this day. In the 1990s, Jasa Marga have collaborated with numerous private owned construction companies to advance toll road infrastructure in Indonesia, but most refuse to build one using their companies name, thus making Jasa stepping forward in completing those projects such as JOR (Jakarta Outer Ring Road).

As for the relevance to this research, Jasa Marga's secretary requested the project of Tol Japek (Jakarta - Cikampek) 2. This is due to the volume of vehicles passing through Japek has exceeded usual numbers, and have caused many traffic jams. The project was then recognized and was accepted to continue to its construction stage in the year 2017.

Jasa Marga's scope of business is at a national level. As a result, Jasa Marga developed several subsidiary companies to compensate for any mismanagement and further enhance each region's toll road development. Some of them are PT Marga Sarana Jabar, PT Jakarta Lingkar Baratsatu, PT Marga Lingkar Jakarta, and many more. Jasa Marga also has separate companies to support their main business in managing Indonesian toll roads. One of them is PT Jasa Marga Related

Businesses, which helped local businesses to build their stores and vendors in the property of Jasa Marga for better customer traffic.

2.2 Crisis Communication of Jasa Marga

Crisis Communication originally derived from public relations and journalism serving as a tool to manage reputational threats due to product failures, environmental disasters, or political scandals (5 Borough Communications, 2023). In these modern days, Crisis Communication has developed out of its original characteristic, of course in a good way. Crisis Communication used to be reactive and spark uncertainty to the company, and because it happens in the pre-internet era, crisis communication is localized and only applied to the nearby reachable consumer. Whereas today, crisis communication is more proactive, where companies predict and mitigate possible crises and make strategies and solution plans for any type of crisis. They are also done in real-time, and digitally driven to compensate for a wider, more global field of customers (Upadhyay & Upadhyay, 2023).

Now, why should any organizations have their own crisis communication strategies? Should a company be concerned about the communication they produce to their stakeholders? Crisis communication is needed more than ever in this era, especially for Jasa Marga. With the presence of social media, Jasa Marga have faced several issues regarding their reputation and continuity of business. Information about a company spread at a very rapid pace, whether it's about their daily business schedule or harmful information that could damage their reputation. Oftentimes, organizations struggle to manage the information that spreads about them, since people often believe information without proper verified claims, further influencing public opinion and organizational reputation (Larisu & Zulham 2024). Therefore, a proper strategy to handle these kinds of situations must be developed at the beginning of every business model, and not forget proper execution.

Strategies could vary between business models, since not all business runs at the same pace. Although, a quick, fast, and responsiveness of a company is required.

Jasa Marga is not an exception in terms of crisis communication. As a matter of fact, Jasa Marga holds the most critical public service involvement in Indonesia's transportation infrastructure. Unlike private owned organizations, state-owned enterprises such as Jasa Marga have a higher scrutiny from the public. This is because state owned enterprises have dual responsibility, maintaining their own operational performance, and maintaining the public's interest towards governments performance. In a crisis situation, Jasa Marga's communication is a form of public accountability. They have an enormous span of stakeholders, from investors, and all toll road users who depend on their service. Thus, Jasa Margas crisis communication is both a reputation and institutional safeguarding tactics.

In the case of MBZ Toll road controversies, Jasa Marga faced reputational challenges associated with allegations of negligence and governance issues. The whole MBZ operation is tied closely to the national significance in infrastructure development, and Jasa Marga's communication response to the crisis became central in shaping the public's perception. As a result, Jasa Marga's crisis communication strategies were required to address concerns regarding transparency, responsibility, and corrective action, while simultaneously protecting organizational legitimacy. Public expectations toward state owned enterprises tend to emphasize ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability more strongly than toward purely private entities. In this regard, a discussion of the way in which crisis communication is applied by Jasa Marga in this case enables the author to gain understanding about the manner in which public sector organizations try to handle with reputational risks when the perception of their responsibility is very high.

2.2.1 Past Controversies and Crisis Communication

PT Jasa Marga had also been involved in various operational crisis situations in which effective crisis communication was needed. A particular instance involves the significant traffic jam experienced in the Jakarta - Cikampek Toll Road during the 2016 Eid (*mudik*) holiday due to the gridlocks experienced by travelers and criticisms against its management. Looking at the incident, the company has cooperated with police department and issued statements highlighting the reasons behind the jam and corrective traffic control actions to be taken. However, their actions appear to be inappropriate and defensive (Alief, 2016). Not to mention, in situations wherein floods affected the company's operations within toll roads, press releases and other forms of information disseminated through social media sites were implemented as ways of keeping the public informed about the situation (Sekar, 2026). In such instances, communication messages were usually focused on issues of operational coordination, improvement, and public safety.

2.3 Corporate Reputation and Public trust

A reputation is not just a corporate image, but a socially constructed reality that forms through time as a result of organizational actions and stakeholders' perception of them (Fombrun 1996). Reputation is one of intangible assets, which plays an important role in determining stakeholder trustworthiness, competitive advantages, and sustainability. At the same time, Coombs (2007) claims that organizational reputation may be vulnerable in crises situations, as stakeholders reevaluate their perceptions of organizations depending on their level of responsibility for the incident and adequacy of response.

Trust and corporate reputation are connected. This statement is particularly true for companies like Jasa Marga. According to Mayer, et al (1995), trustworthiness is based on ability, integrity, and benevolence. In case of a crisis, stakeholders tend

to doubt the company on those three points, thus questioning the institution itself. In relation to Jasa Marga, reputation is also related to the organization's public image, which should not pursue merely commercial interests, but also be accountable to the state (Christensen & Lægheid, 2007).

Communication processes play an important part in the formation and evolution of organizational reputation. Through communication processes, stakeholders evaluate crisis situation and make conclusions about the company's responsibility (Coombs, 2007).

2.4 Digital Media and Crisis Amplification

The advent of using digital media has affected the nature of crisis communication. Information sharing, real time involvement and increased scrutiny by the public are effects associated with social media (Jin, et al 2014). Digital media gives stakeholders an opportunity to be involved in the formation of the situation of crisis, which results in reputational risks due to comments made collectively.

The organization cannot manage the entire crisis communication anymore because the stakeholders get involved in public discussion through comments, reposts, and independent interpretation. This involvement in dialogue only worsen reputational risk in crisis communication. Additionally, in digital environment there appears a situation described as “paracrisis” by Veil, et al (2011). This situation claims that reputational threats happen and escalate before covering of the crisis by media in the traditional sense of the word. Infrastructure disputes may provide an example in question. The discussion about the issues related to toll road management can greatly affect public opinion on both organization and situation of crisis and aggravate accountability demands. Hence, it becomes important to analyze crisis communication in digital context.

2.5 Previous Studies and Research Gap

Previous studies have extensively applied SCCT to examine organizational responses to corporate scandals, public health crises, and institutional failures. Coombs (2007) stated that crisis response effectiveness depends on aligning communication strategies with stakeholder attributions of responsibility. Subsequent research has confirmed that accommodative or “complying” strategies, such as apology and corrective action, are more effective in high responsibility crises. Also, Image Restoration Theory by Benoit (1997), has been widely used to analyze rhetorical strategies in corporate apologies, political scandals, and public sector controversies. Mortification and corrective action are often perceived as more sincere and effective in repairing damaged reputations (Benoit,2015).

However, with many cases and research having been done in another country, there is only a number of research that has examined crisis communication strategies within Indonesian state-owned enterprises, particularly in infrastructure controversies such as Jasa Marga. Additionally, few studies integrate SCCT and IRT within a directed qualitative content analysis framework to analyze crisis communication in preventable crisis contexts. This research addresses that gap by examining PT Jasa Marga’s crisis communication during the MBZ Toll Road controversy through a combined theoretical lens of SCCT and IRT. By focusing on a preventable crisis involving a state-owned infrastructure company operating in a digitally “heated” public environment, the result of the analysis will show how a state-owned enterprise like Jasa Marga manages crisis communication in a high-profile infrastructure controversy.