

Media Relations Strategy of Seqara Communications in Maintaining Oppo's Image

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Abstract

Media relations constitute a foundational service of public relations agencies, particularly in preserving product reputations within intensely competitive sectors, such as Indonesia's smartphone market. While established media relations frameworks are extensively documented, qualitative scholarship on their adaptation by PR firms for digital-era technology brands confronting acute market saturation remains limited. This investigation delineates Seqara Communications' media relations strategy in upholding Oppo's brand equity. Employing a qualitative transcendental phenomenological methodology, primary data were obtained through in-depth interviews with three senior informants from Seqara Communications. Validity was enhanced via triangulation with corroborative input from a senior information technology journalist, a loyal Oppo consumer, and an expert in strategic communication. The analysis discloses a six-phase protocol anchored in Waddington's foundational model: systematic target media analysis; identification of emergent issues and suitable spokespersons; cultivation of enduring media partnerships; provision of bespoke news packages; rigorous follow-up mechanisms; and comprehensive coverage monitoring. Pertinently, the study underscores that efficacy in the contemporary media environment demands supplementary attributes—namely, strategic agility, digital proficiency, and profoundly individualized relationship cultivation. The findings theoretically extend Waddington's framework by incorporating digital-era contingencies, thereby bridging classical PR theory with hybrid analog-digital practices and enriching phenomenological understandings of adaptive media relations strategies in saturated markets. They proffer pragmatic imperatives for practitioners navigating technology brands in such contexts.

Keywords: Media Relations Strategies; Public Relations; Brand Equity; Waddington's Framework; Digital proficiency

INTRODUCTION

Oppo emerged as the leading Android smartphone vendor in Indonesia during 2022, securing the foremost position with a market share of 22.4 percent and shipping approximately 7.8 million mobile devices. This achievement occurred within a fiercely competitive landscape dominated by global manufacturers, where Samsung held the second position (21.7 percent), followed by Vivo (17.9 percent), Xiaomi (14.2 percent), and Realme (11.8 percent). In contemporary Indonesian society, smartphones have become an essential cornerstone for communication, lifestyle, and digital engagement, driven by an internet penetration rate that sees active social media users representing approximately 68.9% of the total population.

An examination of the competitive landscape within the smartphone and Internet of Things (IoT) market in Indonesia reveals a significant presence of products manufactured in China, including brands such as Oppo, Vivo, Xiaomi, and Realme, as well as those from South Korea, notably Samsung. This competitive dynamic is illustrated in the table below.

Table 1. Shipments and Market Share of Android Smartphones in Indonesia (2021-2022)

Vendor	Shipment 2022	Market Share 2022	Shipment 2021	Market Share 2021
Oppo	7.8 million units	22.4%	8.5 million units	20.8%
Samsung	7.6 million units	21.7%	7.2 million units	17.6%
Vivo	6.3 million units	18%	7.4 million	18%
Xiaomi	5.1 million units	14.8%	5.5 million units	19.8%
Realme	4.2 million units	12%	4.7 million units	11.5%
Other	3 million units	8%	3 million units	12%
Total	35 million units	100%	40.9 million units	100%

Source: International Data Corporation (IDC) Report, February 2023

Sustaining the number one position in such a saturated and rapidly evolving digital market requires more than just advanced technological features; it demands a robust and highly adaptive communication strategy. One of the primary strategies employed by Oppo to maintain its competitive edge and positive brand image is the aggressive implementation of media relations, executed through its appointed public relations agency, Seqara Communications. Media coverage of an organization is frequently regarded as a highly credible source by consumers, making it imperative for tech brands to secure positive news placement to garner public trust and loyalty.

While the foundational practices of media relations are well-documented in traditional public relations literature, there remains a significant empirical gap regarding how these established frameworks are adapted for the modern, digital-era technology sector. Previous studies frequently analyze media relations as a static, procedural function. However, the contemporary smartphone market is characterized by hyper-competition, rapid technological obsolescence, and continuous narrative warfare among rival brands. Consequently, traditional, linear models of media relations often fail to capture the agility and crisis-resistant strategies required to maintain a brand's image in today's high-stakes business environment.

To address this gap, this study aims to deeply analyze the specific media relations strategy employed by Seqara Communications to maintain Oppo's brand image in Indonesia. By examining this phenomenon, this research offers new insights into how public relations practitioners adapt traditional frameworks to overcome the inhibiting factors of limited editorial space and intense competitor noise. Furthermore, this study highlights how modern media relations must function not merely as a tool for publicity, but as a critical, agile business communication strategy designed to navigate competitive settings and safeguard corporate reputation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Public Relations and Brand Image Maintenance

According to Ardianto (2016), public relations encompasses activities aimed at fostering a positive image, goodwill, mutual understanding, and trust between an organization and its public. As Angeline and Setyanto (2023) highlight, cultivating a favourable image within business communication is a primary goal that must be attained, as it yields significant internal and external benefits, including enhanced consumer trust, increased consumer loyalty, and improved organizational profitability. Ruslan (2016) asserts that while the concept of image is abstract, its impact can be tangibly assessed through the public's positive or negative responses and perceptions.

Key Theoretical Frameworks in Media Relations

Farleni and Widayatmoko (2016) note that to achieve this positive image, organizations heavily rely on media relations, which focuses on establishing cooperative, mutually beneficial relationships between public relations practitioners and media journalists to disseminate information and garner public support. As referenced by Padilah et al. (2023), historical media relations

strategies have frequently been guided by frameworks such as the one popularized by Frank Jeffkins, which emphasizes serving the media, establishing reliability, supplying quality content, cooperating in providing material, offering verification, and building personal relationships. However, as digital business communication evolves, more structured operational frameworks are required. Waddington (in Tench and Yeomans, 2017) provides the contemporary six-step media relations framework utilized in this study: (1) Research Target Media, (2) Identify Potential Issues, (3) Develop Relationships, (4) Offer News Packages, (5) Follow Up, and (6) Monitor Coverage.

Prior Empirical Findings on PR Strategies

Graf-Vlachy et al. (2019) argue that media coverage of firms holds considerable importance, requiring deep integration and strategic background understanding to manage effectively. In prior empirical research regarding media relations, Fadillah and Kartikawati (2020) analyzed the activities of the PR consultant Media Buffet, categorizing their strategy into two main components: "Introductions" (e.g., media visits and luncheons) and "Maintaining Relations" (e.g., press briefings, monthly press releases, and media interviews). These prior studies affirm that cultivating positive relationships with the press across print, electronic, and online platforms is crucial for shaping consumer perceptions.

The Role of Phenomenological Approaches in Organizational Communication

Purwanto (2019) explains that while corporate communication is fundamentally a process of exchanging business messages to achieve collective goals, the execution of these strategies relies entirely on human interaction. Consequently, qualitative and phenomenological approaches are increasingly vital in exploring organizational communication. Sugiyono (2017) details that qualitative research methods are essential for gathering in-depth data about the what, who, where, when, and how of the research process, focusing on understanding a social phenomenon directly from the subject's perspective. By exploring the lived experiences of PR practitioners, researchers can uncover the intuitive, human-centric tactics that breathe life into structural frameworks.

Theoretical Gaps and Contributions

Susanti (2018) observes that the rapid revolution in information technology compresses time and space, creating new challenges and opportunities through various innovative and non-conventional communication media. Despite the abundance of literature on traditional media relations, a significant theoretical gap exists regarding how these practices are contextualized within hyper-competitive, fast-paced digital markets, such as the Indonesian smartphone industry. By applying a phenomenological lens to Seqara Communications'

strategy, this study extends existing literature by demonstrating how established PR frameworks must be adapted to maintain brand image in an era characterized by intense competitor noise and limited editorial space.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This research employs a qualitative approach utilizing a transcendental (descriptive) phenomenological method. Transcendental phenomenology, rooted in Husserlian philosophy, focuses on exploring and interpreting lived experiences to uncover the inherent meanings individuals ascribe to phenomena, deliberately setting aside the researcher's preconceptions. While traditionally used in psychology and sociology, recent qualitative communication literature demonstrates that phenomenology is highly effective in public relations research for capturing the subjective, high-pressure human experiences behind executing corporate strategies (Constantin et al., 2024; Susanto & Wisudawaty, 2024). In this study, the phenomenon under investigation is the lived experience of PR practitioners at Seqara Communications as they navigate the complexities of executing Waddington's six-step media relations strategy to maintain Oppo's image. Exploring these firsthand accounts directly reveals the underlying human essence of managing a tech brand in a hyper-competitive digital landscape.

Sampling Justification and Participants

Phenomenological research inherently requires a small, homogenous sample of individuals who have directly experienced the phenomenon being studied (Käufer & Chemero, 2021). Therefore, the researcher utilized purposive sampling to select primary informants based on their direct, intensive involvement in Oppo's media relations.

- **Primary Informants:** The sample consists of three key practitioners from Seqara Communications: Niken Hapsari (Founder and PR Practitioner), Priska Kristin (Consultant), and Annisa N. Hasanah (Media Relations Officer).
- **Triangulators:** To capture a structural, outside-looking-in perspective of the practitioners' experiences, the study incorporated source triangulation. Triangulators included a senior IT/smartphone journalist active during the 2020-2022 period, a loyal Oppo customer (to validate the resulting public perception), and Ludwig Suparmo, a strategic communication expert.

Data Collection and Interview Protocol

Data collection spanned non-partisan observation, documentation (literature, online data, and media activity reports), and in-depth interviews.

- **Interview Protocol:** The in-depth interviews utilized open-ended, non-directive questions designed to elicit rich narratives about the informants' daily experiences, attitudes, and emotional responses while engaging with the media. Questions focused on how they practically experience and navigate Waddington's six strategic steps, such as: *"What is it like to face limited editorial space when pitching an Oppo news package?"* or *"How does Seqara Communications determine the news agenda to be disseminated to its target media outlets?"*.
- **Duration and Setting:** Interviews were conducted face-to-face between May and June 2023, lasting approximately 45 to 60 minutes each.

Data Analysis

The phenomenological analysis of the in-depth interview transcripts reveals how Seqara Communications operationalizes Waddington's six-step framework to maintain Oppo's brand image. To ensure robust analysis, the findings are evenly triangulated through two distinct lenses: a Senior Journalist validates the *tactical efficiency* of the strategy in the field, while a Strategic Communication Expert validates its *business effectiveness* and alignment with corporate goals.

Target Media Research and Mapping

In the contemporary, highly fragmented digital media ecosystem, broad-spectrum press releases are increasingly ineffective; modern public relations requires hyper-segmented media targeting (Macnamara, 2023). To maintain Oppo's position as a leading smartphone vendor, Seqara Communications strictly divides its media targets to capture diverse consumer bases. The PR Consultant emphasized this tiered approach: *"The first... um... is definitely national media, assuming that these media have a wide reach, next... there are several specialized media about the cellular and technology world, and no less important are regional media"*. The Media Relations Officer updates these databases constantly through networking: *"I also frequently call or WhatsApp the media to ask for gossip or news if a journalist friend leaves or moves to another media outlet"*.

- **Tactical Validation (Senior Journalist):** The Senior Journalist confirms this rigorous mapping, noting the agency consults him to drill down to specific editorial targets: *"...sometimes colleagues from public relations agencies, including Seqara Communications, like to ask me as a journalist about which media can be targeted... even down to the editor level..."*.
- **Strategic Validation (Strategic Communication Expert):** The Strategic Communication Expert points out that this tiered media mapping perfectly mirrors Oppo's mass-market business strategy: *"Well, by intentionally"*

targeting regional media alongside national outlets, I see that they are directly supporting Oppo's wide-reaching supply chain and regional sales targets..."

Identifying Issues, Stories, and Spokespeople

In a saturated market, proactive issue management and competitive framing are essential to prevent brand messaging from being drowned out by industry noise (Yaxley, 2024). The PR Consultant stated that potential stories must be uniquely positioned against rivals: *"Then potential stories must be different from competitors or at least head-to-head... yes, so they don't look exactly the same!"*. The Founder of Seqara Communications confirmed this requires careful verification: *"First, we must conduct desktop research and simultaneously ask and confirm with media colleagues known to the agency."*

- Tactical Validation (Senior Journalist): The Senior Journalist triangulates this active intelligence-gathering regarding competitor activities: *"When it comes to issues surrounding the cellular industry, I am frequently called or WhatsApped by colleagues from Seqara"*
- Strategic Validation (Strategic Communication Expert): The Strategic Communication Expert's lens reveals that adopting a "head-to-head" narrative stance is a calculated corporate defense mechanism: *"They are not just seeking general publicity; but are actively positioning the client's spokespeople to aggressively counter competitor claims and protect its market share, as simple as that."*

Building Symmetrical Relationships

Recent literature on media relations emphasizes that in an era of digital overload, securing editorial space relies heavily on "social capital" and symmetrical, trust-based relationships between practitioners and journalists (Valentini, 2021). The Founder emphasized that relationships must provide mutual value: *"We always tell the team that every relationship built with the media must be based on mutual trust and benefit"*.

- Tactical Validation (Senior Journalist): The Senior Journalist strongly corroborates this, defining his relationship with the agency as deeply intertwined: *"What I feel is a mix of professional and personal relationships..."*.
- Strategic Validation (Strategic Communication Expert): Strategically, the Strategic Communication Expert identifies this deep relationship-building as constructing a corporate channel: *"It establishes a structural advantage where media partners prioritize Oppo's narratives over rival brands during times of intense industry competition."*

Offering Priority News Packages

Because Oppo products operate similarly to Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), they require high media visibility. Providing "information subsidies"—ready-to-publish content packages—is a critical tactic to assist resource-strapped newsrooms and influence the news agenda (Jackson & Moloney, 2022). The PR Consultant noted that these packages are comprehensive: *"The first is a press release, the second is a photo release, and the third is a fact sheet"*.

- Tactical Validation (Senior Journalist): The Senior Journalist validates that these subsidies are highly welcomed by the media: *"I am actually quite happy, it can help provide ideas for further articles or coverage, although sometimes I'm also overwhelmed by other similar competitors' packages."*
- Strategic Validation (Strategic Communication Expert): The Strategic Communication Expert analyzes this high-volume, ready-to-publish strategy as highly effective business alignment: *"Treating smartphones like FMCG in PR ensures the brand maintains a relentless share of voice, keeping it top-of-mind for consumers and they (priority news packages) must be relevant and offer different angles."*

Agile Follow-Up Strategies

The traditional, rigid sequence of PR planning is increasingly being replaced by "Agile PR," which demands real-time adaptation, rapid response, and iterative problem-solving when facing editorial barriers (Lee & Kim, 2022). Rather than accepting rejection when rubric space is full, the practitioners exhibit extreme agility. The Media Relations Officer explains they rapidly pivot to offer alternative corporate voices: *"We even offer an interview with an Oppo spokesperson."*

- Tactical Validation (Senior Journalist): The Senior Journalist corroborates this relentless agility in the field, noting the agency consistently pivots when standard news is rejected: *"Most often, I am offered an interview with an Oppo spokesperson (if I have time) or other materials."*
- Strategic Validation (Strategic Communication Expert): The Strategic Communication Expert shows that this agility transforms lost media placements into high-value corporate voice opportunities: *"This proves that the agency is actively fighting for business visibility rather than passively distributing information."*

Monitoring and Evaluating Coverage

The transition from vanity metrics (like simple clip counts) to robust, data-driven evaluation is critical for proving PR's contribution to corporate objectives (Buhmann & Likely, 2023). The PR Consultant noted the creation of rigorous validation metrics: *"Very important, because we have daily, weekly, and monthly*

media monitoring reports". The Founder stated that these reports are the ultimate proof of agency efficacy: *"If there are no reports, the PR agency cannot claim the success of its work"*.

- Tactical Validation (Senior Journalist): The Senior Journalist logically validates this necessity for corporate clients: *"It is definitely important, because clients like Oppo need reports to see the results of media relations activities so far"*
- Strategic Validation (Strategic Communication Expert): The Strategic Communication Expert concludes that this is where tactical efficiency meets business effectiveness: *"By linking daily media outputs directly to the client's Scope of Works, the agency proves its Return on Investment, explicitly measuring how their tactics safeguard the corporate image that drives sales."*

Data Analysis and Coding Procedure

In alignment with the transcendental phenomenological method, the analysis of the interview transcripts moved beyond basic thematic categorization. The data was processed through structured phenomenological steps:

1. Epoche (Bracketing): The researcher consciously documented and set aside personal biases and prior knowledge regarding the smartphone industry and standard PR theories to view the practitioners' narratives freshly and authentically.
2. Horizontalization: The transcripts were read multiple times. Every statement regarding the execution of media relations was extracted and treated with equal value and relevance.
3. Meaning Units and Clustering: These horizontalized statements were grouped into "meaning units," which were deductively mapped against Waddington's six media relations strategies.
4. Textual and Structural Descriptions: For each of the six strategic steps, the researcher developed a *Textual Description* (what the PR practitioners experienced) and a *Structural Description* (how they experienced it).
5. Synthesis of Essence: The textual and structural descriptions were integrated to capture the core "essence" of Seqara Communications' media relations strategy.

Trustworthiness (Validity and Reliability)

To ensure the rigorous validity of the qualitative data, the researcher relied heavily on source triangulation, systematically cross-checking the lived experiences described by the Seqara practitioners against the media realities reported by the senior IT journalist and the theoretical assessments of the communication expert. Furthermore, to satisfy contemporary standards of

qualitative reliability, the researcher employed member checking by returning the synthesized textual descriptions to the primary informants to verify that their lived experiences were accurately represented before final publication.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The phenomenological analysis of the interview transcripts, triangulated with secondary market observations, reveals how Seqara Communications operationalizes Waddington's framework to maintain Oppo's brand image. To ensure robust analysis, the findings are evenly triangulated through two distinct lenses: a Senior Journalist validates the *tactical efficiency* of the strategy in the field, while a Strategic Communication Expert validates its *business effectiveness*.

To enhance presentation and directly address the research question, Table 2 below summarizes each strategy alongside its supporting primary evidence and its direct impact on Oppo's brand image.

Table 2. Summary of Seqara Communications' Media Relations Strategy and Image Impact

Strategy Step	Primary Data Evidence (Lived Experience & Quotes)	Contribution to Research Question (Maintaining Oppo's Image)
1. Target Media Research	The PR Consultant divides targets into national, specialized IT, and regional media.	Ensures narratives are placed in credible, high-traffic outlets that the specific target audience reads, maintaining a ubiquitous market presence.
2. Identifying Issues & Spokespeople	Narratives are crafted to be "different from competitors or at least head-to-head".	Prevents the brand voice from blending in with competitors, ensuring Oppo is perceived as a distinct, confident market leader.
3. Building Relationships	The Senior Journalist confirms the relationship is a "mix of professional and personal".	Creates a symbiotic trust that elevates Oppo's press releases above the intense competitor noise, securing favorable editorial placement.
4. Offering News	Providing comprehensive	Supplies the media with high-value

Packages	packages (press releases, photos, fact sheets).	content that shapes positive, accurate, and frequent public discourse about Oppo's fast-moving products.
5. Follow-Up	The agency actively offers alternatives like original articles or exclusive interviews when space is full.	Recovers "lost" news opportunities and demonstrates agency agility, keeping Oppo visible even during tight editorial deadlines.
6. Monitoring Coverage	Execution of rigorous evaluation through "daily, weekly, and monthly media monitoring reports".	Provides empirical proof of the strategy's success, allowing the agency to pivot quickly to protect the brand's positive image if threatened.

Operationalizing the Strategy and Theoretical Integration

Target Media Research

- **Secondary Data Context:** To maintain its position as a leading smartphone vendor with a 22.4% market share, Oppo cannot rely on a generic broadcast approach. The Indonesian consumer base is widely distributed across a vast archipelago.
- **Primary Data Evidence:** The phenomenological data reveals a continuous, tiered approach to mapping this landscape. The PR Consultant emphasized that the criteria are strictly divided: *"The first... um... is definitely national media, assuming that these media have a wide reach, next... there are several specialized media about the cellular and technology world, and no less important are regional media."* The Senior Journalist validated this precise targeting: *"Sometimes colleagues from public relations agencies, including Seqara Communications, like to ask me as a journalist about which media can be targeted... even down to the editor level."*
- **Contribution to Maintaining Oppo's Image:** By rigorously targeting specific journalists across national, specialized, and local tiers, Seqara ensures that the brand's technological advancements are communicated through highly credible channels. This strategic precision directly maintains Oppo's premium and accessible image by preventing narratives from being lost in irrelevant publications.

Research and Identify Potential Issues, Stories, and Spokespeople

- Secondary Data Context: The smartphone market is heavily saturated. Standard product announcements easily get lost amidst the narratives of competitors like Samsung, Vivo, and Xiaomi.
- Primary Data Evidence: The lived experience of the practitioners highlights the pressure to stand out. The PR Consultant stated that potential stories must be uniquely positioned: *"Then potential stories must be different from competitors or at least head-to-head... yes, so they don't look exactly the same!"*. The Founder confirmed this requires careful research and verification with media contacts.
- Contribution to Maintaining Oppo's Image: This meticulous identification of unique, "head-to-head" story angles prevents Oppo from blending into the background. It actively defends the corporate image by ensuring the brand is consistently perceived by the public as an innovative industry leader rather than a follower.

Building Relationships with Key Journalists and Editors

- Secondary Data Context: With editorial space being highly limited due to an abundance of competitor press releases, PR agencies must rely on strong media relationships to secure coverage.
- Primary Data Evidence: The Founder emphasized that relationships must be based on mutual trust and benefit, ensuring the agency provides valuable updates rather than just asking for favors. The Senior Journalist triangulated this experience: *"What I feel is a mix of professional and personal relationships..."*.
- Contribution to Maintaining Oppo's Image: This deep, symmetrical trust acts as a structural advantage. It ensures that journalists prioritize Oppo's narratives over competitors, viewing the brand's representatives as helpful partners. This directly translates to more frequent and favorable media coverage, a cornerstone of positive brand image.

Offering News Packages for Priority Journalists

- Secondary Data Context: Oppo products operate similarly to Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG), requiring a high volume of media visibility to maintain market dominance.
- Primary Data Evidence: Seqara proactively provides comprehensive news packages to priority media. The PR Consultant noted these include: *"The first is a press release, the second is a photo release, and the third is a fact sheet."* The Senior Journalist validated the effectiveness of these packages: *"I am actually quite happy that it can help provide ideas for further articles or coverage."*

- **Contribution to Maintaining Oppo's Image:** By supplying ready-to-publish, high-quality materials (information subsidies), Seqara removes friction for journalists. This guarantees that Oppo's brand messages are published frequently and accurately, keeping the brand constantly top-of-mind for consumers.

Follow Up with Journalists

- **Secondary Data Context:** Journalists frequently face tight deadlines and limited rubric space, leading to unpublished press releases.
- **Primary Data Evidence:** Rather than accepting rejection, Seqara practitioners exhibit extreme agility. The Media Relations Officer explains they rapidly pivot to offer alternative corporate voices: *"We even offer an interview with an Oppo spokesperson."* The Senior Journalist corroborated this: *"Most often, I am offered an interview with an Oppo spokesperson or other materials."*
- **Contribution to Maintaining Oppo's Image:** This relentless, agile follow-up turns rejected placements into exclusive interview opportunities. It maintains the brand image by maximizing Oppo's share of voice in the media, proving that the brand is highly responsive and accessible.

Monitoring Media Reporting

- **Secondary Data Context:** Maintaining the number one market share requires constant empirical validation of communication efforts to justify PR expenditures.
- **Primary Data Evidence:** The phenomenological data reveals monitoring is a daily rigor. The PR Consultant noted the creation of *"daily, weekly, and monthly media monitoring reports."* The Founder stated that *"If there are no reports, the PR agency cannot claim the success of its work."*
- **Contribution to Maintaining Oppo's Image:** This rigorous evaluation allows Oppo and Seqara to instantly gauge public sentiment and the accuracy of media coverage. By linking daily media outputs directly to the business strategy, the agency can pivot quickly if the brand's positive image is threatened, ensuring long-term reputational safety.

Operational Modernization of Waddington's Framework in a Digital Ecosystem

Waddington's six-step framework offers a solid baseline for media relations, but our findings from Seqara Communications highlight that it needs a practical update to truly reflect Indonesia's mobile-first landscape. In traditional literature, Waddington's model usually reads like a straight line, starting at research and neatly ending at evaluation. However, the day-to-day reality for these PR practitioners is much faster and more fluid. In a hyper-competitive tech market,

these steps do not happen one after the other; they blur into a continuous loop driven by instant messaging. For instance, researching target media and building relationships aren't separate administrative tasks to be checked off. Instead, they happen simultaneously through casual digital chats. As the Media Relations Officer pointed out, keeping media databases current means relying heavily on daily WhatsApp conversations to catch up on industry "gossip" or find out if a journalist has moved to a new outlet. This constant digital connection transforms relationship-building from formal, occasional meetings into a daily blend of personal and professional interactions, a dynamic that the Senior Journalist specifically described as a consistent "mix".

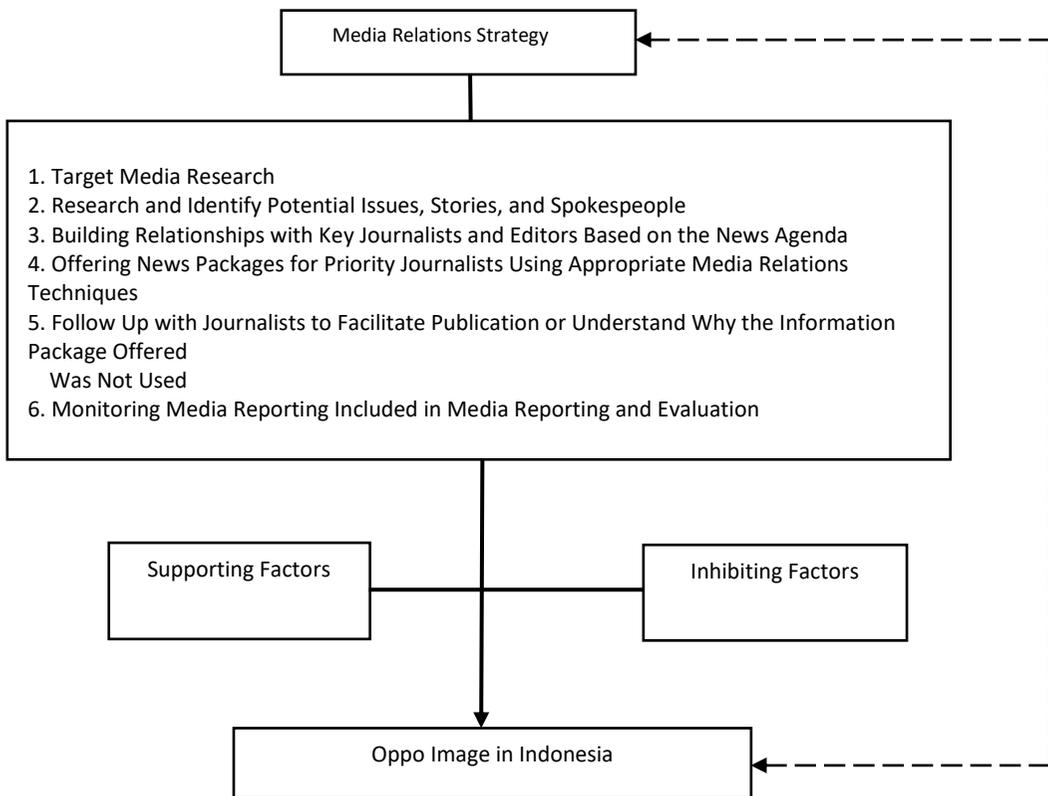
This digital shift also fundamentally changes what it means to "follow up." The smartphone market is incredibly saturated, and because Oppo rolls out multiple device series almost like fast-moving consumer goods, editorial space is always at a premium. When a journalist says they do not have room for a standard press release, Seqara's team doesn't just record the rejection and move on. Instead, they treat the follow-up as an opening to negotiate and co-create content. Using their direct digital access, they quickly pivot to offer tailored alternatives, like drafting original articles or setting up exclusive one-on-one interviews with Oppo's spokespeople. What this reveals is that modern media relations demands serious relational agility. When applying Waddington's framework to today's fast-paced digital ecosystem, we have to view it not as a static checklist, but as an iterative, ongoing negotiation where PR practitioners constantly adapt their strategies just to break through the tight gatekeeping barriers of modern newsrooms.

Implications of the Study

Synthesizing these integrated findings offers robust contributions:

- **Theoretical Implications:** This research extends Waddington's theory by introducing a necessary digital extension. It posits that modern frameworks must formally incorporate real-time messaging platforms (like WhatsApp) as primary channels. Furthermore, it introduces "Agile PR" into the Indonesian smartphone context.
- **Practical and Managerial Implications:** Practitioners must treat tech PR with the urgency of FMCG marketing. Agencies must be structurally prepared to offer immediate backup content, such as exclusive interviews, to bypass the inhibiting factor of crowded editorial news desks.
- **Empirical Implications:** Future empirical research should quantitatively evaluate how specific, agile media relations tactics directly influence consumer purchasing behavior and market share retention.

Image 1. Seqara Communications Media Relations Strategy



Source: 2023 research results

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to comprehensively analyse the media relations strategy employed by Seqara Communications to maintain Oppo's brand image within the highly competitive Indonesian smartphone market. The synthesis of the findings demonstrates that Seqara Communications successfully operationalized this objective by executing a structured strategy grounded in Stephen Waddington's six-step framework: conducting hyper-segmented media research, identifying "head-to-head" strategic issues, building symmetrical media relationships, offering high-volume news packages, deploying agile follow-ups, and rigorously monitoring media coverage. However, addressing the core research question reveals that procedural execution alone is insufficient. Triangulated through both tactical and strategic lenses, the agency's success in safeguarding Oppo's market-leading reputation ultimately relies on treating technology public relations with the urgency of Fast-Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG). It requires transcending textbook steps through extreme agility ("Agile PR"), real-time digital adaptation,

and the cultivation of deep relationships to construct a structural corporate advantage against intense competitor noise.

While this study provides deep, phenomenological insights into corporate communication practices, it is necessary to explicitly acknowledge its limitations. The qualitative case study design utilizes a purposive, small sample size restricted to three primary informants from a single public relations agency and two external triangulators. Furthermore, the specific context of the research focuses exclusively on the Indonesian smartphone and Internet of Things (IoT) industry during the 2020-2022 period. Consequently, while the findings offer profound internal validity regarding Seqara Communications' operations, they may lack broad generalizability to other geographic markets or non-technology sectors. To provide a more balanced and comprehensive view of media relations efficacy, future research should explore these dynamics quantitatively. Future studies could measure the direct statistical correlation between specific agile media relations tactics (such as the volume of information subsidies) and measurable shifts in consumer purchasing behavior, or conduct comparative case studies across multiple PR agencies handling competing tech brands to establish broader industry benchmarks.

Ultimately, this paper tightens the narrative between qualitative methodology and corporate communication strategy, offering distinct contributions to both theory and practice. Theoretically, it extends traditional, linear media relations frameworks by introducing the necessity of Agile PR and proving that tactical media outputs must directly align with mass-market business strategies. Practically, it provides actionable insights for communication practitioners and corporate managers, emphasizing that in a saturated digital landscape, structural strategy must be intrinsically paired with real-time flexibility, rigorous ROI measurement, and authentic, localized relationship-building to successfully elevate and maintain a positive corporate image.

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