

Reputation in the Red Zone Situation: Pertamina Indonesia Petroleum Crisis amidst Digital Transparency and Public Scrutiny Based on Good Governance with the Image & Trust Repair Theory Approach

¹Marlinda Irwanti, ²Gloria Angelita, ³Masayu Fatimah Indriaty, ⁴Dinda Dwimanda

¹London School Public Relation Institute Jakarta

^{2,3,4}Postgraduate Program of Sahid University Jakarta

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2026.100700260>

Received: 01 July 2026; Accepted: 06 July 2026; Published: 29 July 2026

ABSTRACT

In early 2025, Indonesia's state-owned oil company, Pertamina, faced a severe reputational crisis following revelations of fuel contamination and allegations of corruption in its Indonesia specific petroleum product distribution. The public outrage was amplified across digital platforms, transforming the incident from a technical failure into a symbol of deeper institutional mistrust. This study examines Pertamina's crisis communication strategy through the lens of Framing Theory, Image Repair Theory (IRT), and Trust Repair Theory (TRT), aiming to evaluate how the company constructed its narrative, managed public perception, and attempted to restore its damaged reputation. Using a qualitative content analysis of official statements, press releases, and public responses on social media, the study reveals a dissonance between Pertamina's defensive communication frames and the public's demand for transparency and accountability. While the company relied heavily on denial and bolstering strategies as per IRT, it failed to address the core expectations outlined in trust repair processes—namely openness, restitution, and moral acknowledgment. The framing analysis highlights a mismatch between institutional narratives and civic discourse, suggesting that public trust is no longer managed vertically but contested horizontally through participatory media. Ultimately, the study argues that in the age of digital transparency, state-owned enterprises like Pertamina must shift from reactive messaging to proactive trust-building, embracing a culture of accountability and co-created legitimacy. This paper contributes to crisis communication scholarship by integrating traditional image repair models with the dynamics of trust restoration and digital framing, offering practical recommendations for public institutions operating under intense online scrutiny.

Keywords: Crisis communication, Pertamina Indonesia Petroleum, Public trust, Image repair, Good Governance

INTRODUCTION

In the age of digital hyper-transparency, corporate reputation is more vulnerable than ever, especially when public trust is rooted not only in performance, but also in perceived ethics and accountability. In early 2025, Pertamina, Indonesia's state-owned oil and gas company, became the centre of a major reputational crisis after allegations surfaced that it had engaged in fuel adulteration and was embroiled in high-level corruption related to crude oil imports. The crisis rapidly escalated as viral social media posts, whistleblower leaks, and investigative news coverage painted a picture of systemic malpractice and institutional opacity. What began as a regulatory concern soon spiralled into a full-blown public relations disaster. Social media users, particularly on platforms like X (formerly Twitter), Instagram, and TikTok, galvanized public outrage by disseminating viral hashtags (#BoikotPertamina, #PertaliteCampuran) and user-generated content accusing the company of prioritizing profit over public safety—a dynamic consistent with findings on digital activism and online outrage amplification. Influencers, journalists, and citizen watchdogs played a critical role in framing the narrative, amplifying distrust, and calling for accountability, illustrating the horizontal contestation of institutional narratives in participatory media environments.

This digital backlash positioned Pertamina firmly within the “red zone” of reputational damage, where immediate and strategic interventions were necessary to manage both the online discourse and offline repercussions, such as boycott movements and demands for regulatory oversight. Such escalation is consistent with prior research on crisis contagion in the networked public sphere, which demonstrates how crises can intensify when narratives are amplified and reshaped by decentralized actors through digital media (Coombs & Holladay, 2014; Valentini & Romenti, 2011). Within Castells’ (2009) Network Society framework, these dynamics illustrate the operation of “networked communication power,” wherein social media users—including influencers, journalists, and citizen watchdogs—co-create and circulate frames that challenge institutional messaging. This phenomenon aligns with Bennett and Segeberg’s (2012) concept of connective action, where personalized, digitally mediated activism—manifested here through viral hashtags (#BoikotPertamina, #PertaliteCampuran) and user-generated content—mobilizes collective outrage without centralized coordination.

Pertamina’s crisis communication response, however, was met with scepticism. Official statements appeared delayed, overly technical, and lacked emotional resonance—elements identified as critical to effective crisis messaging (Coombs, 2007; van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014). While the company issued clarifications and apologies, public sentiment continued to decline, suggesting a gap between message strategy and stakeholder expectations, a phenomenon consistent with prior research on image repair limitations (Benoit, 1997) and the necessity of aligning messages with both informational and emotional needs of audiences (Kim & Nieder Deppe, 2013). In this context, the Pertamina crisis raises fundamental questions about the effectiveness of image repair efforts and the mechanisms of trust restoration in the digital public sphere. This study investigates Pertamina’s crisis communication and the public’s reaction by employing a three-pronged theoretical lens: Framing Theory, Image Repair Theory, and Trust Repair Theory. Framing Theory provides insight into how both media and netizens constructed competing narratives that shaped public understanding and emotional response. Image Repair Theory is used to evaluate the rhetorical and strategic tools Pertamina deployed to mitigate damage. Trust Repair Theory allows an exploration into whether—and how—the company attempted to rebuild credibility and legitimacy in the eyes of a sceptical public. By analysing media reports, corporate press releases, and user-generated content across social media platforms, this study aims to understand the interplay between corporate crisis response and the dynamics of public scrutiny in an increasingly participatory media environment. The Pertamina case not only offers a critical case study in contemporary crisis communication but also reflects broader shifts in the power of networked publics to hold institutions accountable in real time.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Pertamina, Indonesia’s state-owned oil and gas company, was established in 1974 following the merger of Pertamina and Pertamina (Pertamina, 2020). As the nation’s sole state-owned energy enterprise, Pertamina plays a pivotal role in ensuring energy security and managing oil and gas resources across Indonesia’s vast archipelago. With millions of customers relying on its fuel products daily, Pertamina’s operational integrity directly impacts national economic stability and public trust (Sutopo, 2022). Among Pertamina’s product portfolio, Petalite and Pertamax are two of the most widely consumed fuel types. Petalite, introduced in 2015 as a mid-octane fuel with a Research Octane Number (RON) of 90, targets lower-to-middle-income consumers. Indonesia Specific Petroleum, with a higher RON of 92, is positioned as a premium fuel, favoured by higher-end vehicles and approximately 25% of users nationwide (Pertamina Annual Report, 2024). Combined, these fuels serve millions of Indonesians daily and are integral to the country’s transportation sector.

In early 2024, allegations surfaced accusing certain Pertamina fuel stations of adulterating Indonesia specific Petroleum with lower-quality Petalite to maximize profits. Initial complaints emerged on social media platforms, highlighting vehicle damage and inconsistent fuel quality (Tempo, 2025). Investigative reports soon confirmed that some service stations engaged in illicit fuel mixing practices, compromising fuel standards and consumer safety (Jakarta Post, 2025). Following public uproar, government agencies and Pertamina initiated investigations. Several mid-level executives and contractors were implicated in facilitating these practices, leading to arrests and legal proceedings (East Asia Forum, 2025). Despite Pertamina’s official denials at first, mounting evidence and pressure forced the company to admit lapses in oversight and pledge reforms (Kompas, 2025).

This scandal not only caused widespread consumer distrust but also raised significant concerns about corporate

governance within Indonesia's largest state-owned enterprise. The case exemplifies the challenges faced by state companies operating in complex markets under intense public and digital scrutiny. Crisis communication within the oil and gas industry has attracted scholarly attention due to the high stakes involved in environmental, reputational, and financial risks. Several studies have examined how oil companies manage reputational crises, especially when facing allegations of operational failures or corruption.

In the context of oil spills, Laufer (2003) analysed BP's response to the 2000 Prudhoe Bay oil spill, identifying significant gaps in the company's crisis response, such as delayed acknowledgments and inadequate stakeholder engagement, which exacerbated reputational damage. Similarly, Fediuk, Coombs, and Botero (2012) studied TransCanada's communication following the Keystone pipeline protests, emphasizing the need for transparent and consistent messaging to maintain legitimacy.

Moreover, Boin, McConnell, and 't Hart (2008) explored how major oil companies face governance challenges during crises, arguing that institutional trust is crucial for recovery. Their findings suggest that apologies, restitution, and openness are key elements in successful crisis recovery.

Crisis communication has long emphasized the centrality of framing in shaping how publics interpret and respond to organizational events. Foundational work by Goffman conceptualized frames as structures of meaning that guide interpretation of events (Goffman, 1974), while Endman (1993) operationalized framing for media and political communication, arguing that selection and salience of particular problem definitions, causal interpretations, moral evaluations, and treatment recommendations determine public understanding. In organizational crises, institutional actors therefore attempt to manage meaning via strategic frames that re-cast culpability, risk, and remedies.

Complementing framing approaches, Image Repair Theory (IRT) offers a taxonomy of rhetorical responses organizations use to protect reputation after transgressions—denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness (e.g., bolstering), corrective action, and mortification (apology) (Benoit, 1995; Benoit, 1997). IRT highlights why some message choices (e.g., timely apology plus corrective action) are more persuasive than purely technical denials (Coombs, 2007).

Recent work problematizes the assumption that institutional message control is sufficient in the networked public sphere. Research on affective publics and networked framing shows that emotions and distributed actors (influencers, citizen journalists, activists) co-produce crisis narratives online, often amplifying moral outrage and shaping calls for accountability (Panacheries', 2015; Meraz & Panacheries', 2013).

Empirical studies of hashtag activism and platform dynamics underscore how user-generated frames and viral content can rapidly escalate reputational exposure beyond traditional media gatekeeping (Freelon, McIlwain, & Clark, 2016).

Scholars focusing on the emotional dimension of crisis responses find that technical, instrumental communications that lack emotional resonance frequently fail to reduce public anger or restore legitimacy; conversely, messages that explicitly address affect (e.g., empathy, moral acknowledgment) can be more effective in mitigating reputational damage (van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014). This insight is especially relevant for state-owned enterprises, whose public mandates and social responsibilities make moral acknowledgement and restitution salient expectations among stakeholders. Trust repair literature advances a complementary, process-oriented perspective: restoring trust after institutional betrayal typically requires combinations of attributional explanation, structural reforms, accountability mechanisms, and temporally sustained actions that rebuild social equilibrium (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009; Sharma, Schuurman, & Ballinger, 2023). Recent reviews emphasize that isolated rhetorical tactics (e.g., apologies) seldom suffice; effective repair is multi-pathway—involving verbal statements, transparent disclosure, material restitution, oversight, and demonstrable behavioural change over time (Sharma et al., 2023). Integrating these strands suggests three propositions relevant to the Pertamina case. *First*, message framing that relies primarily on denial and technocratic clarification is unlikely to align with public expectations when moral and safety concerns are salient. *Second*, the horizontal dynamics of digital platforms can reframe institutional narratives rapidly, meaning reputational “red zones” demand dialogic and affective responses rather than purely top-down messaging. *Third*, durable trust restoration requires institutional

commitments to transparency, independent verification, and structural reforms that go beyond immediate image repair tactics. These theoretical linkages motivate an analytic focus on both content (what frames and IRT strategies are used) and process (whether trust-repair pathways—disclosure, restitution, oversight—are initiated and sustained).

Theoretical Framework

This study integrates three interrelated theoretical perspectives to analyse Pertamina's crisis and its implications for corporate communication, reputation, and public trust.

1. Framing Theory

Framing theory, as conceptualized by Endman (1993), posits that media and communicators actively construct meaning by emphasizing certain aspects of reality while excluding others. Frames shape how audiences perceive events by highlighting problems, assigning blame, proposing moral evaluations, and suggesting remedies. In crisis situations, framing becomes a powerful tool for both institutions and the public to negotiate legitimacy, responsibility, and emotion. In the Pertamina case, digital users and online media platforms functioned as active framers, influencing the way the public interpreted the scandal, assessed institutional accountability, and mobilized collective outrage.

“To frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient”

(Endman, 1993, p. 52).

2. Image Repair Theory

Image Repair Theory (IRT) developed by Benoit (1995) provides a framework for understanding the strategies organizations employ to respond to reputational threats. It identifies key tactics such as denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification.

3. Trust Repair Theory

Trust Repair Theory (Kim et al., 2004; Gillespie & Dietz, 2009) explores how organizations rebuild trust after it has been compromised. Trust is not only built on technical competence but also on perceived integrity, transparency, and empathy. In the digital age, where organizational behaviour is constantly monitored and interpreted by online publics, trust repair involves both symbolic and substantive actions. This theory allows for an evaluation of whether Pertamina's crisis response demonstrated the key elements of effective trust repair: acknowledgment of wrongdoing, acceptance of responsibility, communication of reforms, and engagement with stakeholders. According to Gillespie and Dietz (2009), restoring trust requires “decisive actions that signal reliability, integrity, and benevolence to the affected stakeholders” (p. 134).

Lasswell Model of Communication

In the TRT explanation, building trust comprehensively is the message that the Company wants to convey, in this case all parties interested in the organizational aspect. If this description is drawn in the study of communication science, it is emphasized by Lasswell (1948), a communication flow is built to find agreement at least minimize the gap that occurs. The Communication Flow Model offered by Lasswell: Who says (organizational policy makers), What in (improving constituent trust)--Which channel (comprehensive communication)--To whom (Internal & External stakeholders), What effect (Reputation based on Good Governance).

Lasswell's Communication Model

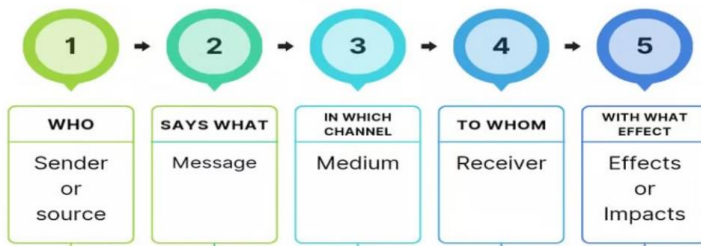


Fig. 1 Lasswell's Communication Model, 1948

Good Governance includes four important aspects to support the acceleration of image improvement and trust of stakeholders (constituents), namely: Accountability (policies and programs can be measured and understood by stakeholders/constituents), Responsibility (having a moral obligation if there is a discrepancy between the parties involved), Independence (having a strong financial foundation and providing periodic financial reports) and equality/fairness (every related party and party with authority must provide mutual support and respect all decisions that have been agreed upon in a joint forum. Researchers analyse the relationship between the effect aspect in the Lasswell model with the sense of trust that is built and designed in the Theory Trust Repair, there is a common thread as a common goal, namely a good image and can be trusted again.



Fig. AI Generate the GG Model

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design using a case study approach to examine the Pertamina fuel adulteration and corruption scandal in early 2025. The goal is to analyse the company's crisis communication strategy, media and public framing, and the effectiveness of trust repair efforts. The case study method enables an in-depth investigation of real-world phenomena within their complex contextual settings (Yin, 2018).

Data Collection

Data were collected from three main sources to capture both institutional and public responses:

a. Official Corporate Communications

Including Pertamina's press releases, public statements, interviews, and social media posts from official accounts (Instagram, Twitter/X, and LinkedIn) during January– March 2025.

b. News Media Coverage

Articles from national and international news outlets (e.g., Kompas, Tempo, and BBC) that reported on the crisis, especially those with framing narratives or investigative angles.

c. Social Media Content

User-generated content (UGC) on Twitter/X and TikTok—especially trending hashtags such as #BoikotPertamina, #PertamaxCampuran, and #SkandalPertamina. Tweets, threads, and viral videos were selected using keyword searches and engagement metrics (likes, retweets, views).

Data selection followed purposive sampling with a focus on posts and texts that represent major themes of public sentiment, criticism, and digital discourse during the crisis period.

Data Analysis

This study uses a thematic content analysis guided by the following theoretical lenses:

- d. Framing Analysis (Endman, 1993): News articles and viral posts were analysed using Enma's four framing devices—problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and treatment recommendation—to uncover dominant frames (e.g., corruption frame, betrayal frame, transparency frame).
- e. Image Repair Analysis (Benoit, 1995): Pertamina's official responses were examined to identify which image repair strategies were deployed: denial, shifting blame, corrective action, bolstering, or mortification.
- f. Trust Repair Framework (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009): The study assessed the presence of symbolic actions (apologies, explanations, public reassurances) and substantive actions (policy reform, sanctions, organizational changes) to determine the degree to which Pertamina addressed public distrust.

Cross-comparisons were made between corporate messaging, media frames, and public narratives to identify gaps or alignments in trust perception and image management.

Additionally, the analysis incorporates Castells' Network Society framework (Castells, 2000; 2009) to situate the crisis within the broader dynamics of a digitally networked public sphere. Castells' concept of "networked communication power" provides a lens to interpret how social media users, including influencers, journalists, and citizen watchdogs, co-produced crisis narratives that challenged Pertamina's top-down messaging. The framework's emphasis on horizontal, decentralized flows of information was applied to map how hashtags, viral videos, and participatory content functioned as *nodes* and *flows* in the crisis communication network. This perspective enables a deeper understanding of how reputational damage escalated through interconnected digital platforms, consistent with the idea that in a network society, legitimacy is increasingly co-constructed rather than institutionally imposed.

Limitations, this study acknowledges certain limitations. First, the analysis is confined to publicly available data and does not include internal corporate decision-making. Second, the social media data are limited to high-engagement content, which may not capture the full diversity of public opinion. Lastly, the research does not measure long-term effects on Pertamina's brand equity, focusing instead on immediate reputational dynamics during the crisis.

Analysis and Findings

This section presents the thematic findings of the study by analysing Pertamina's crisis communication efforts and public responses during the reputational crisis that erupted between late 2024 and mid-2025. The analysis draws upon Benoit's Image Repair Theory and Castells' Network Society framework to interpret the dynamic interaction between institutional discourse and digital publics.

1. Framing the Crisis: Denial, Minimization, and Delay

Pertamina's initial response followed a strategy of denial and downplaying. The first official statement described the fuel adulteration as a "logistical anomaly" rather than a systemic failure. The delay in directly addressing accusations of internal corruption sparked public frustration. "We are still investigating the root of the operational inconsistencies. There is no evidence of wrongdoing at this stage." (Pertamina Press Statement, 18 February 2025).

2. Digital Disruption: The Role of Social Media and Viral Outrage

Social media, particularly Twitter/X and TikTok, became central to the public outcry. The hashtag #PertaminaGate trended nationally for 5 consecutive days, fuelled by influencers, environmental activists, and even former employees.

Using Castells' notion of networked communication, the incident illustrates how netizens constructed a counter-narrative that quickly outpaced traditional media. The virality of whistleblower leaks and customer testimonials reflected what Castells calls mass self-communication, undermining Pertamina's control over the public narrative.

3. Image Repair Attempts and Institutional Fatigue

Under intensifying scrutiny, Pertamina transitioned from denial to corrective action and mortification tactics. These efforts included:

- 3.1. Public Apology from the CEO: delivered a high-profile apology, acknowledging the severity of the issue and expressing the company's commitment to transparency and governance reform.
- 3.2. Provocation of Third-Party Audits: Pertamina conducted comprehensive fuel quality testing with independent institutions such as Fuel & Gas Département, Surveyor Indonesia, and TÜV Rhineland to validate compliance with RON specifications (Jakarta Daily, 4/2025).

These strategies represent classic image repair techniques:

- a. Mortification, via the apology, demonstrates admission of harm and alignment with societal expectations for corrective behaviour.
- b. Corrective Action, through third-party testing, signals institutional efforts to restore credibility by inviting external validation.

4. Crisis Legacy: Lessons in Transparency and Digital Reputation

The Pertamina fuel adulteration scandal underscores a significant disjunction between institutional response times and public expectations in the digital age. Pertamina's initial bureaucratic handling of the crisis, characterized by delayed and reactive measures, contrasted sharply with the public's demand for immediate accountability (East Asia Forum, 2025). This gap highlights the challenges faced by traditional institutions in an era where information flows rapidly and public scrutiny is instantaneous (Castells, 2009). Despite Pertamina's attempts to manage the crisis through image repair tactics such as public apologies and third-party audits, public scepticism persisted. This sentiment reflects institutional fatigue, where repeated or protracted crises erode trust faster than organizations can rebuild it (Jakarta Post, 2025). The digital amplification of dissatisfaction further entrenched this erosion, as negative sentiments proliferated across Twitter, TikTok, and other platforms (Tempo, 2025). As public trust waned, consumers began to shift away from Pertamina products toward alternative suppliers perceived as more reliable, demonstrating how reputational damage translates directly into market consequences (Tempo, 2025).

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The Pertamina case provides a critical lens through which we can examine the evolving interplay between corporate crisis management, public trust, and the digital communication landscape. The findings suggest not merely a failure of operational oversight but a structural dissonance between institutional communication and the logic of the network society.

1. Digital Disruption and Its Implications

The digital backlash against the alleged Indonesia Specific Petroleum adulteration was not merely viral—it

reflected deeply polarized public sentiment and widespread concern.

Petrographic analysis using Brand 24 (Khaimah et al., 2025) found that between February 9 and April 15, 2025, over 36,000 social media accounts posted approximately 13,000 contents related to the issue across platforms including TikTok, Twitter/X, and Facebook. Notably, negative sentiment dominated the discussion (64.7%), while positive sentiment comprised 35.3%, and neutral sentiment remained minimal. These figures highlight three critical dynamics in the online crisis:

- A. Scale and Velocity, the involvement of tens of thousands of accounts and thousands of posts signifies a truly massive digital response.
- B. Sentiment Polarization, with more than 64% negative sentiment dominating the discourse, this reflects not just discontent but an eruption of distrust.
- C. Platform Dynamics, the prominence of TikTok and Twitter/X in content dissemination illustrates how horizontal, decentralized digital networks can override traditional communication pathways. These platforms enabled rapid framing and reframing of the narrative—challenging Pertamina’s controlled messaging and elevating demands for accountability.

2. From Monologue to Dialogue: Rethinking Corporate Accountability

Drawing on Castells’ theory, Pertamina’s initial monologic and hierarchical response to the scandal appears outdated in a context where publics demand dialogic transparency. The asymmetry of information that once protected state enterprises no longer holds. Digital citizens now function as prosumers—producers and consumers of content—who co-construct legitimacy in real time. Thus, any effective crisis response must move beyond press releases and embrace digital listening, rapid engagement, and visible responsiveness. Pertamina’s failure to anticipate this shift contributed to reputational degradation not merely because of the event, but because of perceived arrogance and institutional slowness.

3. The Limits of Image Repair Theory in a Hyperconnected World

While Benoit’s Image Repair Theory remains a valuable framework, the Pertamina case reveals its limitations in the era of memetic communication and algorithmic outrage. For instance, the company’s use of mortification (public apology) and corrective action (personnel changes, audits) were implemented only after digital momentum had peaked, rendering them reactive and largely ineffective. Furthermore, the theory underestimates the durability of public memory when fuelled by shareable and emotionally resonant content. TikTok videos of damaged car engines, accompanied by music and sarcasm, created lasting negative associations that no amount of institutional rhetoric could easily neutralize.

4. Governance, Not Just PR: Restoring Trust through Structural Change

The crisis underlines a broader governance issue, where reputation repair is less about narrative control and more about systemic transformation. The public was not only reacting to contaminated fuel but to a perceived pattern of impunity and elitism within state-linked corporations. This aligns with recent literature emphasizing that transparency and accountability must be baked into institutional culture—not merely performed during crises. True reputational recovery for Pertamina, therefore, requires sustained openness, whistleblower protection, and public co-participation in oversight mechanisms.

5. Implications for Public Sector Communication in Indonesia

For Indonesia’s state-owned enterprises (SOEs), the Pertamina episode is a wake-up call. In an age where crisis velocity is accelerated by mobile media, reputation is not only a function of what an institution does—but how fast, visibly, and empathetically it does it. There is an urgent need for SOEs to develop crisis playbooks that integrate digital-first strategies, cross-platform monitoring, and real-time stakeholder engagement. This includes empowering communication teams with autonomy, not just bureaucratic clearance.

CONCLUSION

The Pertamina fuel scandal is more than a case of operational failure—it is a rupture in the fragile social contract between the public and their institutions. In a hyper-connected, hyper-critical digital ecosystem, the margin for communicative error has vanished. When Pertamina sold tainted fuel, it did not merely damage engines—it eroded trust, magnified long-standing resentment, and ignited a crisis of credibility at the heart of Indonesia's state-run enterprise system. Their arrests exposed systemic weaknesses in governance and oversight within one of Indonesia's most critical state-owned enterprises. Pertamina is more than just a fuel provider—it is a cornerstone of national energy security and a symbol of state capacity to manage vital resources for public welfare. This crisis underscores the urgent need for Pertamina to be managed with uncompromising professionalism, transparency, and accountability. As a state-owned enterprise entrusted with safeguarding Indonesia's energy future, Pertamina must strengthen internal controls, enforce ethical standards rigorously, and embrace a culture of proactive risk management. Failure to do so risks not only operational inefficiency but also the erosion of public confidence that can have lasting socio-economic consequences. In an era of heightened digital scrutiny and public empowerment, Pertamina's path forward requires systemic reforms that go beyond surface-level image repair. Genuine organizational transformation—anchored in integrity and responsive governance—is essential to restore legitimacy and fulfilled the company's critical mandate. The fate of Pertamina is inseparable from the nation's broader aspirations for sustainable development, economic resilience, and social trust. What this crisis laid bare is that reputation is no longer owned by institutions—it is co-produced, contested, and viral. The traditional tools of corporate communication—press conferences, delayed statements, token apologies—no longer suffice. Reputation today lives and dies in timelines, hashtags, and comment sections.

REFERENCES

1. Alon, I., Wang, Y., Shen, J., & Zhang, W. (2010). *China Rules: Globalization and Political Transformation*. Palgrave Macmillan.
2. Bennett, W. L., & Segerberg, A. (2012). The logic of connective action: Digital media and the personalization of contentious politics. *Information, Communication & Society*, 15(5), 739–768. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1369118X.2012.670661>
3. Benoit, W. L. (1995). *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: A theory of image restoration strategies*. State University of New York Press.
4. Benoit, W. L. (1997). Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 23(2), 177–186. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(97\)90023-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(97)90023-0)
5. Boin, A., McConnell, A., & 't Hart, P. (2008). *Governing after Crisis: The Politics of Investigation, Accountability and Learning*. Cambridge University Press.
6. Castells, M. (2009). *Communication Power*. Oxford University Press.
7. Coombs, W. T. (2007). *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding* (2nd ed.). Sage Publications.
8. Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting Organization Reputations During a Crisis: The Development and Application of Situational Crisis Communication Theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 10(3), 163–176.
9. Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2002). Helping Crisis Managers Protect Reputational Assets. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 16(2), 165–186.
10. Da Costa, G. (2025, March 3). Pertamina CEO apologizes for corruption case in fuel oil procurement. *Indonesia Business Post*.
11. Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51–58. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1460-2466.1993.tb01304.x>
12. Freelon, D., McIlwain, C. D., & Clark, M. D. (2016). Beyond the hashtags: #Ferguson, #Blacklivesmatter, and the online struggle for offline justice. Center for Media & Social Impact. <https://cmsimpact.org/resource/beyond-hashtags-ferguson-blacklivesmatter-online-struggle-offline-justice/>
13. Gillespie, N., & Dietz, G. (2009). Trust repair after an organization-level failure. *Academy of Management Review*, 34(1), 127–145. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amr.2009.35713319>

14. Greiling, D. (2007). Public Accountability and Performance Measurement in Government. *Critical Perspectives on Accounting*, 18(1), 23–38.
15. Jakarta Daily. (2025, March 4). Public trust in Pertamina erodes amid Pertamina fuel adulteration allegations. Retrieved from Jakarta Daily.
16. Jakarta Globe. (2025, March 3). Pertamina CEO issues public apology amid graft and fuel blending scandals. Retrieved from Jakarta Globe.
17. Jakarta Post. (2025, March 8). Pertamina's governance crisis and the lingering ghost of corruption. Retrieved from <https://www.thejakartapost.com/opinion/2025/03/08/pertaminas-governance-crisis-and-the-lingering-ghost-of-corruption.html>
18. Khotimah, M. D., Fatimah, A. N., Rizki, M. F., Puspitasari, W., & Soegiarto, A. (2025). Public sentiment analysis on the issue of Pertamina fuel modification by Pertamina on social media. *INNOVATIVE: Journal of Social Science Research*, 5(3), 5057– 5072. Retrieved from <https://j-innovative.org/index.php/Innovative/article/view/19219>
19. Kim, P. H., Dirks, K. T., Cooper, C. D., & Ferrin, D. L. (2004). When more blame is better than less: The implications of internal vs. external attributions for the repair of trust after a competence- vs. integrity-based trust violation. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 99(1), 49–65. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.obhdp.2005.07.003>
20. Kompas.com. (2025, February 26). Public demands clarity on Pertamina adulteration. Retrieved from <https://nasional.kompas.com/read/2025/02/26/public-demands-clarity-pertamax-adulteration>
21. Laufer, D. (2003). Social Accountability and Corporate Greenwashing. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 43(3), 253–261. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1022962719297>
22. Meriläinen, N., & Vos, M. (2021). Accountability, transparency and responsiveness: a framework for evaluating trust in corporations in crisis. *Journal of Communication Management*, 25(1), 43–58.
23. Papacharissi, Z. (2015). *Affective publics: Sentiment, technology, and politics*. Oxford University Press.
24. Pertamina. (2020). *History and Corporate Profile*. Jakarta: Pertamina Corporate Communication Division.
25. Pertamina. (2024). *Annual Report 2023*. Jakarta: Pertamina.