

MEDIA RELATIONS MANAGEMENT OF PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN SUPPORTING REPUTATION ENHANCEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The reputation of private university is important factor to win the competition. One of the public relations (PR) communication activities to build reputation is media relations. The purpose of this study is how to manage media relations by private university in building reputation through PR. The research method uses a descriptive qualitative method, which combines surveys using questionnaires, interviews, and Focus Discussion Groups (FGD) focusing on the form of media relations activities, information content that has publication value, and communication channels used to support reputation enhancement. The results showed that media relations are very important and useful in supporting the reputation of private university. The forms of media relations activities that can be carried out are press conference, media gathering, news coverage, media visit, and doorstep. The use of effective communication channels in delivering information to the public is online media, social media, radio, websites, and television. Campus news content that has publication value is academic achievement, solutions to problems in society, ranking, accreditation, research, achievement of Key Performance Indicators, and community service activities. The results of this study will be one of the references in further research.

Keywords: Reputation Management, Public Relations, Media relations, Private University

1. INTRODUCTION

In accordance with Law No. 14 of 2008 on Public Information Transparency (KIP), all individuals have the right to obtain information and every entity has the obligation to provide and serve requests for information from the public, as well as to improve the documentation system. Universities, including private universities, are public bodies that have the responsibility to deliver and manage the dissemination of information in a proper, complete, accurate, and reliable. Information management and dissemination is carried out by Public Relations to maintain and improve reputation (Grunig, 2013).

Reputation is described as the sum of impressions, beliefs, and ideas that a person has about an object, individual, institution, or organization based on past and present events (Chen et al., 2018). Reputation is interpreted as a set of facts experienced and felt by a product through a social process, not a personal impression of people (Helm, 2007). Post and Griffin (1997) say that reputation is a combination of opinions, perceptions, and behaviors of stakeholders of an organization. Corporate reputation is believed to be a powerful weapon to win the competition and ensure sustainability.

In a competitive environment, reputation helps a company develop and maintain its existence by developing the right communication strategy (Hardjana, 2008).

In the context of universities, reputation is defined as the sum of impressions that stakeholders receive from the results of communication and interaction with their universities (Rindova et al., 2005). Some of the determining elements in building a university's image and reputation according to Golata et al. (2020), among others, are media coverage of the university and its academicians as sources in the media. In managing reputation, the media plays an important role because it provides a channel and space where stakeholders know, identify, give opinions and discuss the reputation of an institution (Deephouse, 2000). Reputation needs to be communicated to all stakeholders so that it can be well understood and give a positive impression and increase public trust in the university.

As a form of communication between the organization and its public, external PR can conduct media relations to foster and develop good relations with the media (Iriantara, 2005). Media relations is defined as a PR practitioner's practice of systematically subsidizing information to the media (Turk, 1985), publishing and broadcasting messages or information to the public regarding an institution in order to optimally create knowledge and understanding (Frank Jefkins, 2000). So media relations is a relationship with the media to do publicity or respond to media interests (Lesly, 1991).

The maximum publication is not only seen in terms of the number of media that load, but also the delivery of complete information, is in a strategic position or easy to read, and heard or watched by viewers. The media in question can be newspapers, magazines, radio, television, and the internet to communicate newsworthy messages, stories, or information using appropriate media channels. Obrien (2014) says that media relations can be described as a company's interaction with editors, reporters, and journalists. Media relations is a term for activities that involve direct relationships with people responsible for producing news and stories in the mass media (Harrison, 2005). The challenge of media relations is to know what the media wants in enabling it to present images, ideas and information accurately and fairly.

The focus of discussion in this research is how media relations are managed and implemented in private universities to build reputation through public relations. Private Universities were chosen because they were founded and organized by the community, have a very large role in producing excellent human resources, but have the responsibility to manage operational costs and funding sources for education independently, thus creativity and innovation are needed to enhance reputation. It is necessary to remain a campus that is attractive to prospective students for study. According to the data base for Higher Education (PDDIKTI) for 2023, the number of universities in Indonesia is 4,448, with 137 state universities and 4,311 private universities. Specifically in Jakarta, the number of universities is 282, with four state universities and 278 private universities. Considering the large number of private universities in Indonesia, the development and sustainability of private universities should be well managed.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses Descriptive Qualitative method through the stages of distributing questionnaires, in-depth interviews, and Focus Group Discussions (FGD). Respondents consisted of Public Relations practitioners of Private Universities in the Higher Education Service Institution (LLDIKTI) region 3 Jakarta, high school teachers and students, industry practitioners, journalists,

alumni, students, and employees. And as the main source of the interview is the Public Relations of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, the Head of LLDIKTI 3 in the Jakarta area, leaders, and mass media journalists. As the final stage of the research, a Focus Group Discussion was conducted with the journalists from online, print, radio, and television mass media. The research flow chart is as follows:

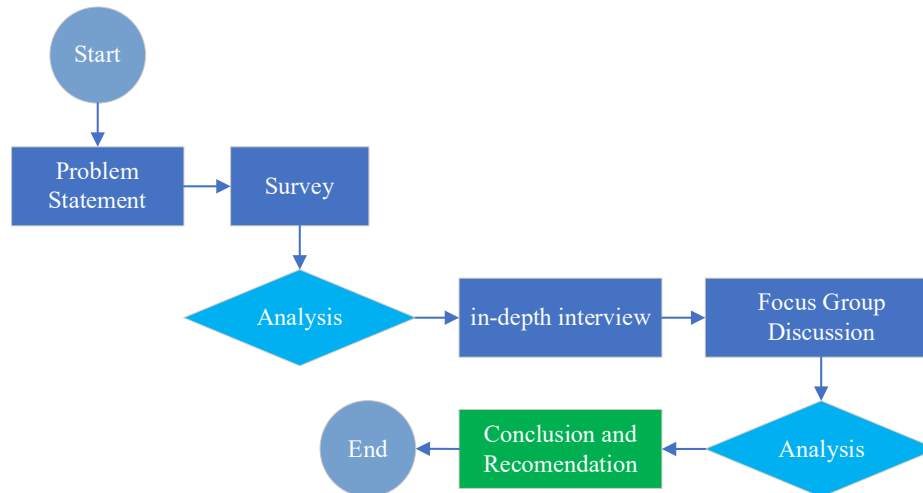


Figure 1. Research Flow Chart

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Media Relations at Private Universities in Higher Education Service Institution (LLDIKTI) Region 3 Jakarta

In the early stages of the research, researchers conducted a survey by distributing questionnaires to find out media relations activities at private universities in LLDIKTI 3 in the Jakarta area. By knowing the number of private universities that implement media relations activities, it becomes the basis for researchers to provide input on the importance of media relations and its management to improve reputation. The number of respondents was 154 private universities out of a total of 278 private universities at LLDIKTI 3 in the Jakarta area. Thus, only 55% of private universities were collected. The survey results can be seen in Figure 2.

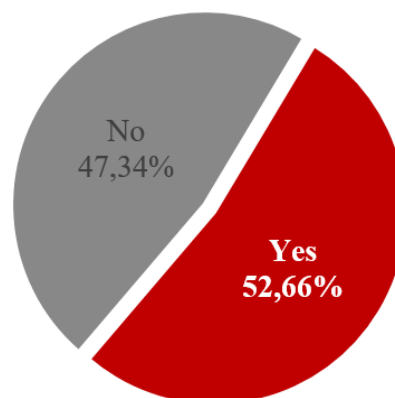


Figure 2. Private universities that have cooperation with media

The result of the survey shows that 53% or 82 out of 154 private universities have collaborated with the media. When compared to the total number of private universities in LLDIKTI 3 in the Jakarta area, it can be concluded that only approximately 30% of private universities have

cooperation with the media. From this figure, the private university in Jakarta have not fully realized media relations activities in order to support reputation enhancement.

The researcher then conducted a survey on the variety of media used by private universities that have collaborated with the media. The survey results can be seen in Figure 3. The result of the survey shows that the variety of mass media used by 82 private universities is 48% online media, 23% print media, 15% radio, and 14% television. From the results of the previous survey, it can be concluded that the number of private universities in Jakarta that have implemented media relations activities is relatively small, around 30%. For this reason, researcher would like to explore more in-depth information about how important media relations are for private universities. The method used is by questionnaire survey and conducting interviews with several sources.

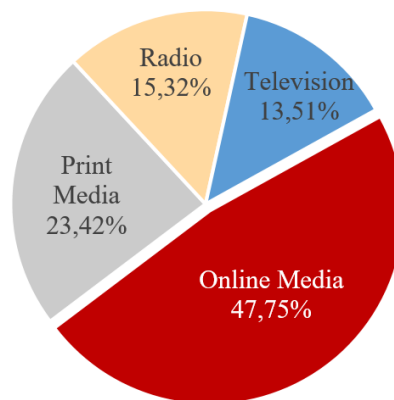


Figure 3. Variety of Mass Media Used by Private Universities

The Importance of Media Relations for Private Universities

At this stage, researchers conducted a further survey to explore the opinions of private university stakeholders consisting of high school teachers and students, university students, lecturers, practitioners, and employees regarding the importance of media relations in supporting the reputation of private universities. The results of the survey through distributing questionnaires to 171 respondents is shown in Figure 4.

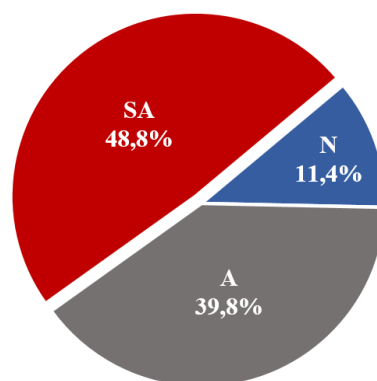


Figure 4. Private University Needs to Build a Relationship with Media for Supporting Institutional Reputation

The survey results shown in figure 4 show that about 88% of the respondents agreed that private universities need to cooperate or establish relationships with the media to support reputation enhancement.

A further point was explored regarding the need to publish information about private universities through the mass media. The survey results can be shown in Figure 5.

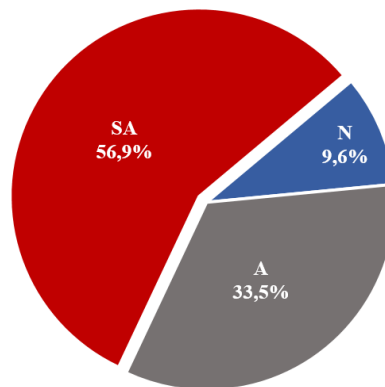


Figure 5. Private University Needs to Publish Information Through Mass Media to Support Institutional Reputation

According to the survey results shown in Figure 5, around 90% agreed that private universities need to publish information through the mass media to support the improvement of the institution's reputation. Based on the results of the two surveys above, it can be said that private universities need to implement media relations activities, including news information through the mass media to support reputation enhancement.

After conducting the questionnaire survey, interviews with several informants were obtained consisting of, the head of LLDIKTI region 3 Jakarta, the PR coordinator of the Directorate General of Higher Education, editor-in-chief and mass media journalists, as well as students to explore more deeply the importance of media relations for private universities.

The head of LLDIKTI 3 Jakarta region said that PR has the responsibility for establishing good relations and partnering with the media. Private universities need the media to disseminate information and solve problems. Likewise, the media needs news from academics. Therefore, the reciprocal relationship between private universities and the media must be well established. According to Sam Black and Melvin L. Sharpe quoted by Diah Wardhani (2008), it is said that media relations are the relationship between organizations and the press, radio, and television in two directions or two parties. And one of the communication activities that is the spirit of PR is media relations, which is the activity of establishing relationships between PR and the media (Iriantara, 2011).

The leaders and journalists of the mass media said that the reputation of private universities is very important to win the competition because it will remain a favorite place and remain in demand by prospective students. Reputation is having achievements and being informed to the public. Communicate to the media through releases about academic and non-academic achievements, quality study programs, and activities that have an impact on people's lives. Building a reputation is also accomplished by sharing thoughts through writing academics in the media, media visits, building relationships with the media, collaborating, and program innovations by featuring speakers on social media. A good reputation has the potential to get free media coverage and hence reduce advertising costs, for example as a campus expert to become a speaker in the media. Mateus and Acosta (2020) said that university reputation has benefits, such as positive media

coverage. Fame or reputation is what is said or reported about a name (Stergiou and Tsikliras, 2014). A university needs to do publications in the media, where the authors come from lecturers, students, and employees, such as writing journalistic articles, essays, or interview programs whose statements are used by journalists to become part of their articles or programs (Gołata and Sojkin, 2020). So, media relations is part of external PR that fosters and develops good relations with the media as a means of communication between the organization and the public to achieve organizational goals (Iriantara, 2005). Sheaffer (2001) and Yoon (2005) have added that the media relations function is part of the strategy used by organizations to build reputation.

The journalists added that the communication channels that can be used by private universities in disseminating information can be through newspapers, movies, radio, TV, podcasts, YouTube, and social media. PR departments must be able to process information into news that has value for the media by raising major issues that are trending to have an attraction to be read. Any information received by the media editor in the release should have differentiation or novelty compared to other private universities. This means that to build an image, PR must create a difference and interesting content. A university is considered reputable if it provides information that has inspiring, educative, and impactful effects. In relation to external stakeholders, PR must have a role to bridge the campus and its public, build a reputation with the media by establishing good relations, and offer information that has news value for the media so that it is included in the category that will be published by the media.

The PR Coordinator of the Directorate General of Higher Education said that PR is a communicator of policies and programs, therefore ideal PR needs to synergize with the media. The duties and functions of PR are regulated in the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Culture, Research and Technology of the Republic of Indonesia Number 28 of 2021 concerning Organization and Work Procedures of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology article 38 that PR has the duty of implementing publication and public relations affairs. PR, which has the role of communicator, is the frontline for disseminating government programs and performance, the sources and manages of information, and encourages public participation in the success of government programs.

The main task of PR is to create an image, attractiveness, sympathy, and understanding of the same message. The scope of PR includes internal and external communication strategies, media relations, and media handling. Media relations will maintain good relations between the institution and the media, and one of the benefits obtained is the dissemination of information or being a message well communicated. Media relations activities can include media visits, media gatherings, editor gatherings, press tours, media partners, and key opinion leaders. Media relations activities intend to publicize PR work programs through mass media to facilitate communication between PR and the public (Ruslan, 2017). Therefore, media relations is often part of the strategy used by an organization to build reputation (Sheaffer, 2001; Yoon, 2005). Hardjana (2008) has said that corporate reputation is believed to be a great weapon to win the competition and ensure survival because in a situation of high competition, reputation helps companies develop and maintain their existence by building the appropriate communication strategy. Student representatives pointed out that the reputation of a campus can be obtained, among others, from news in the mass media. News about a campus will be a means of knowing the track record of a private university. One of the activities that public relations must do is media relations, which is to have a relationship with the media.

Referring to the surveys and interviews that have been undertaken previously, it can be concluded that media relations in private universities is important to be carried out in order to support reputation enhancement. Furthermore, researchers conducted FGDs to confirm the importance of media relations for private universities with 18 journalists. The FGD was conducted on December 23, 2023, and was attended by various mass media including online print, radio, and television.

Journalists from print and online Media Indonesia pointed out that private universities need to conduct media relations to be more recognized and support their reputation. Media relations may become a bridge in improving and accelerating the distribution of information to the public as well as maintaining the reputation of the campus. Radio Republik Indonesia journalists hope that doing media relations will ensure that private universities do not become ivory towers that are not accessed by the public. Media relations is a mutually beneficial activity and provides benefits for both parties. Kompas.com journalists added that media relations can be utilized to share positive information about the achievements and success of the institution. Positive news delivered and good relations with the media will provide great benefits and offset the news if the institution faces a crisis. Antara media said that institutions that have media relations are directly proportional to the increase in achievements in image and reputation. By recognizing various achievements and accomplishments, as well as projects that benefit the community, it will increase the trust of the institution. Medcom.id journalists said that the effectiveness of media relations carried out by private universities has a significant impact on reputation so they should be more active in conducting media relations to strengthen reputation.

According to Trijaya FM radio journalists, in facing the development of communication technology, collaboration with all stakeholders is needed, especially in dealing with the negative impacts arising the era of information disclosure. Every university has a responsibility in delivering information and communication, both the PR organization and the media itself. We must collaborate to deliver information that has more positive impacts than negative impacts. Information must be valid and reliable in order not to mislead the public. Sindonews.com journalists emphasized that in the face of intense competition between private universities, the frequency of collaboration among universities and the media or the power of media relations must continue to be maximized consistently and continuously, so that the objectives expected by the campus in maintaining reputation and promotion can be achieved optimally. The amount of information published by private universities will make it easier for people to remember them. For media relations to be effective, it must be supported by reliable PR practitioners who have good communication skills, are able to write, creative, and innovative in performing their roles and duties. For example, a private university PR practitioner must be able to create scientific work from an academic and then create a work that is easily understood by the public. With optimal collaboration and interaction with the mass media, it will raise the reputation of the institution.

In managing reputation, the media has an important role because it provides channels and spaces where stakeholders know, identify, give opinions, and discuss the reputation of an institution (Deephouse, 2000). Media relations is a form of collaboration that has the benefit of maintaining good relations and openness in the digital information age, as well as a means of getting feedback and accurate information from PR.

Media Relations Management to Enhance the Reputation of Private Universities

Following the survey and FGDs conducted with journalists from various media, researchers collected questionnaires to explore information on media relations management. For effective media relations activities, it needs to be managed properly. The first survey was regarding the type

of information that was determined as news value to be published in the mass media. The results of the survey can be seen in Figure 6.

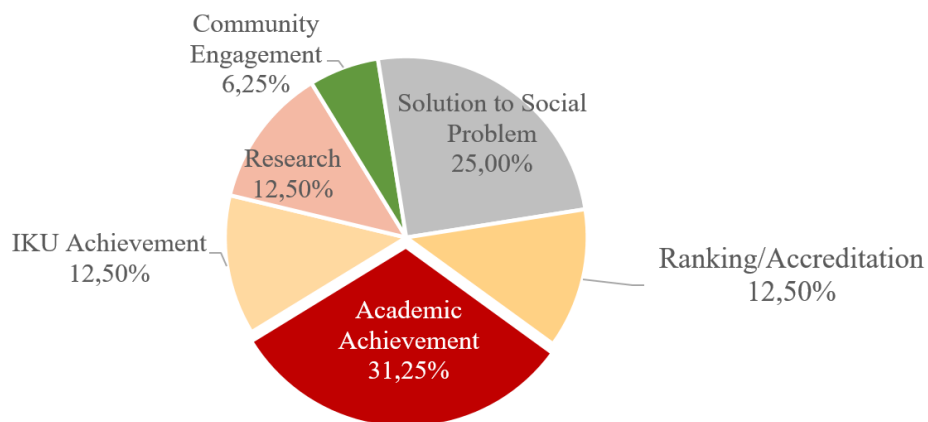


Figure 6. Information That Has News Value for Publishing in The Mass Media

According to the survey results, the types of information that have news value to be published in the mass media are information about academic achievements, solutions to problems that arise in society, accreditation or ranking, research, achievement of Key Performance Indicators (IKU), and community service activities. For this purpose, PR of Private Universities need to consider this type of information by formatting it in such a way as to become news that attracts readers' interest. During the FGD, the journalists added that some other information such as creative and innovative projects, independent learning activities on independent campuses (MBKM), non-academic achievements, profiles / figures of the academic community, faculty / study program profiles (excellence, graduates who get jobs quickly, successful alumni), scholarships, and light discussions from campus experts can also be considered to be explored into news that is interesting, light, and easy for readers to understand, thus making it suitable for publication.

Furthermore, researchers conducted a survey on the type of media relations activities that private universities need to do to support reputation. The survey results are shown in Figure 7.

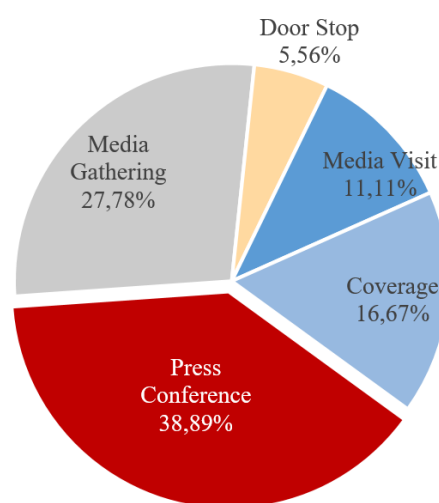


Figure 7. Types of Media Relations Activities

The results of this survey show that the type of media relations recommended by journalists to PR practitioners of private universities to be effective are press conferences, media gatherings, news coverage, media visits, and door stops.

The journalists during the FGD added that PR practitioners must prepare an interesting and fast press release for each activity, to avoid losing the momentum of the news. As stated by Fombrun and Van Riel (2004) that organizations can develop their reputation through information about the organization that is collected, then communicated to their stakeholders through the media, press releases, websites, online resources, and/or word of mouth. Other methods of media relations that were also suggested by the journalists were providing campus experts for offline event programs, light talk shows, discussions, filling in columns, opinions, collaborative activities in the form of training, social services, coffee mornings, and scholarships.

In ensuring that the delivery of information in the mass media is on target, it is necessary to consider the use of communication channels as a forum for delivering information to the public. Communication channels that can be used to disseminate information are newspapers, movies, radio, television, podcasts, YouTube, and social media. Currently, the variety of communication channels owned by the mass media itself is very diverse, following the trend of communication technology. Therefore, researchers conducted a survey to identify the communication channels that should be used by private universities in delivering information to the public. The survey results are shown in Figure 8.

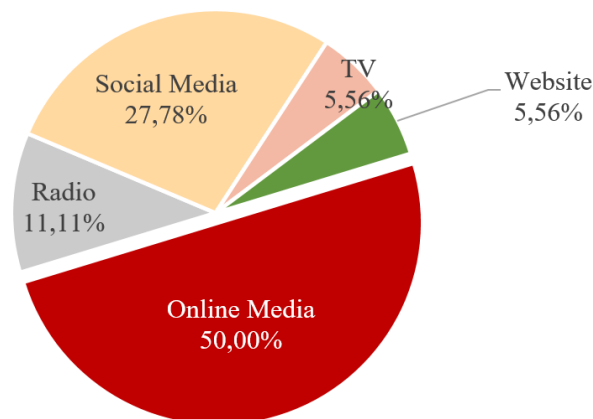


Figure 8. The Most Effective Mass Media Communication Channel

The survey results showed that the communication channels owned by the mass media and can be utilized by private universities to be effective in delivering information are online media, social media, radio, websites, and television. Currently, the mass media industry has a wide variety of communication channels that can be used to share information with the public.

Journalists added during FGDs that communication channels such as live IG and tiktok, podcasts, video broadcasts, speakers for seminars held by journalist groups on radio, tv, and online portals for short content on youtube, are also becoming popular choices for today's generation. Yenicikti (2016) said that in modern society, social media plays an important role for individuals and organizations because people's communication styles have evolved and changed rapidly from internet-based communication technology, smart phones, and others.

Social media channels are present in the modern business world and are increasingly popular for establishing communication in building consumer trust and loyalty. Communication that occurs on social media is not one-way communication, but multi-directional communication (Tsimonis,

Dimitriadis, 2014 in Tabarosi and Maljugić, 2022) so it becomes interactive. In between consuming, users also could create content and share. Tik Tok is a creative channel, using audiovisual effects, users can easily create video content that is technically very interesting (Bresnick, 2019 in Tabarosi and Maljugić, 2022). This feature makes Tik Tok a very popular application and quickly gets users, especially when there are social restrictions due to Covid-19. Websites not only transmit information or sell products or services, but also communicate messages about what a company or organization represents (Dilenschneider, 2010). Today's communication channels all have different age segments of users and fans. Trends in communication channels are evolving, therefore private universities must be adaptive and apply these trends to get closer to the target audience. Private university PR practitioners must address the various types of media relations activities that will be implemented to maintain good relations with the media, the content of information that has news value to be published, and the most suitable strategy in using communication channels in the mass media, ensuring that the information effectively delivered to all stakeholders (Figure 9).

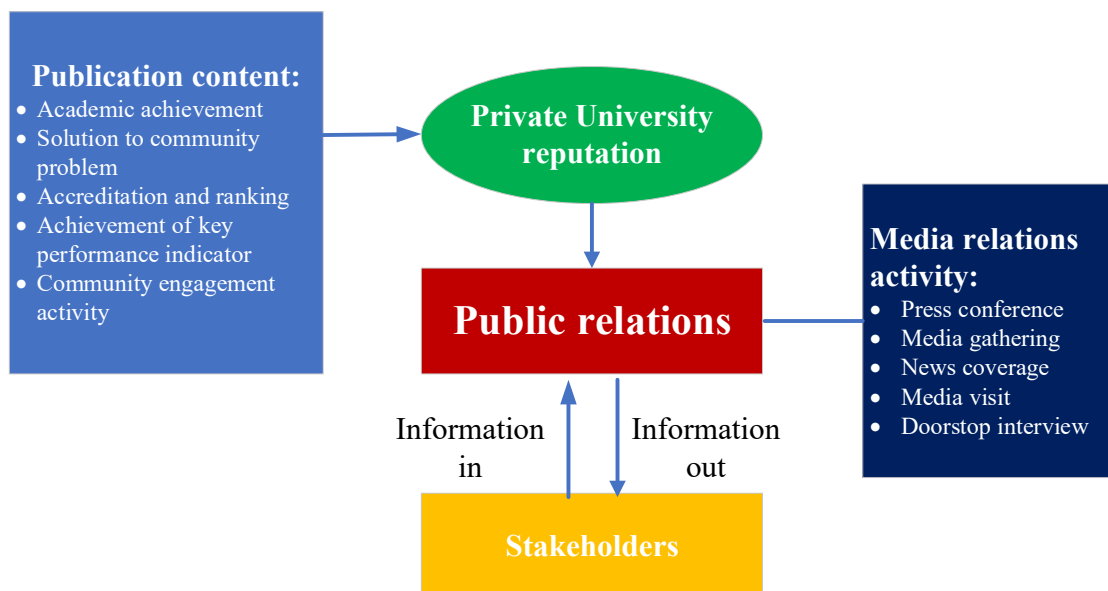


Figure 9. Flow of Media Relations Management in Order to Increase the Reputation of Private Universities

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Media relations in private universities is very important and strategic to improve reputation. In enabling media relations activities to run effectively, it needs to be managed properly, where private university PR practitioners need to know the types of media relations activities, the information that can be published by the media, and the channels of communication being used. Forms of media relations activities that can be carried out are press conferences, media gatherings, news coverage, media visits, and direct interviews with sources (doorstop). The information that has news value to be published is related to academic achievements, solutions to problems that arise in the community, rankings, accreditation, achievement of key performance indicators, and community service activities that should be formatted in such a way as to have news value, so it deserves to be published. Finally, what is equally important is the selection of the most suitable communication channels so that all stakeholders can receive the information well and completely, including online media, social media, radio, website, and television.

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