



## Hotel Public Relations Communication Strategies in Managing the Crisis of Declining Government MICE Activities Due to Budget Efficiency Policies at Solo Paragon Hotel

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### ARTICLE INFO

*Keywords:* Crisis Communication; Hotel Industry; Public Relations Strategy

*Received :* 29, January  
*Revised :* 28, February  
*Accepted:* 25, March

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### ABSTRACT

The decline in Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions (MICE) activities due to the government's budget efficiency policy through Presidential Instruction Number 01 of 2025 has significantly impacted hotel occupancy rates in Surakarta. This study aims to analyze the Public Relations (PR) communication strategy implemented by Hotel Solo Paragon in responding to this crisis situation by applying the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) proposed by W. Timothy Coombs (2019), as well as the Public Relations concept by Kriyantono (2017). This research employs a descriptive qualitative approach through in-depth interviews and documentation studies. The findings indicate that Hotel Solo Paragon focused its strategy on the private corporate segment and social events by strengthening media relations and external stakeholder engagement. The study concludes that an adaptive PR communication strategy is effective in maintaining the hotel's reputation and sustainability during the crisis period, which, according to SCCT, is categorized as a victim cluster crisis.

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## **INTRODUCTION**

The hospitality industry represents a pivotal sector within the tourism ecosystem, heavily reliant on public trust, institutional image, and the quality of communication with stakeholders. In this context, Public Relations (PR) plays a strategic role as a managerial function tasked with establishing harmonious relationships between the organization and its publics Kriyantono (2017). Through planned communication activities, PR not only disseminates information to the public but also manages perceptions, maintains organizational reputation, and fosters mutually beneficial relationships between the institution and society. This role becomes increasingly vital when organizations encounter environmental dynamics that potentially affect both their image and operational sustainability

In the hospitality industry, reputation constitutes a decisive asset that determines levels of customer trust and loyalty (Trisnayanti et al., 2023). Hotels provide more than just accommodation services; they offer service experiences centered on guest comfort, trust, and satisfaction. Consequently, the Public Relations department within a hotel is responsible for building a positive image through various communication strategies, such as media relations management, promotional activities, guest information services, and the handling of issues that could affect the hotel's reputation. In certain situations, the role of PR becomes even more crucial when the organization faces crisis conditions that may result in a decline in public trust and business performance.

One of the dynamics currently affecting the Indonesian hospitality industry is the government's budget efficiency policy, which has led to a decline in MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) activities. According to research by Hartono (2025), this budget efficiency policy aims to reduce the fiscal deficit by Rp 616.2 trillion by cutting ministry and state agency spending by up to Rp 256.1 trillion, along with regional transfers amounting to Rp 50.59 trillion. This policy has resulted in a reduction in the organization of government meetings, conferences, and events, which have historically served as a primary revenue source for hotels, particularly star-rated hotels in major cities (Pamungkas et al., 2025). This condition poses new challenges for the hospitality industry, as the decline in MICE activities not only impacts occupancy rates but also potentially affects operational stability and the hotel's public image.

Surakarta, as a prominent tourism destination and business hub in Central Java, has also experienced the impact of the decline in MICE activities. A recent study by Ananda Pratama & Susanto (2024) states that Indonesia possesses numerous strategic regions for the MICE industry, owing to the unique attractions each area offers to foreign visitors, particularly in major cities such as Jakarta, Bali, Yogyakarta, and Surakarta. A prominent figure addressing this phenomenon is Joko Sutrisno, Chairman of the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI) in Surakarta, who has frequently voiced the concerns of hotel industry players regarding the budget efficiency policy. According to statements by Sutrisno, as cited in a Kompas news report by Tiofani & Sukmana (2025), hotel occupancy rates in Solo reached only 20–30% following the implementation of the budget efficiency policy.



Figure 1. Hotel Room Occupancy Rate (TPK) Percentage in 2025

Based on data from the Central Bureau of Statistics (BPS) of Surakarta, the Room Occupancy Rate (ROR) for star-rated hotels in February 2025 was recorded at only 43.69 percent, representing a decline of 7.39 points compared to the previous month. Under these circumstances, the role of Public Relations becomes paramount in formulating appropriate communication strategies, whether in managing information disseminated to the public, building relationships with various stakeholders, or maintaining the hotel's reputation amidst shifting market conditions.

Research concerning Public Relations communication strategies in addressing crises within the hospitality sector remains a highly relevant topic for investigation, particularly in the context of declining MICE activities resulting from government budget efficiency policies. This study not only contributes to the development of communication science – specifically in the fields of Public Relations and crisis communication – but also provides an empirical overview of how PR practitioners in the hospitality industry formulate communication strategies to maintain organizational image and business sustainability.

Based on the aforementioned phenomenon, this study aims to analyze hotel Public Relations communication strategies in response to the decline in MICE activities resulting from government budget efficiency policies. Furthermore, it seeks to identify how these strategies are implemented to maintain reputation and public relations amidst a challenging environment for the hospitality industry.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### *The Concept of Public Relations: A Local Perspective*

Public Relations (PR) is a managerial function aimed at establishing mutually beneficial relationships between an organization and its publics through a strategic communication process. According to Kriyantono (2017), Public Relations functions not merely as a disseminator of information but also as a relationship manager between the organization and various stakeholders to foster trust, mutual understanding, and a positive organizational image in the eyes of the public.

From a strategic communication perspective, PR plays a vital role in safeguarding an organization's reputation, particularly when facing situations with the potential to trigger a crisis. Kriyantono (2017) explains that Public

Relations activities encompass communication planning processes, information management, the strengthening of relationships with both internal and external publics, and the management of issues that may affect the organizational image. Through this approach, PR functions as a mediator between the organization and its publics, thereby creating harmonious and sustainable relationships.

In the context of Indonesian society, particularly in regions with deep-rooted Javanese cultural foundations, the concept of harmony in PR can be expanded through a local sociocultural perspective. The principles of PR communication aimed at creating harmony align with Javanese philosophical values such as “rukun” (social harmony) and “guyub” (togetherness or communal spirit). In this regard, the role of PR as a mediator undergoes an assimilation with local communication ethics that prioritize politeness (*unggah-ungguh*) and empathy in delivering messages.

The integration of Kriyantono’s PR concepts with local wisdom yields a more humanistic communication approach, where information management transcends mere technical-administrative tasks and becomes an effort to “*nguwongke*” (humanize) the public. This aligns with the principle of *Tepa Selira*, or mutual consideration, wherein an organization—through its PR practitioners—strives to understand the public's position to avoid overt conflict. Consequently, this study posits that PR communication strategies in critical situations require a theoretical foundation that is not only based on modern crisis management but also capable of adopting local cultural identity as an instrument to maintain balance and stakeholder trust (Masrukhan & Roker, 2025).

### ***Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)***

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) was developed by W. Timothy Coombs (2019) as a theoretical framework that explains how organizations can respond to crises through appropriate communication strategies. This theory emphasizes that an organization's communication response to a crisis must be tailored to the level of responsibility perceived by the public toward the organization.

SCCT categorizes crises into several groups based on the level of attribution of organizational responsibility: victim crisis, accidental crisis, and preventable crisis. In the victim crisis category, the organization is viewed as a victim of the event; thus, the level of organizational responsibility is relatively low. In an accidental crisis, the crisis occurs due to unintentional factors, whereas in a preventable crisis, the organization is perceived to hold high responsibility for the occurrence of the crisis.

Based on this classification, Coombs (2019) explains that organizations must select appropriate crisis communication strategies, such as denial, diminish, rebuilding, or bolstering strategies. These strategies aim to protect the organization's reputation and minimize the negative impact of the crisis on public trust. By employing the SCCT approach, organizations can determine more effective communication responses as they account for public perceptions regarding the underlying causes of the crisis.

Within the context of this study, the decline in MICE activities resulting from government budget efficiency policies can be understood as a crisis originating from external factors. Consequently, the communication strategies implemented by hotel Public Relations become essential in safeguarding organizational reputation, rebuilding public trust, and communicating that hotel operations and service quality remain consistent despite shifting market conditions.

### ***Conceptual Framework***

The hospitality industry is heavily dependent on MICE activities as a primary revenue source and a driver for increasing hotel occupancy rates. However, the government's budget efficiency policy, which has led to a reduction in meetings, conferences, and official events, has caused a decline in MICE activities across various hotels. In such a situation, Public Relations plays a strategic role in formulating and executing appropriate communication strategies to respond to these crisis conditions. Kriyantono (2017) concept of Public Relations explains that PR functions as the manager of organizational communication, tasked with building positive relationships with the public and maintaining organizational reputation through planned and sustainable communication.

To understand how organizations respond to crises through communication, this study employs the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) by Coombs (2019) as an analytical framework. This theory helps explain how organizations select communication strategies aligned with the characteristics of the crisis they encounter. In the context of this research, the decline in MICE activities is viewed as a crisis originating from external factors; thus, the communication strategies implemented by hotel Public Relations are directed toward efforts to maintain reputation, strengthen relationships with the public, and rebuild customer trust.

Based on the aforementioned conceptual framework, this study analyzes how hotel Public Relations communication strategies are implemented in response to the decline in MICE activities resulting from government budget efficiency policies. Furthermore, it examines how these strategies play a role in maintaining the hotel's image and reputation in the eyes of the public.

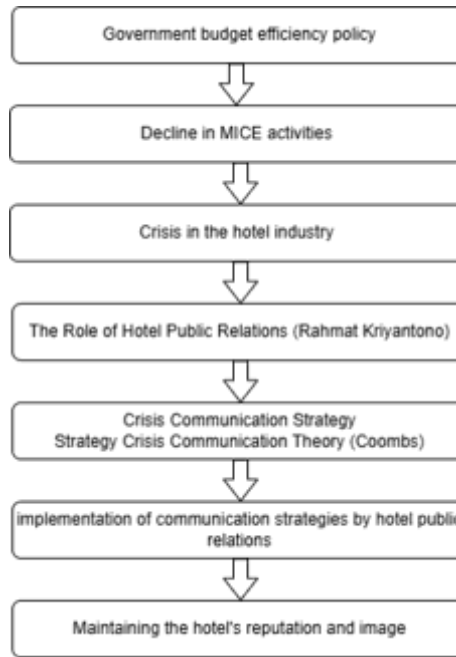


Figure 2. Thinking Conceptual Framework Chart

## METHODOLOGY

This study employs a descriptive qualitative approach with a constructivism paradigm, aiming to describe and analyze phenomena in-depth through the interpretation of data obtained from the field. According to Nasution (2023) qualitative research is utilized to understand social phenomena deeply by emphasizing meaning and processes, while producing descriptive data gathered through interviews, observations, and documentation. This approach was selected as it is suitable for exploring Public Relations (PR) communication strategies within a dynamic and contextual crisis, where data are subjective and dependent on the informants' perspectives.

The research location focuses on a four-star hotel in Surakarta, namely Solo Paragon Hotel, which was selected because it has been affected by the decline in MICE activities resulting from government budget efficiency policies and maintains an active PR division. The research subjects include key informants selected through a purposive sampling technique, specifically: (1) the Marketing Communication of Solo Paragon Hotel; and (2) the Public Relations of the Indonesian Hotel and Restaurant Association (PHRI) Surakarta. The selection of informants is based on criteria of expertise and direct involvement in PR communication strategies to ensure the relevance and depth of the data (Afifuddin, & Saebani, 2012).

Data collection techniques consist of: (1) In-depth semi-structured interviews to explore communication strategies, situational analysis, and crisis responses; (2) Documentation studies, including occupancy data from BPS Surakarta, PHRI reports, and Instagram content from the hotel account @soloparagon. Data were collected through triangulation to enhance validity by combining internal (hotel) and external (PHRI) sources. To ensure the credibility and authenticity of the data in this study, the researcher employed data triangulation techniques, specifically source triangulation. This technique was

selected because the qualitative nature of the research demands precision, consistency, and accuracy of the information obtained from various informants (Abdussamad, 2021).

This study utilizes the data analysis stages proposed by Miles, Huberman, & Saldana (2014), as cited in Kriyantono (2022), which involve four activity flows: data collection, data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. This data analysis process is interactive and occurs simultaneously; specifically, during the data collection process, data condensation activities are also carried out concurrently.

## RESEARCH RESULT

This section presents the field findings obtained through in-depth interviews with the Marketing Communication of Solo Paragon Hotel and the Public Relations of PHRI Surakarta, supported by documentation studies related to the condition of the hospitality industry in Surakarta.

### *The Impact of Budget Efficiency Policy on Hotel Operations*

The state expenditure efficiency policy, regulated under Presidential Instruction No. 01 of 2025, has placed significant pressure on the operations of the hospitality industry in Surakarta, including Solo Paragon Hotel. Field conditions indicate a more critical situation, where the average hotel occupancy rate in Solo following the implementation of this policy has only reached the range of 20–30%. This decline is most sharply felt during weekdays, dropping from a previous range of 60–70% to a mere 30–40%.

Meeting Room	Size	Theater	Classroom	U-Shape	Board Room	Upright	Height
Board	64m²	30	75	70	30	30	3.4m
Blue Sapphire	122m²	180	70	45	60	150	3.4m
Red Sapphire	122m²	180	70	45	60	150	3.4m
Ruby	433m²	280	140	90	120	350	3.4m
Grand Emerald	1000m²	1000	850	350	800	1500	4.7m
Emerald 1	439.2m²	380	180	100	180	500	4.7m
Emerald 2	184m²	180	75	40	70	150	4.7m
Emerald 3	132m²	150	60	30	50	130	4.7m
Emerald 4	652.6m²	300	150	100	100	300	4.7m
Emerald 5	250m²	250	110	60	100	270	4.7m
Emerald 6	489m²	360	110	150	100	350	4.7m

Figure 3. Solo Paragon Hotel Meeting Room Specifications

Solo Paragon Hotel is one of the primary destinations for MICE activities in Surakarta. The hotel is equipped with five meeting rooms of various capacities, including a ballroom capable of accommodating up to 1,500 people. Due to its extensive ballroom capacity, Solo Paragon Hotel frequently serves as a top choice for large-scale MICE events in Surakarta. Prior to the implementation of this policy, the hotel relied heavily on formal government institution activities – such as coordination meetings, seminars, and ceremonial events – as the 'backbone' of its revenue and room occupancy.

When the government implemented travel restrictions and prohibited off-site activities, Solo Paragon Hotel lost its primary source of revenue from meeting

room rentals and catering services. The impact extended beyond a decrease in turnover, affecting the supporting ecosystem, such as event organizers and catering vendors, who have long partnered with the hotel.

### *Identification of the Crisis Situation at Solo Paragon Hotel*

The identification of the crisis situation at Solo Paragon Hotel was conducted through an in-depth analysis of external factors arising from the enactment of Presidential Instruction (Inpres) No. 01 of 2025 regarding government budget efficiency. The hotel management identifies this phenomenon as a significant crisis due to a high historical dependence on MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions) activities from the government sector.

Based on internal evaluations conducted through weekly and monthly reports, it was found that travel restrictions and the ban on off-site meetings directly severed the primary revenue stream during weekdays. This situation is categorized into the victim cluster within the framework of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), wherein the organization is perceived as a victim of macro policies that lie beyond the hotel management's control.

Field findings indicate that public perception of economic stability has begun to influence the general public's purchasing power in the lifestyle sector. In response to these conditions, the Public Relations of Solo Paragon Hotel concluded the necessity of market repositioning and communication strategy adjustments. The analysis results show that social activities and private events, such as birthday parties, weddings, and corporate gatherings, still hold high potential as they do not depend on government decisions.



Figure 4. Solo Paragon Hotel which created a promotion to strengthen the private individual and corporate market

Consequently, Solo Paragon adjusted its communication strategy by focusing on the private corporate segment and the general public. This was achieved by creating special promotions for these segments and strengthening branding through social media, influencer collaborations, and partnerships with Online Travel Agents (OTAs) such as Traveloka and Agoda. Thus, this identification process serves not only to map the problems but also as a 'compass' for Public Relations in formulating more adaptive communication narratives to maintain the hotel's image and business sustainability amidst fiscal policy uncertainty.

### ***Implementation of Public Relations Communication Strategies***

The implementation stages of communication strategies at Solo Paragon Hotel are carried out in a structured manner, beginning with situational analysis through routine weekly and monthly management reports. Based on the evaluation of the decline in demand from the government segment, the hotel's PR formulated a strategic objective to provide solutions for guests' budget constraints through a win-win solution principle offering competitive pricing without compromising maximum service quality.

Digital campaigns are implemented intensively and with a clear focus, particularly on Instagram and TikTok platforms. The hotel's PR consistently uploads daily content highlighting flagship facilities, such as the new 'moderate' room types, to attract market interest through collaborations with influencers aimed at creating viral effects and increasing message reach.

In an effort to ensure business sustainability, Solo Paragon Hotel performed a market repositioning by expanding its target audience to sectors beyond the government. The target public was strategically shifted to private corporate clients, social event organizers such as weddings and birthdays as well as individual travelers and families.



Figure 5. Platform used by the Solo Paragon Hotel to convey messages to the audience

This approach is supported by the use of an integrated media strategy, which combines the strengths of digital and conventional media. While social media is utilized for speed and broad interaction, conventional media such as television and newspapers remain optimized to maintain information credibility and reach more senior generations within institutional or corporate structures. Through this strategy, the hotel positions itself as a flexible urban lifestyle destination catering to the diverse needs of the city's community.

## **DISCUSSION**

### ***Crisis Analysis Based on Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)***

Based on the research findings, the crisis experienced by Solo Paragon Hotel due to the decline in government MICE activities can be analyzed using the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) framework developed by W. Timothy Coombs. In this theory, the crisis at Solo Paragon Hotel is classified into the victim cluster. This classification is based on the fact that the primary cause of the crisis is not internal management failure, but rather an external factor in the form of the government budget efficiency policy through Presidential Instruction (Inpres) No. 01 of 2025. As an organization, the hotel is in a position

where it lacks control over such macro-regulatory changes, yet directly suffers from their operational impacts. These characteristics reinforce the hotel's position as a party that is also a victim of the ongoing economic and political situation, similar to the phenomena of natural disasters or external sabotage within the SCCT crisis typology.

Classification into the victim cluster has direct implications for the level of responsibility attribution assigned by the public. In accordance with SCCT premises, because this crisis stems from external factors, the public tends to assign a low level of responsibility to the hotel. The public and stakeholders understand that the decline in hotel activities is not caused by poor service quality or operational procedural errors, but rather by government agencies' compliance with state austerity instructions. Recent research in the field of crisis communication also indicates that crises falling within the victim cluster generally generate higher levels of public sympathy compared to other types of crises (Ramadhani, 2025).

The low attribution of responsibility significantly benefits Solo Paragon Hotel's position, as the threat to organizational reputation is not as severe as it would be if the crisis arose from internal errors (preventable cluster). The public tends to view the organization as a party also affected by uncontrollable circumstances. Consequently, the level of public anger toward the organization is lower compared to crises caused by internal organizational failures, such as management negligence or corporate ethical violations (Prismarini & Kristina, 2023). Thus, the focus of the PR communication strategy is no longer on apologizing for mistakes, but rather on adaptation efforts and providing information regarding the added value that the hotel can still offer to non-government market segments.

### ***Crisis Response Strategies of Solo Paragon Hotel***

In addressing the crisis caused by the decline in MICE activities, Solo Paragon Hotel implemented a combination of crisis response strategies to mitigate negative impacts on its reputation and operations. First, the hotel applied a denial strategy in a proportional manner. This strategy was not used to deny the existence of the crisis itself, but rather to clearly emphasize to the public and stakeholders that the decline in MICE activities was purely caused by external factors, specifically the government budget efficiency policy (Presidential Instruction No. 01 of 2025). Through communication messages across various channels, the hotel's PR ensured that this situation was unrelated to any decline in service quality, facilities, or management professionalism. This emphasis is crucial to maintaining a positive public perception of Solo Paragon Hotel's service standards.

Second, Solo Paragon Hotel utilized a diminish strategy to minimize any attribution of blame that might be directed toward the organization. The hotel's PR fostered public understanding that the sluggishness in MICE activities was a consequence of macro-economic variables experienced by the entire hospitality industry, particularly in Surakarta. By positioning this crisis as a collective industry challenge, the hotel successfully reduced individual reputational

pressure. This was supported by communication demonstrating that the hotel continued to strive for the best value despite being in a difficult situation, allowing the public to understand the operational adjustments made for internal efficiency.

Finally, the hotel optimized a bolstering strategy to rebuild and reinforce its positive image in the eyes of customers. This strategy was realized through aggressive promotional campaigns for new packages targeting non-government segments, such as wedding packages, social events, and room promotions for individual travelers. By highlighting the hotel's added value, such as the newly renovated moderate rooms and friendly personalized service, Solo Paragon Hotel sought to shift public attention from the crisis situation toward its competitive advantages. Strengthening relationships with loyal customers and approaching the private corporate market serves as concrete evidence that the hotel remains stable, adaptive, and continues to innovate despite losing its primary market from the government sector.

### *Integration of Public Relations Strategy with Javanese Ideology*

In the practice of organizational communication, Public Relations plays a strategic role in building and maintaining relationships between an organization and its public. Surakarta itself is renowned as a city with a strong Javanese cultural identity, reflected in various traditions, social values, and everyday social practices. This local culture emphasizes social harmony, politeness in communication, and respect for others in social interactions (Widiyanto & Supriyanto, 2023). These cultural values also influence how organizations and service institutions interact with their public. In the context of the hospitality industry in Surakarta, service approaches that emphasize hospitality, polite communication, and respect for guests can be understood as a reflection of the local Javanese cultural values that uphold harmony and interpersonal relationships (Pandansari et al., 2020).

The success of Solo Paragon Hotel in navigating the budget efficiency policy crisis cannot be separated from the internalization of Javanese ideology into its organizational communication practices. The hotel's PR approach reflects the principle of 'Tepa Selira' (empathy/mutual consideration) in managing stakeholder relationships. In the long term, this builds solid loyalty as clients feel humanized through a personal approach that is 'sumeleh' (sincere acceptance while remaining persistent) and full of understanding – which is the core of the local wisdom of the Solo community in maintaining social harmony amidst a crisis situation (Prajayanti & Suharnomo, 2018).

When government agencies abruptly canceled MICE activities due to budget constraints, the hotel did not prioritize rigid contract penalties or sanctions; instead, it prioritized dialogue and empathy. This humanistic and 'Andhap Asor' (humility) approach fosters long-term loyalty, as clients feel personally valued beyond a formal business relationship. By employing a communication style that is 'Alus' (refined) and full of the politeness characteristic of Solo, the hotel's PR successfully mitigated potential conflicts and built an image of Solo Paragon Hotel as an adaptive and solution-oriented

partner. The integration of modern crisis management and Javanese ideology creates a unique crisis communication model, where organizational resilience is built upon a foundation of social harmony and mutual respect.

Within the Public Relations theoretical perspective proposed by Kriyantono, one of the primary functions of PR is relationship management, which is the organization's ability to build and maintain long-term relationships with its public. In practice at Solo Paragon Hotel, this approach is evident in how Public Relations strives to maintain good communication with the media, customers, local communities, and business partners related to the hotel's activities. The established relationships are not merely formal; they are built through more personal and persuasive communication, thereby creating an emotional connection between the organization and its public. Public Relations plays a strategic role in safeguarding organizational reputation and managing public trust when the company faces external pressure due to government policies or changes in the business environment (Shilfani et al., 2025).

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

Based on the research findings and discussion, it can be concluded that the Public Relations (PR) communication strategy of Solo Paragon Hotel in managing the crisis resulting from the government's budget efficiency policy was carried out through an adaptive and integrated approach. Theoretically, this crisis is classified into the victim cluster according to the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), as the cause of the crisis originated from external factors (Presidential Instruction No. 01 of 2025) beyond the organization's control. This condition resulted in low public attribution of responsibility toward the hotel, providing room for PR to focus on recovery strategies rather than mere defensiveness.

The crisis response strategies implemented included a combination of a deny strategy to clarify that the crisis was not caused by service quality, a diminish strategy to provide a macro-perspective of the industry-wide crisis, and a bolstering strategy through the promotion of innovative packages. The implementation of these strategies was conducted systematically through market repositioning, shifting focus from the government segment to private corporate segments, social events, and family travelers. The primary strength of Solo Paragon Hotel's strategy lies in the use of integrated media, combining aggressive digital campaigns on Instagram and TikTok with conventional media, as well as the integration of Surakarta's local cultural values—which are humanistic and *grapyak* (friendly)—in maintaining relational ties with stakeholders. The combination of modern crisis communication theory and local wisdom has proven effective in safeguarding the hotel's credibility and operational sustainability amidst government policy uncertainty.

## **ADVANCED RESEARCH**

This research has limitations as it focuses on only one study object, Solo Paragon Hotel, and utilizes a qualitative approach that does not quantitatively measure the effectiveness of the strategies. Therefore, future research is suggested to expand the scope of the study to include several hotels with

different star classifications in the Surakarta region to obtain a more comprehensive industrial overview. Furthermore, the use of quantitative or mixed methods is highly recommended to numerically measure the impact of PR communication strategies on occupancy rates. It is also suggested to incorporate external perspectives from government agencies to evaluate the effectiveness of the communication messages delivered by the hotel.

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