



## Enhancing Public Relations (PR) as the Focus of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) for CRG Indonesia

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**ABSTRACT:** This study investigates methods to improve Public Relations (PR) within Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) for CRG Indonesia, paying attention to the key challenges encountered in media relations, event management, and community engagement/Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR). Through conducting qualitative analysis and interacting with stakeholders, the research has found that there is a requirement for content which can be tailored to specific locations, a more solid sustainability message, and enhanced digital interaction. The findings show that CRG's current public relations strategies have to be better aligned with local sensitivities and company goals. The recommended enhancements involve establishing more robust media connections, implementing thorough event organization, and integrating corporate social responsibility initiatives to cultivate community confidence. The implementation plan utilizes digital platforms, establishes explicit CSR objectives, and adheres to a comprehensive timeline based on the AISAS (Attention, Interest, Search, Action, Share) model. This strategy ensures effective involvement and extensive understanding among all parties involved. By implementing such strategies, CRG Indonesia may enhance its prominence, convey its dedication to sustainability, and establish a robust public relations structure that aids both short-term and long-term business goals.

**KEYWORDS:** AISAS Model, Community Relations, Corporate Social Responsibility, Event Management, Integrated Marketing Communication, Media Relations, Public Relations, Stakeholder Engagement, Sustainability Messaging.

### INTRODUCTION

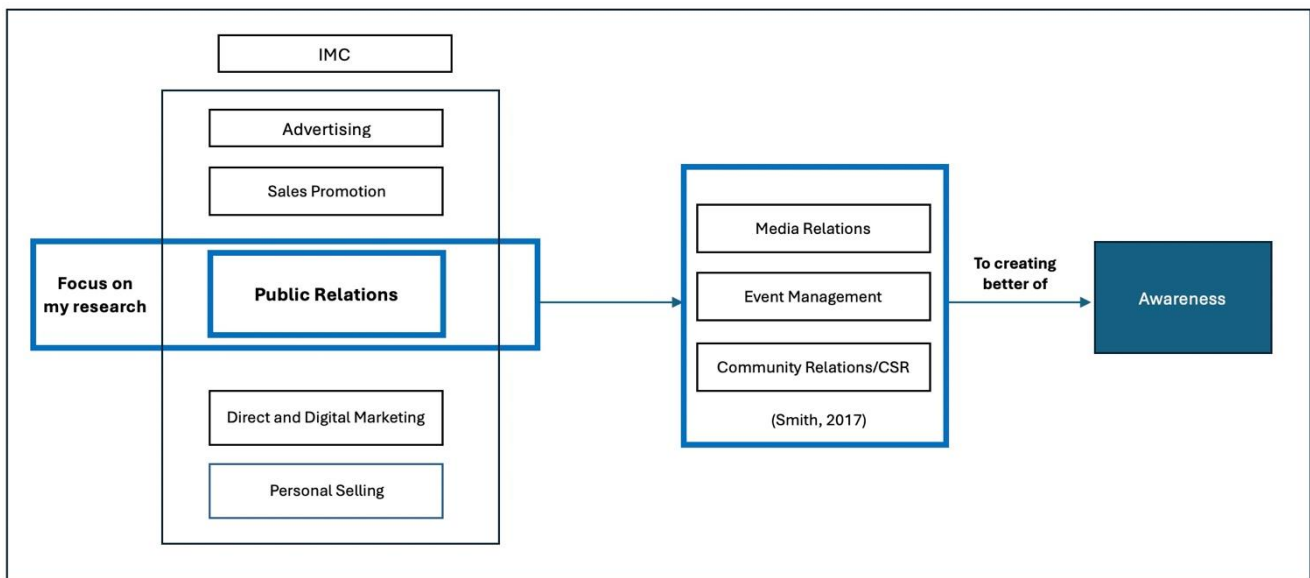
Indonesia, the world's fourth most populous nation, is characterized by its rich agricultural heritage, making it a vital player in the global agriculture industry. Numerous islands, lush plains, and rainforests make up the country's varied terrain, which provides a variety of farming opportunities. In 2023, Indonesia witnessed a remarkable surge in household demand for palm oil, driven by a confluence of factors. A burgeoning economy and expanding middle class led to increased disposable incomes, allowing families to indulge in more processed foods and personal care products, many of which rely heavily on palm oil. Changes in lifestyle and urbanization further exacerbated this shift in consumer behavior. As populations migrated to cities, traditional cooking methods gave way to the convenience and affordability of processed foods, often laden with palm oil. Demand in the industry was further stimulated by the Indonesian government's ambitious biodiesel blending mandate (B30), which aims to replace 30% of diesel fuel with alternatives based on palm oil. The combination of rising economic growth, changing lifestyles, and government policies created a perfect storm that drove Indonesia's domestic palm oil demand to unprecedented levels.

CRG is a global food company with a complex supply chain that spans over 70 countries. CRG Indonesia, a leading agribusiness company in Indonesia, faces a number of challenges in enhancing its awareness in the competitive agriculture industry. Our PR (Public Relation) external activities and media coverage reveal a concerning trend of negative sentiment toward the Indonesian agricultural industry, particularly the palm oil sector. This negativity stems from several factors: deforestation, a major environmental concern, and European Union regulations that potentially limit palm oil production in Indonesia. Deforestation poses a significant issue not only for the environment but also for the agricultural industry's long-term sustainability. In light of these challenges, it is crucial to critically evaluate our business practices and ensure they are demonstrably safe and responsible, addressing both environmental concerns and potential trade restrictions. This proactive approach is crucial for navigating the complex landscape of the Indonesian agricultural industry and maintaining a positive public image.

This study aims to identify the key barriers to the successful implementation of public relations strategies for CRG Indonesia and propose innovative approaches to improve the overall integrated marketing communication framework. The main research questions include: a) What are the key challenges faced by CRG Indonesia in implementing effective public relations strategies as part of its IMC approach? b) How can CRG Indonesia adapt and innovate its PR strategies to enhance its IMC strategies?.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

To address the study inquiries, within the scope of Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC), focusing on Public Relations (PR) is essential for promoting effective brand communication and engaging stakeholders. The AISAS model—Attention, Interest, Search, Action, and Share—provides a strategic framework for understanding consumer behavior and directing PR efforts. This model aids in capturing the audience's attention, generating interest, facilitating information search, prompting actions, and encouraging content sharing, thereby enhancing the overall effectiveness of PR initiatives. Complementing this approach, the SOSTAC model—Situation, Objectives, Strategy, Tactics, Action, and Control—offers a comprehensive planning and management framework. By systematically addressing each element, organizations can ensure their PR strategies align with broader IMC objectives. The use of SOSTAC in PR activities enables thorough analysis of the current situation, the setting of clear and measurable objectives, the development of strategic plans, the implementation of tactical actions, and continuous monitoring and evaluation. Combined, the AISAS and SOSTAC models facilitate a structured and strategic approach to PR within the IMC framework, ensuring that communication efforts are targeted, effective, and adaptable to changing market conditions.



**Figure 0-1 Conceptual Framework adopted from Rakic and Rakic (2015)**

**METHODOLOGY**

The methodology chapter of the study adopts a mixed-method approach, combining primary and secondary data collection to analyze the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) strategies of CRG Indonesia. Primary data is obtained through semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders, including media relations officers, commercial team members, communication managers for Tropical Oils, corporate responsibility managers, global communication directors, and external partners like Fleishman Hillard. These interviews are recorded, transcribed, and coded to ensure accuracy and reliability. Secondary data is collected from internal documents, reports, journals, press releases, and publicly available information to provide a comprehensive background and context for the study. For data analysis, the research employs triangulation to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings. This includes methodological triangulation, comparing data from different methods like interviews and observations, and theory triangulation, analyzing data from multiple theoretical perspectives such as IMC Theory, Public Relations Excellence Theory, and the AISAS Model. Thematic Analysis is then applied to identify, analyze, and report patterns (themes) within the data. This method offers flexibility, richness of detail, and accessibility, making it suitable for identifying key themes related to the challenges and strategic considerations in CRG Indonesia’s PR and IMC efforts. Key themes are categorized and sub-categorized, focusing on areas such as media relations management, stakeholder engagement, sustainability messaging, and audience action and sharing, ensuring a detailed and nuanced understanding of the data.



RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Analysis IMC at PR

This section presents the results of the research and discusses the key findings related to the challenges and opportunities for enhancing Public Relations (PR) within the Integrated Marketing Communication (IMC) framework at CRG Indonesia. The analysis draws on data collected through interviews with key stakeholders and secondary sources, providing a comprehensive view of the current state of CRG's PR strategies and their effectiveness.

• **Current IMC Strategies focused on PR at CRG Indonesia**

CRG Indonesia's IMC strategy is multifaceted, involving various communication channels and PR activities designed to enhance brand perception and stakeholder engagement. The company employs a mix of traditional and digital media to reach its audience, focusing on sustainability and community engagement to build a positive corporate image.

• **Effectiveness and Gaps in PR/Communications**

The analysis reveals that while CRG Indonesia has made significant efforts in PR, several gaps hinder its effectiveness. Key challenges include negative public sentiment towards the palm oil industry due to environmental concerns, inconsistent messaging across different communication channels, and limited engagement with local media. These issues have impacted the overall effectiveness of CRG's PR campaigns, leading to a need for a more integrated and strategic approach.

• **Challenges in Implementing IMC Strategies on PR**

The main challenges identified in implementing effective IMC strategies at CRG Indonesia include:

**Media Relations:** Maintaining continuous and proactive media engagement to build long-term relationships is a significant challenge.

**Event Management:** Ensuring all events are meticulously planned to align with strategic objectives and implementing thorough follow-up procedures.

**CSR Integration:** Deep integration of CSR programs into strategic objectives and enhancing transparency through regular, detailed reporting.

**Digital Engagement:** Effectively leveraging digital platforms to boost stakeholder engagement and measuring the impact of these efforts.

2. Public Relations (PR) Strategy Analysis

Current PR practices at CRG Indonesia focus on sustainability initiatives, community engagement, and digital outreach. However, the effectiveness of these practices is limited by inconsistent messaging and a lack of strategic integration across different communication platforms. The study highlights the need for a more unified approach to PR that leverages both traditional and digital media to convey a consistent and positive corporate narrative.

<b>Media Relations</b>	<p><b>Press Releases and Media Kits:</b> Regularly distributing detailed press releases and comprehensive media kits to inform the public and the media about CRG's initiatives, achievements, and events.</p> <p><b>Media Events:</b> Organizing media events such as press conferences, media briefings, and tours of CRG's facilities to foster direct engagement with journalists and media houses.</p> <p><b>Proactive Media Engagement:</b> Building and maintaining relationships with key media outlets to ensure continuous and positive media coverage.</p>
<b>Event Management</b>	<p><b>High-Profile Events:</b> Hosting events like public announcements, product launches, and community service projects to capture public and media attention.</p> <p><b>Community Engagement:</b> Organizing events that involve local communities, such as replanting projects and agricultural workshops, to promote sustainability and community welfare.</p>



<b>CSR</b>	<b>Sustainability Projects:</b> Implementing projects focused on environmental sustainability, such as replanting initiatives and waste management programs. <b>Community Support:</b> Collaborating with local NGOs and community groups to support educational, health, and economic development programs.
<b>Digital Communication</b>	<b>Social Media Engagement:</b> Utilizing social media platforms to share updates, success stories, and engage with the public. <b>Digital Content:</b> Creating and disseminating digital content that highlights CRG's efforts in sustainability, innovation, and community support.

- **Sustainable Practices and IMC**

Sustainability is a core component of CRG's IMC strategy. The company's efforts in promoting sustainable palm oil production and community development are commendable. However, these initiatives need to be communicated more effectively to build a stronger narrative around CRG's commitment to sustainability.

- **Integration of Sustainability in IMC**

Integrating sustainability into the IMC framework involves developing clear, consistent, and compelling messages about CRG's sustainable practices. This includes highlighting successes in reducing environmental impact, promoting sustainable agriculture, and supporting local communities. Effective integration will enhance the credibility and impact of CRG's PR efforts.

### 3. Primary Data Analysis

Semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders at CGR Indonesia revealed insights into the company's IMC and PR strategies. Interviewees included media relations officers, commercial team members, communication managers for Tropical Oils, corporate responsibility managers, global communications directors, a customer from Sinar Mas, and a representative from Fleishman Hillard. The analysis identified recurring themes critical to CGR's communication strategies and areas for improvement. Key themes include: Media relations management, Stakeholder engagement, Event management, Community relations and CSR management. Thematic analysis and coding were used to organize and interpret the data, highlighting important insights for developing recommendations to enhance CGR Indonesia's IMC approach.

### 4. Theoretical according to Smith (2017)

Public relations strategies are crucial to CRG Indonesia's Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) approach, emphasizing sustainable agriculture and corporate responsibility. Currently, PR methods include traditional approaches like press releases and community engagement, along with digital strategies to boost visibility and stakeholder engagement in Indonesia's dynamic market. To thrive in this competitive and fast-changing environment, these practices must align closely with the optimal frameworks suggested by Smith (2017). The table below compares current practices at CRG with Smith's recommendations:



CRG Current Practices	Ideal Practices According to Smith
<b>Media Relations</b>	
<p>CRG engages with the media through organised events and detailed press releases. They aim to capture attention and maintain interest through well-crafted media kits and regular updates.</p>	<p>According to Smith (2017), media relations should be proactive and strategic, focusing on building long-term relationships with key media outlets. This involves continuous engagement, not just during events or press releases. It also includes media training for spokespeople and establishing a crisis communication plan. Smith states, "Effective media relations require ongoing interaction and trust-building with journalists and media houses".</p>
<p><b>lesson learned:</b> While CRG's media relations efforts are effective in capturing attention, they may benefit from a more strategic, relationship-focused approach as suggested by Smith. This includes ongoing dialogue with media representatives and preparing for potential crises. Enhancing these aspects can ensure a more robust and resilient media strategy.</p>	
<b>Event Management</b>	
<p>CRG hosts high-profile events such as public announcements and community service projects, which aim to capture attention and promote sustainability messages.</p>	<p>Smith (2017) emphasizes that event management should be strategically aligned with organizational goals and designed to engage stakeholders effectively. This includes meticulous planning, execution, and follow-up to ensure the events meet their objectives and contribute to broader business goals. Smith notes, "Strategic event management involves planning events that not only capture attention but also align with and promote the organization's strategic objectives.</p>
<p><b>lesson learned:</b> CRG's event management practices align with Smith's ideal by focusing on impactful events that highlight sustainability. However, they could enhance their strategy by ensuring that all events are meticulously planned to align with the company's strategic goals and by implementing thorough follow-up procedures to assess and maximise the impact of these events.</p>	
<b>CSR/Community Relations</b>	
<p>CRG's CSR activities focus on environmental sustainability and community welfare, aiming to address deforestation and support local communities.</p>	<p>According to Smith (2017), effective CSR programs are those that are holistically designed to address both social and environmental issues. They should be a core part of the company's strategic objectives and should involve clear, measurable goals and transparent reporting. Smith asserts, "CSR should be embedded within the corporate strategy, with clear goals and transparent reporting mechanisms."</p>
<p><b>lesson learned:</b> CRG's CSR initiatives are robust, but they could further improve by ensuring these programs are deeply integrated into their strategic objectives and by enhancing transparency through regular, detailed reporting of their CSR efforts. This alignment would not only bolster CSR effectiveness but also enhance corporate accountability and stakeholder trust.</p>	
<b>Strategic Communication and Alignment with Organizational Goals</b>	



<p>CRG’s PR practices are designed to enhance brand perception and engage stakeholders effectively.</p>	<p>Smith (2017) emphasizes that PR strategies should be closely aligned with the overall organizational goals. This means that PR activities should not only aim to enhance brand perception but also support broader business objectives, such as sustainability, community engagement, and corporate transparency. Smith highlights, “Alignment with organizational goals ensures that PR activities contribute meaningfully to the company’s mission and objectives.”</p>
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**Lesson learned:** CRG’s PR activities align with the theoretical ideal by supporting their sustainability and community engagement goals. However, they can improve alignment by ensuring that all PR activities are directly linked to their strategic business objectives and by regularly assessing the impact of these activities on these goals. This would enhance the coherence and strategic impact of their PR efforts.

**5. Business Solution**

- **Enhance Media Relations**  
Develop a proactive media engagement strategy to build long-term relationships with media outlets and ensure regular, positive coverage of CGR's initiatives. Implement media training programs for key spokespeople to handle media interactions effectively, and establish a comprehensive crisis communication plan to respond swiftly during crises, minimizing brand damage.
- **Optimize Event Management**  
Align event management initiatives with the company’s core business strategy, ensuring meticulous planning and execution of events to maximize their impact. Thorough follow-up procedures are necessary to capture valuable feedback, which can be used to measure event success and improve future initiatives.
- **Strengthen CSR Integration**  
Integrate CSR initiatives comprehensively into the business strategy to build stronger community relations and enhance corporate reputation. Address both social and environmental aspects through well-planned CSR activities. Set clear, measurable goals for CSR initiatives and enhance transparency through regular reporting to improve accountability and stakeholder trust.
- **Leverage Digital Platforms**  
Leverage digital platforms to boost stakeholder engagement and expand the reach of CGR’s messages. Enhance the use of social media and other digital tools to share updates and engage with the public. Utilize advanced analytics to measure the impact of digital engagement efforts, enabling data-driven decision-making and optimizing strategies for better outcomes.
- **Implementation Plan & Justification**  
Establish Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to measure how well the implementation strategy accomplishes corporate goals. Develop a detailed and phased timeline outlining key tasks and milestones for each month to ensure each action step is carefully executed and aligned with the overall strategic objectives.

**CONCLUSION**

The research in this study identifies significant challenges in CRG Indonesia's PR strategy within its IMC framework. A key issue is improving the 'Attention' phase to increase awareness and engagement among diverse stakeholders. The study found gaps in localizing content, sustainability messaging, using digital tools for targeted communication, and building long-term stakeholder relationships.

The SOSTAC model offered a structured approach to refine these strategies, stressing the need for situational analysis to create locally resonant yet globally aligned approaches. The AISAS model's emphasis on 'Attention' is crucial, as it lays the groundwork for subsequent engagement, leading to desired actions and shares from the audience.



In conclusion, CRG Indonesia must adopt a more localized, sustainability-focused, digitally adept, and stakeholder-centric approach to overcome IMC and PR challenges. This will enhance visibility and reputation in Indonesia, clearly communicate sustainability commitments, and effectively engage audiences. As CRG navigates global markets and local nuances, these recommended strategies provide a roadmap for a resilient and dynamic PR framework that supports both immediate needs and long-term business goals.

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