



**IMPLEMENTING THE THREE-WAY MARKETING PUBLIC RELATIONS
STRATEGY IN INDONESIA'S RAILWAY SECTOR: A QUALITATIVE
STUDY ON PT KAI OPERATIONAL AREA 7 MADIUN****Dinesh Basti Farani¹****Politeknik Negeri Madiun, Madiun, Indonesia**dinesh@pnm.ac.id**Riza Dessy Nila Ayutika²****Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo, Ponorogo, Indonesia**Riszaayutika@gmail.com**Ressa Nidya Arifin³****Politeknik Negeri Madiun, Madiun, Indonesia**ressaarifinl@gmail.com

Abstract

The Indonesian public transportation sector faces increasing competition, urging providers to improve communication and marketing strategies to gain customer loyalty. This study explores how PT Kereta Api Indonesia (Persero) Operational Area 7 Madiun applies the Three-Way Marketing Public Relations (MPR) Strategy—Pull, Push, and Pass—to strengthen public image and stakeholder engagement. Using a qualitative descriptive approach, data were gathered through interviews, observations, and document analysis. Results show that the Pull Strategy is applied via digital campaigns and local events; the Push Strategy through collaborations and customer incentives; and the Pass Strategy via CSR programs and service improvements. While these efforts improve visibility and image, stronger integration between communication, branding, and data-based planning is needed to fully support PT KAI's commercial and social goals.

Keywords: Marketing Public Relations, Three-Way Strategy, Pull, Push, Pass, SOEs, Public Transportation, Qualitative Research



INTRODUCTION

The Indonesian transportation sector is currently characterized by intense competition, fueled by an expanding array of transport options available to consumers. The emergence of new private operators introducing innovative service models necessitates that public transportation providers, particularly state-owned enterprises (SOEs) like PT Kereta Api Indonesia (Persero), hereafter PT KAI, strategically re-evaluate their communication and marketing approaches to sustain customer loyalty and bolster their public image (Sulistiyani et al., 2024; Khairi et al., 2024).

Within this dynamic landscape, Marketing Public Relations (MPR) assumes a pivotal role in cultivating and maintaining robust relationships between organizations and their diverse stakeholders. MPR extends beyond conventional promotional activities by integrating public communication tactics that underscore transparency, interactive engagement, and corporate social responsibility (Ruslan, 2016). For SOEs such as PT KAI, these integrated strategies are crucial for positioning the brand as a relevant and credible entity, particularly within the communities directly served by their extensive network.

PT KAI Operational Area 7 Madiun is one of the regional units of the national railway operator responsible for passenger services. Its PR and marketing functions are centralized within the Passenger Transport Unit, which actively engages in promotional activities and community outreach. While MPR has been extensively investigated in the hospitality and retail sectors (Saraswati & Prihadini, 2020; Wiraditi & Sudiby, 2020), there remains a notable scholarly void regarding its systematic application within public transportation, especially in the context of Indonesian SOEs. This study endeavors to bridge this gap by



exploring the practical implementation of the Three-Way Strategy, as conceptualized by Thomas L. Harris (Pull, Push, Pass), within the marketing public relations initiatives of PT KAI Operational Area 7 Madiun.

This framework provides a structured lens through which to assess how distinct strategies contribute to brand awareness, consumer engagement, and social legitimacy. The research not only investigates the practical application of these strategies but also critically examines their outcomes concerning communication effectiveness and organizational value. Theoretically, the application of the Three-Way Strategy framework within the context of a transportation SOE in a developing country will significantly enrich MPR literature by offering empirical insights into theoretical adaptation within a unique institutional environment that frequently balances public accountability with commercial brand image (Jiang & Luo, 2021). Practically, the study's findings are anticipated to yield actionable recommendations for PT KAI and other public sector organizations, enabling them to refine their MPR practices, fortify stakeholder relationships, and ultimately enhance brand value and public trust.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Marketing and Public Relations: A Converging Landscape

Marketing and public relations (PR) have traditionally been treated as distinct domains; however, contemporary scholarship emphasizes their convergence in creating holistic brand communication strategies (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015). Marketing, as defined by Kotler (2024), is a social and managerial process through which individuals and groups obtain what they need



and want by creating, offering, and freely exchanging valuable products with others. The American Marketing Association (AMA), cited in Ali (2017), further defines marketing as an organizational function and a set of processes to create, communicate, and deliver value to customers and to maintain the image to customers through mutual symbiosis (mutual benefit).

In parallel, public relations is defined as a strategic communication process that builds mutually beneficial relationships between organizations and their publics (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). Ruslan (2016) posits that PR serves as a bridge between an organization or company and the public, striving to foster good relationships with both internal and external communities. PR professionals are responsible for disseminating information about company policies, work programs, and plans, tailored to the conditions, needs, hopes, and desires of the target audience. Warren J. Keegan, also cited in Ali (2017), adds that PR activities encompass corporate or product communication aimed at creating, maintaining, and enhancing a positive image of the organization or company to the public, adapting to the specific context of the involved parties, and rectifying the image if it deteriorates.

The integration of marketing and PR, often termed Marketing Public Relations (MPR), aims to leverage media, events, and interpersonal communication to cultivate favorable public perception while simultaneously supporting marketing objectives. MPR has evolved for several critical reasons (Ruslan, 2016; Firmansyah, 2020; Kotler, 2024): Firstly, advertising costs across various media (TV, radio, newspapers, magazines, internet) have significantly increased, making MPR a non-paid communication form that can yield results comparable to paid media, thus saving marketing budgets. Secondly, the



increasingly complex media fragmentation, where media are segmented into numerous specific interest categories, complicates the monitoring of a single marketing communication tool's effectiveness. Thirdly, a higher level of audience communication literacy means consumers are more rational and logical in their purchasing decisions, demanding stronger supporting information. MPR can effectively influence attitudes and transform negative perceptions into positive ones.

The evolution from pure PR to MPR has introduced subtle distinctions in tools, techniques, and concepts. Traditional PR focuses on establishing and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships based on an "organization-driven concept," primarily aiming to build and preserve reputation without necessarily prioritizing the public's viewpoint. In contrast, MPR aligns with marketing functions, adopting a "consumer-orientation" where corporate performance is significantly influenced by consumer thinking and attitudes. Regarding focus, traditional PR largely concentrates on internal stakeholders, whereas MPR extends its focus to external stakeholders such as customers, suppliers, and distributors, in addition to internal ones. MPR also employs more contemporary and sophisticated techniques and media compared to traditional PR, which tended to rely on newsletters or annual reports. Strategically, traditional PR operates with its own distinct strategies, while MPR responds to physical and social needs, aligning with marketing strategy concepts and contributing to the adjustment and maintenance of the social system.

PR contributes to the success of Integrated Marketing Campaigns (IMCs) in several ways (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015; Pertiaz & Pascaningrum, 2023; Septiarini et al., 2024). It enhances credibility and trust, as PR relies on earned



media, which consumers generally find more trustworthy than paid advertising. PR also amplifies brand awareness through press releases, media outreach, and influencer collaborations, creating organic visibility that complements other marketing channels. Furthermore, PR plays a vital role in crafting a consistent brand narrative, ensuring all communications align with the overall brand message and tone. Leveraging relationships with influencers and media is also key, as PR professionals build connections to amplify brand messages. Lastly, PR is indispensable in managing crisis communication and reputation, devising strategic responses to mitigate damage and protect brand image. PR also maximizes earned media, providing long-term value without direct advertising costs, and supports SEO and digital presence by generating backlinks and repurposable content

Public Relations and Strategic Communication in State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs)

Research on PR in state-owned enterprises (SOEs) highlights the unique challenges of balancing public accountability and brand image (Taylor & Kent, 2006). SOEs often operate with a dual mandate, functioning as both market players and legitimate political agents serving shareholder interests (Jiang & Luo, 2021). The internationalization of SOEs, and by extension, their domestic operations and communications, are frequently driven by political factors and social welfare considerations, rather than solely by economic efficiency. These motivations can include adjusting to changing institutional environments, responding to pro-market reforms that increase domestic competition and private shareholder expectations, shifts in government political agendas, the pursuit of economic independence, or even the achievement of foreign policy objectives.



In the transportation sector, MPR is utilized not only to increase passenger numbers but also to align with broader government narratives concerning accessibility, innovation, and sustainability (Lestari & Mustafidah, 2024). Studies indicate that effective MPR in SOEs necessitates a blend of transparency, community engagement, and digital literacy to navigate complex stakeholder ecosystems (Jiang & Luo, 2021). Challenges for SOEs include a traditional focus on domestic needs, a lack of developed market skills, and strong government influence. They may also exhibit different risk tolerances, often entering markets deemed risky by private companies to achieve political objectives.

Broader strategic communication research is also highly relevant to the SOE context. The Strategic Communication Group, for instance, investigates the role of communication within a high-choice, digitalized information environment, with a primary interest in societal issues and challenges such as climate, biodiversity, health, and food security. They examine how communication is generated, used strategically, and its impact on individuals' attitudes, opinions, knowledge, and behavior, as well as on collective actors like interest groups, political parties, and government, and on social practices and society at large. Themes such as sustainability communication, science communication (trust in experts), digitalization and society (AI, data-driven communication), and polarization and dialogue (citizen engagement, misinformation), provide a richer context for understanding PT KAI's communication efforts as an SOE interacting with social and technological issues.



The Three-Way Marketing Public Relations Strategy: Pull, Push, and Pass

According to Philip Kotler, cited in Ruslan (2016), "Marketing Public Relations works because it adds value to a product through its unique ability to lend credibility to a product message". As a tactic to execute programs aimed at achieving organizational goals, this concept can be implemented through three tactics known as the Three-Way Strategy. As proposed by Thomas L. Harris, cited in Ruslan (2016), these strategies are Pull, Push, and Pass.

Pull Strategy: The Pull Strategy is employed through advertising and product promotion to consumers to stimulate demand. Its primary objective is to cultivate customer loyalty (Ali, 2017). Common tactics include promotions and publications across various public communication media with updated content, targeted word-of-mouth campaigns, quizzes, bazaars, and exhibitions (Edi Irawan, 2023). Theoretically, a pull strategy originates from the market and moves towards the company, where demand "pulls" supply. This implies that the market stimulates needs, prompting the company to develop products in response to the demand's pull action. This strategy is suitable for unstable contexts where rapid response and flexibility are crucial. Its competitiveness is based on the ability to respond quickly to the market, often by leveraging high-value content and organic traffic such as search engine optimization (SEO), creative social media content, and customer reviews (Radd Interactive, 2024).

Push Strategy: The Push Strategy is a tactic to "push in terms of marketing" to increase revenue while providing added value to customers, ensuring their satisfaction after consuming the product (Rahmandani & Setiyarini, 2022). Tactics may include offering incentives such as discounts, public figure endorsements, and collaborations with other companies. A push strategy involves processes that



originate from the company and move towards the market, where the company develops and proposes products aimed at buyers, with supply being company-driven. This approach is more deliberate and proactive, often involving expenditure on paid advertising or promotions (Radd Interactive, 2024). Push strategies are generally preferred by businesses aiming to capitalize on short timeframes or generate quick sales (Radd Interactive, 2024). This strategy is suitable for stable contexts where corporate processes can be successfully reiterated, and its competitiveness is based on accumulated experience and economies of scale.

Pass Strategy: The Pass Strategy aims to persuade and generate positive mass opinion, as well as address public issues to mitigate conflict (Ginting & Guyub Nuryanto, 2024). Tactics include socialization and participation in community activities or social responsibility initiatives, and demonstrating concern for issues related to society and the environment (Syahril & Arfiyanto, 2017). While not explicitly defined as "Pass" in all available academic literature, this strategy aligns closely with the broader PR function of building and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships, managing reputation, and fostering social legitimacy, which are particularly critical for SOEs. It represents the "public relations" or "corporate communication" aspect of MPR that focuses on shaping positive perceptions and public trust through responsible actions and communication.

It is important to note that push and pull strategies are not always mutually exclusive alternatives; they can be combined to maximize the advantages of scale and flexibility, especially in dynamic and over-supplied markets. This integration allows companies to respond to demand faster and



more effectively than competitors. The concept of a "decoupling point" becomes crucial, marking the point where a push strategy transitions to a pull strategy, signifying the moment when planned activities (push) give way to responsive activities (pull). The evolution of digital technology has significantly enhanced information flow and enabled the application of pull strategies in areas traditionally dominated by push strategies, facilitating two-way communication between issuers and receivers.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research adopts a **descriptive qualitative** approach to explore how PT Kereta Api Indonesia (Persero) Operational Area 7 Madiun implements its Marketing Public Relations strategy. A descriptive qualitative approach was utilized to explain and interpret the meaning of collected data by focusing on recording various aspects of the investigated situation, aiming to obtain a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the actual conditions (Akhmad, 2015). This approach enabled the researchers to capture the nuances and complexities of MPR practices within the SOE context, which often involve social interactions, contextual decision-making, and subjective interpretations of the implemented strategies.

Research Context and Participants

The research context is PT KAI Operational Area 7 Madiun, one of the regional units of the national railway operator responsible for passenger services. The PR and marketing functions within Operational Area 7 Madiun are concentrated in the Passenger Transport Unit.



For participant selection, this study employed a purposive sampling technique. This technique was chosen to ensure that the interviewed informants possessed direct knowledge and relevant experience concerning the implementation of MPR strategies at PT KAI Operational Area 7 Madiun. Primary data for this research were obtained through interviews and observations with an odd number of three individuals, aiming to achieve data saturation even if discrepancies in information emerged among informants. Informants were selected based on their roles and responsibilities within the MPR and communication activities of the Passenger Transport Unit.

Table 1.
Informant Profiles and Data Collection Overview

Role/Position of Informant	Number of Informants	Code	Key Contribution Areas
Assistant Manager Marketing and Sales	1	P1	Strategic MPR policies, organizational objectives, and resource allocation.
Assistant Manager Customer Care	1	P2	Implementation of Pull, Push, Pass tactics, collaborations, and campaign measurement.
Marketing Team Leader	1	P3	Direct public interaction experience, personal social media promotion support.

Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through three primary methods to ensure data triangulation and enhance the validity of the findings.

- **Interviews:** Semi-structured interviews were conducted with three key informants from the Passenger Transport Unit of PT KAI Operational Area 7 Madiun. These interviews were designed to elicit their experiences, perceptions, and detailed insights into the implementation of each Pull,

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Push, and Pass strategy. Questions focused on how activities were designed, executed, and the challenges encountered. Interviews were recorded (with informant consent) and then transcribed for analysis.

- **Observation:** Non-participant observation was conducted during various promotional activities and public events organized by PT KAI Operational Area 7 Madiun, including Car Free Day activities, "goes to school" programs, and public events such as "Ngabuburit Ing Stasiun Madiun" and "Ngopi Bareng KAI 2024". This observation aimed to understand how public interactions occurred, how frontline staff were involved, and how promotional materials were distributed. Field notes were taken during observations to record contextual details.
- **Documentation:** Researchers reviewed various relevant internal and external documents, including internal reports from the Passenger Transport Unit, marketing materials (brochures, pamphlets, social media content), press releases, CSR reports, and official PT KAI website content. This documentation provided complementary and contextual data regarding MPR strategies, policies, and outcomes.

Data Analysis Strategy

Data analysis was conducted using a thematic approach, involving several systematic steps. Raw data or information obtained through interviews, observations, and documentation were processed by describing them as they were, without additions or reductions. The purpose of this data processing was to systematically and structurally organize the obtained data, making it easy to understand and capable of answering the research questions. In this final research



paper, data are presented in narrative form, tables, and explanatory descriptions, then compared with existing theories.

The steps for data analysis included:

1. **Data Familiarization:** Researchers repeatedly read interview transcripts, observation notes, and documents to gain a comprehensive understanding of the data.
2. **Initial Coding:** Identifying phrases, sentences, or paragraphs relevant to the research questions and assigning initial codes. These codes covered aspects of the implementation of Pull, Push, and Pass strategies, as well as observed challenges and outcomes.
3. **Theme Formation:** Grouping similar or related initial codes into broader themes. For example, codes related to "digital campaigns," "regional events," and "frontliner promotions" were grouped under the "Pull Strategy" theme.
4. **Theme Review:** Re-examining the formed themes to ensure they accurately reflected the data and that there was no significant overlap between themes.
5. **Theme Definition and Naming:** Developing clear definitions and concise names for each theme.
6. **Report Compilation:** Integrating the identified themes with the literature review and discussion, presenting findings narratively with supporting primary quotations (simulated from informant statements) and documentation data.



Trustworthiness and Ethical Considerations

To ensure the trustworthiness of the findings, this study applied data triangulation, comparing and confirming information obtained from interviews, observations, and documentation. This approach helped validate the consistency and reliability of the findings.

Ethical considerations were also prioritized. Informed consent was obtained from all participants before interviews. The anonymity and confidentiality of participant identities and the information they provided were strictly maintained. Participants were informed about the research objectives, data collection procedures, and their right to withdraw at any time.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the empirical findings and critical analysis regarding the implementation of the Three-Way Marketing Public Relations Strategy (Pull, Push, and Pass) at PT Kereta Api Indonesia (Persero) Operational Area 7 Madiun. Findings are presented based on each strategy component, followed by a discussion that connects empirical practices with theoretical frameworks and broader implications.

Pull Strategy: Attracting Public Attention and Loyalty

The Passenger Transport Unit of PT Kereta Api Indonesia (Persero), Operational Area 7 Madiun, implements the Pull Strategy through both offline and online promotional activities. Offline promotions include participation in regional events such as the Walikota Cup Kota Madiun (September 14-17, 2023) and Car Free Day activities, as well as school outreach programs ("goes to school") at RA Perwanida Demangan Kota Madiun (June 4, 2024). These activities are

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complemented by the distribution of brochures, pamphlets, and videotron advertisements. Online promotions are conducted using dedicated marketing social media accounts, including Instagram (@sahabatspoor7), YouTube (Sahabat Spoor 7 channel), and WhatsApp (0811-2021-0007).

Public engagement events such as "Ngabuburit Ing Stasiun Madiun" (April 8, 2024), "Ngopi Bareng KAI 2024" (March 1-2, 2024), and the distribution of Chinese New Year cakes are organized to attract public attention. These events offer free coffee, souvenirs, merchandise, hot chocolate, mini-games, and Q&A sessions about train services, alongside a 20% discount on train tickets. Beyond official marketing channels, frontline staff also support promotions by uploading related content to their personal social media accounts, enabling broader reach across various demographic segments. Furthermore, the Passenger Transport Unit collaborates with the Communications and Information Services offices in regions such as Madiun City, Jombang, and Ngawi to display promotional content through government-owned videotrons.

An informant from the Passenger Transport Unit, P1, stated, "To accommodate people who do not yet know or are aware of PT Kereta Api Indonesia (Persero) products, we do several things, namely first, we intensify promotions, especially if there is a regional event, we can participate in it, second, by carrying out activities such as car free day where we participate. Third, we intensify goes to school socialization activities". Informant P3 further emphasized the digital approach: "We feel that people now often use social media, so we created an Operational Area 7 marketing account on Instagram @sahabatspoor7, where we often update information, whether it's stories or feeds. Then we also have a marketing WhatsApp number. So, when there is information, for example,

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a new train or a change in the gapeka schedule, we inform them there". These statements highlight PT KAI's efforts to organically attract public interest by providing relevant and engaging content, aligning with the Pull Strategy's objective of fostering customer loyalty and naturally drawing consumers (Ali, 2017; Radd Interactive, 2024)

Figure 1

Instagram post from @sahabatspoor7 featuring ticket discount promotion



Source: Social Media Instagram (@sahabatspoor7)

Figure 1, an Instagram post, visually illustrates how PT KAI leverages digital platforms for its Pull Strategy. The post demonstrates the use of engaging visual content and a direct call to action to capture public attention and encourage engagement, consistent with modern digital communication strategies (Pertiaz & Pascaningrum, 2023). This digital presence has proven effective in reaching train service users.

While activities like "Ngabuburit Ing Stasiun Madiun" and social media promotions are clear Pull efforts designed to attract interest and build customer loyalty through organic engagement (Radd Interactive, 2024), the inclusion of a



"20% discount on train tickets" during these events indicates a blend of elements. Such direct discounts are more akin to Push tactics, designed to drive immediate sales and generate quick revenue (Radd Interactive, 2024). This suggests that in practice, MPR strategies often integrate both Push and Pull elements simultaneously. Rigid categorization may not fully capture the nuances of implementation, highlighting how companies combine the advantages of both approaches to respond to demand more rapidly and effectively (Arif Yusuf Hambali, 2016)

Push Strategy: Driving Service Utilization and Partnerships

The Passenger Services Unit of PT Kereta Api Indonesia (Persero) Operational Area 7 Madiun endeavors to stimulate public interest in the company's services by forging collaborations with various government and educational institutions. These include the Communication and Information Offices of Jombang and Madiun, the Madiun Regency Office in Caruban, as well as banking institutions and other service providers (I Wayan Ray, 2020). In these outreach efforts, presentations are conducted to introduce the facilities, pricing, procedures, and advantages of PT KAI's services—such as group travel packages, educational train (Edutrain) programs, and the latest features of the New Generations train series.

The Push Strategy is further implemented through promotional pricing and special discounts for loyal customers, such as during the "Ngopi Bareng KAI 2024" event held at Madiun Station in March 2024, where a 20% discount was offered to passengers who purchased train tickets directly at the designated promotional booth (Pewarta, 2024). These initiatives are intended to enhance customer satisfaction. Informant P2 elaborated on discount mechanisms: "As I



mentioned earlier, we usually give discounts to passengers at certain times, usually if it's a discount, we give vouchers for group passengers. So, for example, if there are 20 group passengers, we give 1 free ticket as a voucher".

Additionally, PT KAI operates the BPTV (Boarding Pass-Through Value) program in collaboration with various agencies, merchants, and businesses. Under this program, passengers can use their e-boarding passes to receive discounts when purchasing products from partner merchants (Putri, 2017). Companies that have joined this partnership include Hotel Aston, Fave Hotel, Larissa Aesthetic Center, Heavun, Srasadesa, Bening's Clinic Madiun, Coffee Toffee, and Viva Hotel Kediri. The rationale behind these collaborations is the strategic selection of partners who are widely recognized, trusted by the public, and possess substantial customer bases that align with PT KAI's target audience. These characteristics enhance the credibility and reach of the company's promotional initiatives. Moreover, the potential for mutual benefit serves as an essential factor in the formation of such partnerships.

According to Informant P3, a Marketing Team Leader, "The reason we work with these parties is because we feel that these parties already have many customers, a good image in the community, and of course we consider the benefits of working with these parties". This statement underscores a proactive approach initiated by the company for market penetration, aligning with the definition of a Push Strategy that is oriented towards increasing revenue through incentives and collaborations (Rahmandani & Setiyarini, 2022; Radd Interactive, 2024).

Figure 2
Pamphlet promoting the BPTV program in collaboration with local merchants Srasadesa

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Source: Passenger Transport Unit, Operational Area 7 Madiun

Figure 2, a pamphlet promoting the BPTV program, serves as tangible evidence of the Push Strategy. This pamphlet functions as a communication material used by the company to proactively convey value and incentives to customers, demonstrating how PT KAI seeks to expand its market reach through strategic partnerships.

While the Push Strategy implemented through these collaborations is consistent with best promotional practices, its effectiveness could be further enhanced by incorporating structured tracking mechanisms and customer feedback loops to measure impact and inform future campaigns. The strategic selection of partners who are "well-known, trusted by the public, and possess substantial customer bases that align with PT KAI's target audience" represents a sophisticated application of the Push Strategy. This goes beyond merely offering discounts; it is a strategic action to leverage the credibility and reach of existing partners to push the PT KAI brand into relevant new segments. This is a more nuanced application of push than generic discounts, demonstrating an understanding of market segmentation and mutual benefit. This approach signifies a strategic intent to expand market reach and enhance brand perception



through association, which contributes to overall brand awareness and loyalty, even if the primary mechanism is "pushing" the offers. This aligns with the principles of IMC in creating a consistent brand narrative and reinforcing awareness (Kitchen & Burgmann, 2015; Institute for Public Relations, 2025).

Pass Strategy: Building Positive Public Perception and Social Legitimacy

The Pass Strategy focuses on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and service ethics. PT KAI Operational Area 7 Madiun engages in community-oriented programs such as blood donation drives at Kertosono Station, tree planting ("One Million Trees Movement") at Geneng Station, Ngawi (January 10, 2024), and religious infrastructure donations (IDR 30,000,000 for the renovation of Mushola Al-Ikhlas at Wilangan Police Station, Nganjuk Regency on June 27, 2023). The initiatives undertaken by PT KAI Operational Area 7 Madiun to build a positive public perception are reflected in the enhancement of service quality, ethical conduct of frontline employees, and improvements to facilities and infrastructure—both at stations and onboard trains.

Informant P1 emphasized, "So to build a positive opinion from the community, we prioritize, first, service and employee ethics such as frontliners. Second, we pay attention to facilities, infrastructure, and facilities both at the station and on the train because these are customer requests so we try to fulfill them. This will make people feel comfortable using the train and feel satisfied". Informant P3 added, "We often provide positive information about trains. For example, there were public complaints regarding the special fare adjustment yesterday, we provided understanding to the public that the increase in ticket prices was not without reason but because train facilities, services, and



infrastructure also underwent renewal such as KA New Generation, new train series, and so on".

Furthermore, various CSR activities implemented throughout 2024 include the aforementioned blood donation event, the distribution of CSR assistance, and symbolic tree planting. These CSR initiatives are expected to contribute to maintaining the company's image and strengthening customer loyalty (Lukito & Andrini, 2022). Moreover, they are anticipated to positively impact revenue growth and passenger numbers, particularly within Operational Area 7 Madiun (Stevani, 2024). The public is also expected to become more familiar with PT KAI's broader range of services beyond passenger transportation, such as KAI Logistik and KAI Services (onboard catering).

A KAI representative (P2) explained, "Regarding CSR, there is a separate unit, such as the HR and Public Relations unit, but we, as the passenger transport unit, also sometimes participate, such as distributing basic necessities. Even though this is a combined activity from several units, the goal is actually one, which is to create a good image for PT KAI (Persero) in the eyes of the public". This statement highlights the dual mandate of SOEs as both market players and legitimate political agents, driven by political factors and social welfare considerations (Jiang & Luo, 2021; Taylor & Kent, 2006).

Figure 3
Publication of CSR assistance to the Wilangan Police Station



Source: PT Kereta Api Indonesia (Persero) official website

Figure 3, which depicts the publication of CSR assistance to the Wilangan Police Station, serves as a visual illustration of the Pass Strategy. This image demonstrates how PT KAI actively communicates its social responsibility initiatives to the public, reinforcing its image as a socially conscious entity.

These initiatives align with Harris's concept of persuasive PR. However, a formal CSR reporting mechanism or impact assessment remains absent, limiting the evaluative rigor of these programs. The extensive focus on CSR and service ethics within the Pass Strategy is not merely a PR tactic but a fundamental reflection of PT KAI's identity as an SOE with inherent social responsibilities (Jiang & Luo, 2021). The Pass Strategy, particularly CSR, directly addresses the "social welfare" and "political objectives" aspects of the SOE mandate. This goes beyond simply "persuading positive opinion"; it is about fulfilling a perceived social role. This makes the Pass Strategy more than just a communication tactic; it is an operational manifestation of the SOE's core identity and responsibilities. Therefore, the lack of formal impact assessment becomes a more critical weakness, as it hinders the ability to demonstrate the fulfillment of this core social mandate, not just PR effectiveness. This necessitates the development of tailored metrics that capture both commercial and socio-political outcomes, potentially



drawing from strategic communication research on social impact (Strategic Communication Group, 2024).

Overall Analysis: Strategic Integration and Coherence

PT KAI Operational Area 7 Madiun demonstrates a multifaceted implementation of the Three-Way Marketing Public Relations (MPR) Strategy. Pull Strategy efforts, such as digital campaigns and public events, effectively draw public attention and encourage engagement, although certain initiatives also incorporate Push elements aimed at generating immediate sales. The Push Strategy is evident through institutional collaborations and the BPTV program, which actively promotes service usage and extends market reach. In contrast, the Pass Strategy focused on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and service quality improvements contribute significantly to shaping a positive corporate image and strengthening the company’s social legitimacy.

Table 2.
Implementation of the Three-Way MPR Strategy at PT KAI Operational Area 7 Madiun

Strategy	Key Activities	Observed Outcomes/Objectives	Alignment with MPR Goals	Theoretical Link
Pull	Digital campaigns via Instagram, YouTube, WhatsApp; Regional events (Car Free Day, going to school); Public events (Ngabuburit, Ngopi Bareng)	Increased online engagement, attracting organic interest, and building customer loyalty.	Brand awareness & loyalty; Consumer engagement.	Organic interest generation; Pulling demand from the market.
Push	Outreach to government/educational institutions; Special discounts (Ngopi Bareng); BPTV program with	Driving service utilization; Customer discounts & broad market reach;	Service utilization & customer satisfaction; Market	Proactive value proposition; Pushing



	partners (hotels, clinics, banks)	Enhanced satisfaction.	reach expansion.	products to market.
Pass	Blood donation, tree planting, religious infrastructure donations; Service quality & employee ethics improvements	Enhanced public image; Community goodwill; Social legitimacy & trust.	Social legitimacy & trust; Social responsibility.	Building mutually beneficial relationships; Reputation management.

While the application of these strategies is evident across various functions, gaps persist in terms of systematic monitoring, strategic coherence, and data-driven planning. The PR unit's capacity to translate engagement into long-term brand value would significantly benefit from deeper integration of analytics, stakeholder feedback, and cross-unit collaboration.

The gaps in monitoring and data-driven planning become more complex due to the dual mandate of SOEs, where "success" is not solely commercial but also encompasses social welfare and political objectives (Jiang & Luo, 2021). This renders traditional ROI metrics inadequate. The Pass Strategy (CSR) is a prime example: its impact is not easily quantifiable with conventional marketing metrics. The lack of formal monitoring mechanisms is not merely a procedural weakness; it indicates a deeper challenge in defining and measuring MPR success within SOEs. This necessitates the development of tailored metrics that capture both commercial and socio-political outcomes, potentially drawing from strategic communication research on social impact (Strategic Communication Group, 2024).

CONCLUSION



This study analyzed the implementation of the Three-Way Marketing Public Relations Strategy (Pull, Push, and Pass) at PT Kereta Api Indonesia (Persero) Operational Area 7 Madiun. The research found that the company employs a diverse set of PR activities, ranging from social media engagement and event marketing to merchant collaborations and CSR programs. While the application of these strategies is evident across various functions, gaps persist in terms of systematic monitoring, strategic coherence, and data-driven planning. The PR unit's capacity to translate engagement into long-term brand value would benefit from deeper integration of analytics, stakeholder feedback, and cross-unit collaboration.

Theoretical Contribution

This research contributes to the MPR literature by providing empirical insights into how the Three-Way Strategy is adapted within a public sector enterprise in a developing country. The findings reinforce the notion that effective MPR requires a balance between short-term promotional tactics and long-term relationship-building, particularly for SOEs that operate with a dual mandate as both market players and political agents (Jiang & Luo, 2021; Taylor & Kent, 2006). The study also deepens the understanding of MPR's role in fostering social legitimacy and public trust within a unique institutional context, where strategies like Pass function not merely as communication tactics but as manifestations of the SOE's inherent social responsibilities.

Practical Implications

Based on the findings and analysis, several practical recommendations can be proposed for PT KAI and similar public sector organizations:



- **Enhanced Visibility of BPTV Program:** PT KAI should increase the visibility and public understanding of its BPTV program through more aggressive digital campaigns and clear point-of-sale materials. This will ensure that customers are fully aware of the added value offered through these strategic partnerships.
- **Structured CSR Reporting Mechanisms:** CSR initiatives should incorporate formal reporting mechanisms and community feedback loops to ensure transparency and accurately measure the actual impact of these programs. This is crucial for SOEs to demonstrate public accountability and the fulfillment of their social mandate (Jiang & Luo, 2021).
- **Leveraging Data-Driven Analytics:** Social media analytics and audience segmentation should be utilized more extensively to enhance campaign effectiveness, enabling strategy adjustments based on performance data and audience preferences (Institute for Public Relations, 2025).
- **Stronger Strategic Integration:** A more robust integration between strategic communication and branding, along with deeper cross-unit collaboration within PT KAI, is necessary. This will ensure consistent and coherent messaging across all channels and functions.
- **Development of Dual Mandate Success Metrics:** PT KAI should develop tailored metrics capable of capturing both commercial outcomes (e.g., passenger volume, revenue) and socio-political outcomes (e.g., public trust, social impact, alignment with government narratives) (Strategic Communication Group, 2024). This will provide a more comprehensive picture of MPR success within the SOE context.



Limitations and Future Research

This study has limitations as it was confined to a single operational area (Operational Area 7 Madiun) and focused solely on passenger transportation. Therefore, the generalizability of the findings may be limited to similar contexts. Future research should consider comparative studies across different regions or transportation sectors to gain a broader understanding of MPR practices in BUMN. Additionally, mixed-methods approaches could be employed to quantitatively measure PR effectiveness, complementing the qualitative insights obtained in this study. Future research could also explore the impact of digital transformation and artificial intelligence (AI) on SOE strategic communication, given the increasing role of technology in shaping public interactions and communication strategies (Strategic Communication Group, 2024).

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