

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATION AND CORPORATE BRANDING: A STUDY OF UNILEVER INDONESIA

Rahma Santhi Zinaida ^{a*)}, Apri Dwi Sulistyanto^{a)}

^{a.)} Universitas Bina Darma, Palembang, Indonesia

^{*)}Corresponding Author: rahmasanthi@binadarma.ac.id

Article history: received 10 April 2024; revised 26 April 2024; accepted 20 May 2024

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.33751/jhss.v8i2.10574>

Abstract. The existence of a company is determined by the company's identity. This aspect is very important because it is a very clear differentiator to other companies or competitors in the same industry. Brand identity, corporate culture and brand personality are some indicators that can show the strength of a corporate identity. This research will focus on PT. Unilever Indonesia as the object. The main issue to be investigated in this research is how Unilever builds its corporate identity through its corporate communication strategies. The method used in this research is literature study and Unilever corporate video observation. From the findings of the author, PT. Unilever has consistently strengthened its organizational identity from time to time. This consistency can be seen from the many innovations made, the corporate communication channels used, as well as the adaptation of the world and digital technology developments that occur. The journey of 88 years to finally become Market Leaders in Indonesia today, is the result of strengthening corporate identity in various forms such as strategy choice, corporate expression, brand image, to reputation. Public Expose 2022 further emphasizes the corporate identity of PT. Unilever Indonesia as a market leader with a very strong image. This research will contribute to the enrichment of information about the corporate identity of PT. Unilever is getting stronger as a market leaders company in Indonesia.

Keywords: strategic communication; corporate identity; brand; Unilever

I. INTRODUCTION

Unilever is a multinational company from England which operates in the fast moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector. Unilever's headquarters are located in London and Rotterdam. Unilever products are very diverse, ranging from beauty products, food, baby equipment, and many more. To date, Unilever products can be found in 190 countries throughout the world. Unilever Indonesia was first founded in Indonesia on 5 December 1933 as Lever Zeepfabrieken NV and only changed its name to PT Unilever Indonesia Tbk on 30 June 1990. The products produced by Unilever Indonesia are divided into 3 categories, namely foods & refreshment, home care, and personal care.

For decades, Unilever has succeeded in becoming one of the most well-known FMCG companies and is trusted by the public. Apart from its quality products, there is also a role for company identity in it which helps Unilever reach its current position. Therefore, the problem that we want to examine in this research is how Unilever builds its corporate identity through its corporate communication strategies, both to internal and external parties. In accordance with the problem formulation, the aim of this research is to understand how the corporate communication strategy implemented by Unilever plays a role in building its corporate branding. Related previous research found that one of the strategies in building Unilever's corporate image was to carry out corporate social responsibility (CSR). In this research, it is stated that there is a consensus that places CSR as an

important strategy to improve the company's image (Ali et al ., 2020; Ansoglenam et al ., 2018; Chen et al ., 2021; Gürlek et al ., 2017; Mohammed & Rashid , 2018; Palacios - Florencio et al ., 2018; Rodrigues et al ., 2021).vIn this quantitative research, Machmed Tun Ganyang (Ganyang, 2021) found that CSR has a positive and significant effect on company image. The relationship between CSR and corporate image is positive. So, the higher the students' perception of CSR, the higher their perception of the company will be.

Corporate communication is a coordination structure applied in a company's organizational communications with the aim of building and maintaining a good reputation before stakeholders . In practice, corporate communication is carried out by a unit or selected person from the company to ensure that the messages conveyed are similar to each other. Apart from maintaining a good name, corporate communication is also carried out to market products and services produced by a company (Lestari et al., 2017). All corporate communication activities are carried out with the aim of getting positive reactions from the company's internal and external stakeholders . Therefore, those who work in this unit must be able to have good management communication, business communication and organizational communication skills (Lestari et al ., 2017). Robbin (2002) states that communication is more than just conveying meaning, but more than that, communication is a process of understanding. O'Sullivan et al (2003) stated the importance of communication strategies because they can influence changes

in individuals and society, build new societal norms and ultimately support stronger and more effective policies. and programs. Meanwhile, Hasbullah (2018) states that communication is the process of sending messages from one party to another through certain contexts such as interpersonal communication or interpersonal communication, group communication or organizational communication and mass communication. When communication takes place in the context of group communication or organizational communication, it will have its own network or communication pattern.

Corporate identity is all the ways and efforts made by companies to show themselves to all their publics (Marguelis in Bargenda, 2017). Visual design and communication are the main basis of corporate identity, but the same is true for PR tools, branding and user experience when consumers use the products or services offered. Therefore, corporate identity must be managed, maintained and developed, with great care, just like other company assets (Crăciun, 2019). In carrying out business and marketing activities to achieve company goals, corporate identity is the most important reference. Apart from being a differentiator from its competitors, brands also have trust attributes that make the products they produce more trusted and chosen compared to their competitors' products. This is because every brand has an element of trust in it (Andreea, 2013). Among the many similar products sold on the market, it is impossible for consumers to choose and buy a product because they know every difference and benefit that differentiates one product from another. In reality, consumers choose a product only based on the brand that produces it.

The industry's corporate brand image is based on dual process theory (System 1 and System 2 processing) which, although rooted in cognitive psychology, also has advanced marketing theory (Dhar and Gorlin, 2013, Evans, 1984, Evans and Stanovich, 2013, Graf and Landwehr, 2015, Kahneman and Frederick, 2002, Petty and Cacioppo, 1986, Stanovich and West, 2000). To help companies shape and build their identity, Kapferer discovered a brand identity model called Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism.

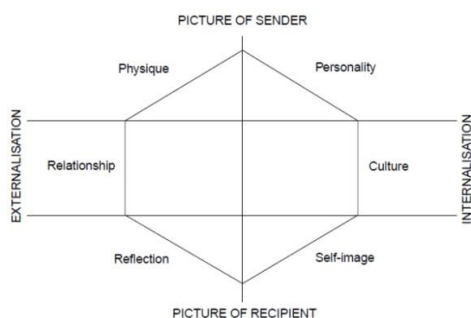


Figure 1. Kapferer's Brand Prism
Source: (Andreea, 2013)

This model explains that brand identity has six dimensions, namely physique, personality, culture, self-image, reflection, and relationship. The physical dimension is the visible parts of the brand, personality is the result of communications carried out by the company and is explained

by comparing it with human traits that can be attributed to the brand, and culture is a set of values held by the company and made into reference in all its activities. The fourth dimension is self image, which is a reflection of the consumers the brand is trying to portray. Reflection is how consumers try to reflect on themselves when or after using the products sold by a brand. Then, the last one is relationship, namely how the brand delivers its products and services to its consumers (Andreea, 2013).

II. RESEARCH METHODS

The method used in this research is literature study and observation of Unilever corporate videos, namely Public Expose PT Unilever Indonesia Tbk 2022. From the definition, Danial and Warsiah (2009) define Literary Study as research carried out by researchers by collecting a number of books and magazines related to research problems and objectives. Meanwhile, literature study / literature study is a data collection technique by conducting a review study of books, literature, notes and reports related to the problem being faced (M. Nazir (1998: 112). The definition of observation according to John W. Creswell, as stated in the book *Qualitative Research Methods in the Field of Education*, (Dr. Umar Sidiq, M.Ag and Dr. Moh. Miftachul Choiri, MA, 2019), states that observation is a data mining process carried out directly by the researcher himself (not by research assistants or other people) by making detailed observations of humans as objects of observation and their environment in the research arena.

To conduct this research, data regarding Unilever and its various strategic communication activities were taken from reports and information made public by the company, such as social media, annual reports and the company website. Therefore, this research uses a case study method with Unilever as the main object studied. Data collection was carried out by means of interviews and data analysis using the interactive data analysis model proposed by Miles, Huberman (Saldana, 2014).

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Unilever Brand Identity

In carrying out its business activities, Unilever Indonesia has several values which serve as standards of behavior when dealing with every partner who collaborates with Unilever Indonesia, the community involved in the company's business and activities, and the surrounding environment.

1. Always Work with Integrity

All business activities are carried out with integrity and respect for all people, organizations and the environment involved in the business.

2. Positive impact

Aims to provide positive benefits to society, both through the Unilever Indonesia brand and work programs.

3. Positive impact

Aims to provide positive benefits to society, both through the Unilever Indonesia brand and work programs.

4. Setting Aspirations

Providing aspirations to the surrounding community when running a business.

5. Cooperate with Others

Unilever Indonesia has a code of business ethics that covers business integrity and responsibility regarding employees, consumers and the environment. Apart from that, Unilever Indonesia only wants to work with suppliers who have a business code of ethics that is in line with Unilever's code of business principles.

These values are a reference for Unilever to build and run its business. This value is then reflected in its *brand identity*. The following is Unilever's *brand identity based on Kapferer's brand prism model*.



Figure 2. Brand Prism Unilever
Author's source

Culture

1. Integrity, Commitment, Responsibility

Unilever has a company culture that emphasizes its employees to prioritize integrity, commitment and responsibility in working at the Unilever company.

2. Care about Human & Environment

Unilever has a corporate culture that prioritizes the welfare of human resources and the public around the company, as well as the environment in the areas where the company operates.

3. Promoting Sustainability

Unilever supports products that are *sustainable* or sustainable. This can be seen from Unilever's production activities which produce products from environmentally friendly materials and leave a minimum carbon footprint in the production process.

4. Support Well Being

Unilever supports improving the standard of living and the human economy by providing quality and guaranteed products, fair prices, environmentally friendly products, and an *environment* that supports its workers.

Personality

1. Friendly

Unilever has a persona that is known to be friendly. Not only friendly to environmental sustainability but also to human welfare around the company location. Apart from that,

the products are known to be *friendly* in terms of ingredients and price and for consumers.

2. Commitment

Unilever has a high level of commitment and is serious about maintaining and maintaining its commitments from the start of the company until now, one of which is in terms of *sustainability*.

3. Honest

Honesty is a value adhered to by Unilever and is expected to be implemented well by all Unilever business branches and the workers involved in them.

4. Caring

Unilever is well known for its motivation to care about its surroundings and also care about the welfare of its employees. So the value of caring that is formed is expected to create a more positive organizational climate.

5. Flexible

Unilever looks flexible and adaptive in facing changes in human life. So that continues to make Unilever a company whose existence continues to this day.

Physique

The Unilever logo is a combination of various logos that represent Unilever products. From food, drinks, to personal care. The logos then form the letter U as a symbol of *'U' can make a difference*. The color blue is interpreted as calm, stability, harmony and protection as well as product quality and excellence.

Relationships

1. #UnileverforIndonesia

Unilever is a company that always shows its concern for consumers, *suppliers*, government, NGOs, MSME traders, and farmers with the various activities they carry out. One of Unilever's main focuses is on the progress of MSMEs in Indonesia, especially in the pandemic era. Therefore, Unilever has a campaign entitled #UnileverForIndonesia which helps provide technology systems for MSME traders.

2. Every 'U' Gives Kindness

Another form of concern from Unilever is the *tagline* Every "U" Gives Kindness. The efforts carried out are divided into several categories, namely Every "U" Helps Save Forests, Every "U" Empowers Women and Youth, Every "U" Provides Delicious Taste, Every "U" Helps Develop Clean Water Solutions, and Every "U" Help Limit Water Waste. These kindness programs are implemented with various Unilever products. One of them is Every U Helps Empower Indonesian Women which is implemented in the Sunlight program Supporting Women Entrepreneurs and Clear Invites Young People to Realize Their Dreams in Totality.

Reflections

1. Healthy & Hygienic

Unilever is known as a company that produces various kinds of products that have been clinically tested. Therefore, the target users of Unilever products are of course individuals who care about products that are guaranteed to be clean and healthy.

2. Modern

With the sophistication of Unilever's technology, users of Unilever products can also be seen as modern individuals.

For example, ancient people used to wash dishes, bathe, or for other sanitation activities using materials that came from nature. Now, with products from Unilever, they can replace these natural ingredients with products from Unilever that have been clinically tested. Therefore, users of Unilever products are certainly individuals who carry out their daily activities with modern thinking.

Self Image

Care about Self and Environment

This means that consumers of Unilever products want to reflect that they are people who care about their own quality so they choose quality products from Unilever. Apart from that, we also care about social life and the environment, because by using Unilever products we can maintain cleanliness and health in the surrounding environment so that social life becomes more comfortable.

Unilever's Forms of Digital Communication in Social Media

1. Instagram @unileveridn

It is social media aimed at various parties, such as consumers and the media. In this social media, there is various information regarding Unilever's corporate social responsibility (CSR) program. So this social media is used for CSR communication & media relations. This is because this platform is used to show CSR activities carried out by Unilever and also information about the company which can be an update for the media with the aim of providing information and building reputation. So if we conclude, Unilever's Instagram social media is used to strengthen brand identity and increase awareness.



Figure 3. Unilever Indonesia Instagram feed
Source: Instagram @unileveridn

2. Instagram @kami.unilever

Unlike the previous Unilever Instagram account, the @kami.unilever account is aimed more at the company internally, as well as at people who are interested in becoming part of Unilever. Therefore, social media is used more to show Unilever's company culture to, apart from employees, prospective employees. Based on the content shared, this social media is used to build employee relations because the content contains internal information, such as updates on internal activities, tips & tricks for employees, and interesting and entertaining facts.



Figure 4. Our Unilever Instagram Feed
Source: Instagram @kami.unilever

3. Facebook Unilever Indonesia

This social media is focused on CSR communication, namely to communicate CSR programs carried out by Unilever. Unilever Facebook is used to build Unilever's brand identity as a company that cares about the welfare of the Indonesian people and to increase awareness of Unilever's CSR programs so that it can also increase its reputation.



Figure 5. Unilever Facebook
Source: Unilever Facebook

4. Facebook Unilever Careers

This social media is used to build employee relations because the content contains internal programs. Not only for those who are already employees, this social media is also aimed at those who are interested in working at Unilever, so there is also a lot of information about career vacancies. Facebook Unilever Careers Indonesia aims to form a brand identity and show company culture as a company that supports young, quality workers.



Figure 6. Facebook Unilever Careers
 Source: Facebook Unilever Careers

Industrial corporate brand image represents a logical development of the nascent corporate brand image construct as evidenced by the literature (Abratt and Kleyn, 2012, Alwi and Kitchen, 2014, Bravo et al., 2010)

5. Twitter @unilever & @unileverIDN

The content on this social media contains information about various activities carried out by the Unilever company globally. Therefore, social media is used more to build media relations, namely to provide information to the media about programs and activities.



Figure 7. Unilever Indonesia Twitter
 Source: Unilever Indonesia Twitter

6. Unilever Indonesia Website (unilever.co.id)

Various comprehensive information is explained in full on the Unilever website. Starting from CSR programs ,

various information for the media and investors, and to communicate Unilever's crisis management. Therefore, this website covers almost all forms of communication carried out by Unilever, namely *Investor Relations*, *CSR communication*, *Media Relations*, & *Crisis Communication*.

Investor relations lies in how Unilever always updates its annual report on its website for investors, *CSR communication* and *media relations* with various complete information discussing Unilever's CSR programs. There's even its own page for the media relations section. For *crisis communication*, the Unilever website is used to distribute *press releases* which are usually a mainstay when a crisis occurs. Apart from that, Unilever also shares its crisis management plan on their website.



Figure 8. Unilever Indonesia website
 Source: unilever.co.id

7. LinkedIn Unilever

LinkedIn Unilever contains various information for Unilever employees, such as webinar information and Unilever brand program information. Apart from that, there is also various information regarding the introduction of Unilever and its employees. Therefore, this media is used to build employee relations for permanent employees and those who are interested in becoming Unilever employees. LinkedIn social media is used to build awareness about Unilever's CSR program and show Unilever's company culture to the public.

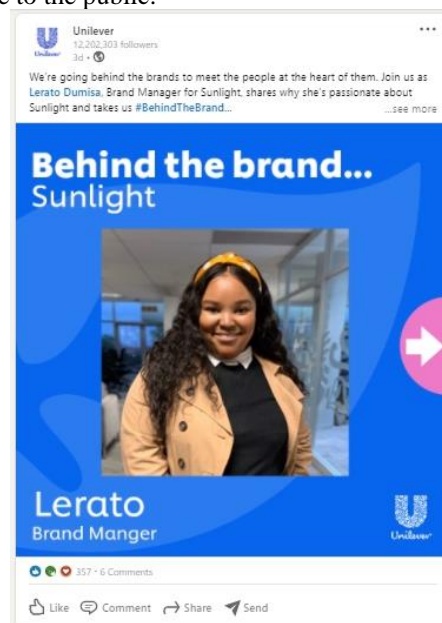


Figure 9. Unilever's LinkedIn
 Source: LinkedIn Unilever

Unilever Corporation Video Observation Results

On June 15 2022, Unilever held the 2022 Public Expose. This exposure was led directly by the President Director of Unilever Indonesia, Mrs. Ira Novianti. At the beginning of his presentation, Ira Novianti presented an infographic containing the latest Unilever Profile in 2022. The profile referred to included Unilever Indonesia as a 40 Trillion Company with a *strong presence* in Indonesia with its favorite brands, 88 years old with its commitment, holding Market Leadership in 13 out of 15 categories, as well as focusing on sustainability as the company's core. In this presentation, the 5 Strategic Priorities of Unilever Indonesia 2025 are also explained, namely as follows.

1. Strengthen and Unlock the Core



Figure 10 . Unilever Strategic Priorities

Source: Youtube Unilever Indonesia

This strategy focuses on strengthening the brand, market development, as well as strengthening initiatives and innovation

2. Play the Full Portfolio

This strategy focuses on developing premium products by developing the premium segment, especially the upper middle class

3. Build Execution Powerhouse

This strategy emphasizes strengthening product channels which increasingly use digital channels and e-commerce

4. Transformational Capabilities

This strategy prioritizes internal strengthening processes in anticipating technological and digital changes, including customer portals from upstream to downstream and data-based digital marketing

5. Leading in Sustainability

This strategy is the core of the priority strategy, namely ensuring sustainability which aims to improve the health and welfare of the community, as well as ensuring production processes that support the preservation of the earth.

In the next presentation, corporate *performance is explained* in terms of Sales Growth, Domestic Growth, Advertising Effectiveness, Inflation Management. In this section, PT Unilever Indonesia explains how the company's strategy has developed to become a 40 trillion company. Apart from that, they also emphasized that one of Unilever's strategic focuses is to innovate both in terms of products, promotions and differentiation of sales channels, especially through e- commerce and social commerce.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

From the discussion researched by the author, we see that PT. Unilever has consistently strengthened its

organizational identity over time. The journey of 88 years to finally become the market leader in Indonesia today, is the result of strengthening corporate identity in various forms such as Strategy Choice, Corporate Expression, Brand Image, up to Reputation. Public Expose 2022 further emphasizes PT's corporate identity. Unilever Indonesia is a market leader with a very strong image. This research is information for further research which is expected to be able to examine further the opinions of users of Unilever products from time to time so as to obtain a correlation between strengthening corporate identity and increasing users of Unilever products.

REFERENCES

- [1] Andreea, C. (2013). Exploring Kapferer's Brand Identity Prism Applicability in Theatre. *International Journal of Advances in Management and Economics* , 2 (2), 18–23.
- [2] Bargenda, A. (2017). The artification of corporate identity: Aesthetic convergences of culture and capital. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal* , 23 (4), 797–819.
- [3] Crăciun, A. (2019). The Visual Turn: Corporate Identity as an Alternative Public Relations Tool. *Advances in Public Relations and Communication Management* , 4 (1), 87–98.
- [4] Dr. Umar Sidiq, M.Ag Dr. Moh. Miftachul Choiri, M. (2019). Qualitative Research Methods in Education. In *Journal of Chemical Information and Modeling* (Vol. 53, Issue 9).
- [5] Ganyang, MT (2021). The Influence of Corporate Social Responsibility Programs on the Image of PT. Unilever Indonesia Tbk Survey of STIE PBM Jakarta Students. *Journal of Management and Business Research* , 6 (2), 51–59.
- [6] Lestari, HWTD, Dimiyati, D., & Shihab, M. (2017). Strategic Communications and Corporate Branding: A Study of Jepsen & Jessen Indonesia Group. *MediaTor* , 10 (1), 37–52.
- [7] Unilever Indonesia. (2022). *Public Expose PT Unilever Indonesia Tbk 2022* . <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ukDjBXIrB58>
- [8] Robbins, P. Stephen. (2002). Principles Organizational Behavior. Fifth Edition. Translated by: Halida, SE and Dewi Sartika, SS Erlangga, Jakarta
- [9] Arthur O'Sullivan . 2003 . Urban Economics, Mc Graw Hill, Bandung:Elvira
- [10] R. Dhar, M. Gorlin (2013)., A dual-system framework to understand preference construction processes in choice. *Journal of Consumer Psychology* , 23 (4) (2013), pp. 528-542
- [11] J. S. Evans, (1984). Heuristics and analytics processes in reasoning *Journal of Psychology* , 75 (4) (1984), pp. 451-468
- [12] JS Evans, KE Stanovich (2013) Dual-process theories of higher cognition advancing the debate. *Perspectives on Psychological science* , 8(3) pp. 223-241