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Strategic Public Relations for Digital Sovereignty and Environmental, Social, and Governance Integration in the Telecommunications Industry

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the strategic role of public relations (PR) within PT Telkom Indonesia (Persero) Tbk, conceptualizing it as an integral management function that drives market value and corporate resilience. Amidst the rapid digitalization and geopolitical uncertainties of 2025–2026, the research investigates how PR manages the intersection of digital sovereignty, Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) integration, and market authority. Utilizing a conceptual research approach through a systematic literature review, this study synthesizes Excellence Theory and Stakeholder Theory to develop an Integrated PR-Management (IPM) model. The findings demonstrate that PR at Telkom acts as a strategic architect by transforming technical infrastructure initiatives such as the launch of the Satelit Merah Putih 2 and decarbonization efforts into authoritative narratives that enhance investor trust and secure regulatory legitimacy. Furthermore, the study highlights that effective PR communication, validated by external accolades like the PR Indonesia Awards, is essential for navigating B2B markets and mitigating reputational risks. The analysis emphasizes that digital reputation is a critical intangible asset, and the alignment of PR Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) with core business metrics is vital for long-term sustainability. The proposed IPM framework offers a roadmap for state-owned enterprises to navigate technological disruptions by bridging technical operational excellence with persuasive strategic communication. Consequently, this research

underscores the necessity of reforming traditional siloed communication structures into AI-integrated, fluid units to maintain competitiveness in the 2026 digital era.

Keywords
Corporate Reputation
Digital Sovereignty
ESG Integration
Integrated PR-Management
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Introduction

A fundamental shift in the public relations (PR) paradigm is currently being observed through the transition of its role from a technical communication function to a crucial pillar of strategic management for modern organizations [1]. Traditionally, PR activities were positioned merely as supportive instruments for media relations; however, in the contemporary corporate landscape, this function has been deeply integrated into the organization's dominant coalition [2]. This transformation is driven by the increasing complexity of reputational risks, necessitating direct involvement of PR practitioners in strategic decision-making processes to align internal policies with public expectations [3]. The significance of PR engagement at the managerial level is further validated by PT Telkom Indonesia's success in maintaining the top position in the Top Digital PR Index 2025, where digital communication activities demonstrated a positive correlation with strengthened public sentiment and brand interaction in cyberspace [4].

The telematics industry in 2026 is characterized by asymmetric competition involving global low-earth orbit satellite providers and domestic telecommunication operators, placing data sovereignty as a non-negotiable managerial priority [5],[6]. National digital sovereignty is conceptualized as a defensive strategy for maintaining information integrity against foreign jurisdictional penetration, which is frequently exposed through cross-border cloud ecosystems [6]. The management of strategic infrastructure, including the operation of the Satelit Merah Putih 2 by PT Telkom Indonesia, serves not merely as technical connectivity fulfillment, but as a strategic effort to mitigate digital geopolitical threats [5]. This perspective is reinforced by the 2026 national policy report, which emphasizes that the development of fiber optic backbone infrastructure must be synergized with sovereignty protection narratives to secure political legitimacy and robust regulatory support [7]. Consequently, public relations is increasingly expected to function as a strategic management capability that aligns organizational communication, stakeholder trust, and digital sovereignty objectives within an evolving governance environment.

Literature Review

A. Excellence & Stakeholder Theory

The position of public relations (PR) within modern corporate structures is increasingly conceptualized as an integral strategic management function, particularly when positioned at the C-level [8]. According to the Excellence Theory, the involvement of PR practitioners in high-level managerial decision-making is a critical prerequisite for achieving organizational excellence [3]. In the context of PT Telkom Indonesia, managerial autonomy granted to strategic communication units facilitates the alignment of Digital Telco transformation visions with the macro-policies formulated by the dominant coalition [9]. This strategic role is further evidenced by industrial metrics, where digital narrative leadership by state-owned enterprises serves as a key determinant for maintaining reputational stability [10].

Stakeholder mapping is employed as a navigation instrument to balance the diverse demands of government bodies, global investors, and digital consumers [11]. Organizational legitimacy is fundamentally tied to the management's ability to symmetrically identify and respond to the expectations of these strategic groups [12]. For PT Telkom, the government is positioned as a primary stakeholder demanding digital sovereignty and equitable infrastructure access across the archipelago. Failure to manage these political expectations can result in weakened regulatory support, potentially hindering the acceleration of national strategic projects [7].

B. Strategic Issue Management

Strategic issue management is constructed as a proactive approach to detecting and responding to regulatory and technological signals before they escalate into destructive reputational crises [13]. Environmental scanning is conducted continuously by the PR function to identify global trends, such as the expansion of foreign low-earth orbit (LEO) satellites that pose threats to domestic digital sovereignty [14]. Organizational agility in responding to these critical issues is analyzed as a competitive capability that enables management to formulate both defensive and offensive strategies [15]. As highlighted in global digital trust reports, an organization's preparedness to face technological disruption is a primary determinant of market value within the telematics industry [16].

The PR function operates as an early warning system, responsible for providing impact analyses of shifts in the political and economic landscape [17]. Market intelligence and digital sentiment analysis are utilized as the basis for providing strategic input to the board of directors regarding potential risks associated with cross-border data jurisdictions [15]. At PT Telkom Indonesia, this system is implemented through a digital monitoring center capable of detecting fluctuations in public perception toward corporate policies within hours [9]. Furthermore, the integration of advanced technologies like artificial intelligence allows PR

practitioners to conduct crisis simulations and scenario planning with greater accuracy, effectively translating technical complexities into risk narratives understood by non-technical stakeholders [17].

Material and Methods

The research method employed in this study is a conceptual approach conducted through a systematic literature review. This methodology is utilized to analyze complex concepts, theories, and contemporary phenomena regarding strategic public relations management within the telecommunication sector, specifically focusing on PT Telkom Indonesia (Persero) Tbk [8]. The conceptual approach facilitates the synthesis of fundamental management frameworks, such as Excellence Theory and Stakeholder Theory, to address the evolving demands of national digital sovereignty and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) integration [11]. By employing this method, the research aims to construct a new theoretical proposition that bridges the gap between technical infrastructure operations and strategic reputation management.

The materials analyzed in this study consist of a systematic selection of high-impact academic journals, authoritative textbooks, and official corporate documents published between 2012 and 2026. Key secondary data, including the Telkom Annual Report 2025/2026 and the Top Digital PR Index 2025, are integrated as empirical benchmarks to validate the conceptual framework [4],[10]. These sources are evaluated through qualitative narrative synthesis, cross-referencing global industry trends with national policy reports from the Ministry of Communication and Informatics [7]. This rigorous selection and analysis procedure ensures that the resulting "Integrated PR-Management (IPM)" model possesses both theoretical depth and practical relevance for managing corporate reputation in the digital era [18].

As illustrated in Fig. 1, the Integrated Public Relations Management (IPM) model combines four interdependent constructs: digital sovereignty, environmental, social, and governance (ESG) integration, stakeholder legitimacy, and the IPM model itself. Each construct is conceptually grounded in either Excellence Theory [3] or Stakeholder Theory [12], providing a robust theoretical foundation for strategic communication. Within this framework, the public relations function operates at the intersection of all four constructs, serving as a strategic architect that translates technical infrastructure, governance initiatives, and sustainability commitments into credible organizational narratives. Consequently, the framework offers methodological transparency and analytical coherence for interpreting the conceptual relationships and findings presented in the subsequent Results and Discussion section.

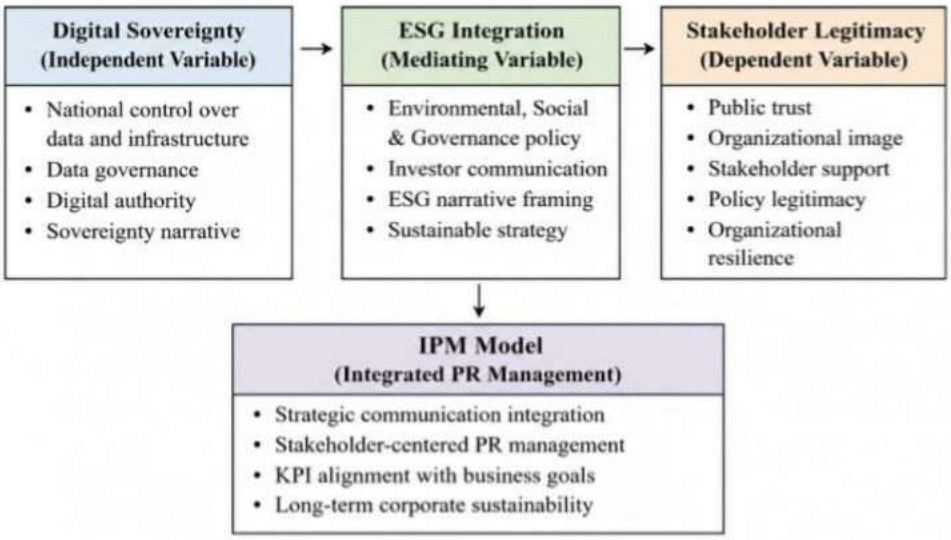


Fig. 1. Conceptual Framework: Digital Sovereignty, ESG Integration, Stakeholder Legitimacy, and Integrated PR Management (IPM)

Results and Discussions

A. Digital Sovereignty and National Identity

The construction of Indonesia's digital sovereignty is strategically managed by Telkom through the launch of the Satelit Merah Putih 2, serving as a defensive instrument against the penetration of global satellite providers [14]. This narrative is operated by the PR function to foster technological nationalism, distinguishing the state-owned enterprise's identity from foreign competitors [6]. Corporate legitimacy is further secured by aligning the company's agenda with the government's vision of national data independence, as outlined in the evaluation of national strategic infrastructure, thereby strengthening Telkom's bargaining position in cyber-regulation negotiations [5],[6].

PR serves as the "gatekeeper" of national interests, disseminating strategic messages regarding personal data protection and cyber resilience through integrated digital campaigns to mitigate public perceptions of foreign dominance [9]. Based on industry research data, the effectiveness of digital sovereignty communication has proven to be a decisive factor in maintaining customer trust within the government and banking sectors [10]. Consequently, digital sovereignty is transformed from a technical obligation into a reputational asset, a form of sustainable competitive advantage for the corporation, ensuring that the development of backbone infrastructure is synergized with narratives of national protection [7],[19].

B. ESG Integration as an Investor Relations Tool

The integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) parameters into corporate communication strategies is intended to transform compliance obligations into instruments for attracting international capital [20]. Infrastructure decarbonization data and digital social

empowerment initiatives are systematically presented at global forums, such as WEF Davos 2026, to assure international investors of long-term business sustainability [21]. By proactively managing ESG scores, reputational risks are reduced, ensuring that the company's stock price stability in the capital market remains maintained [20],[22].

PR plays a crucial role in communicating sustainable value by bridging stakeholders' ethical expectations with the company's operational reality [12]. The role of PR management is expanded into an economic diplomacy function, ensuring that technological innovations are communicated in terms of their impact on energy efficiency and social inclusion [4]. These integration results are validated by achieving high ESG risk ratings, which directly implies a reduction in the cost of capital and enhances the company's political role in a globalized business world [4],[9].

C. B2B Authority and Revenue Growth Support

Market authority in the Business-to-Business (B2B) sector is bolstered through prestigious external validations, such as the PR Indonesia Awards (PRIA) 2026, confirming the excellence of the company's communication strategy [7],[22]. This external recognition is analyzed as an essential credibility signal for corporate clients when selecting secure and trusted technology partners, effectively reducing information asymmetry [1]. By establishing an image as a "Digital Center of Excellence," the PR function successfully secures industrial sector trust for high-stakes projects in banking and government segments [23].

PR communication strategies are deeply integrated into the sales cycle to support revenue growth through comprehensive digital solution narratives [2]. The trust built by the PR management function toward the Telkom brand is identified as a primary driver in winning long-term contracts with financial institutions and multinational organizations [23]. Through the synchronization of service promises and tangible evidence of digital transformation, PR is positioned as an economic growth engine that ensures high-level customer retention amidst sharp price competition, bridging technical complexity with market-ready reputation [2],[15].

D. Summary Matrix of Analytical Findings

Table 2 consolidates the major analytical findings across all three discussion themes. The matrix demonstrates that digital sovereignty, ESG integration, and B2B market authority are not independent outcomes but mutually reinforcing dimensions of the IPM model. Together, they constitute a comprehensive strategic communication architecture whereby PR functions simultaneously as a national interest gatekeeper, investor relations instrument, and revenue growth enabler. These findings contribute to both the theoretical extension of Excellence Theory [3] and the practical application of Stakeholder Theory [12] in the context of state-owned digital infrastructure management.

Table 1. Integrative Summary: Themes, Theoretical Grounding, Strategic Implications, and Expected Outcomes

Theme	Key Finding	Theoretical Grounding	Strategic Implication	Expected Outcome
Digital Sovereignty	PR transforms infrastructure (Satelit Merah Putih 2) into technological nationalism narratives	Stakeholder Theory [12]; Issue Management [14]	Align sovereignty messaging with government policy to secure regulatory support	Strengthened bargaining position in cyber-regulation; reduced geopolitical risk
ESG Integration	ESG compliance reframed as investor-facing narrative at global forums (WEF Davos 2026)	Excellence Theory [3]; Freeman [12]	Proactive ESG score management to stabilize stock valuation and attract sustainable capital	Lower cost of capital; enhanced corporate political role in globalized markets
B2B Market Authority	PRIA 2026 validation as a credibility signal, reducing information asymmetry in B2B procurement	Argenti [1]; Cornelissen [2]	Synchronize PR KPIs with revenue cycle metrics and B2B contract acquisition strategy	High-value client retention; revenue growth in banking and government sectors
IPM Model (Integrated)	PR as strategic architect in dominant coalition, bridging sovereignty, ESG, and B2B authority	Excellence Theory + Stakeholder Theory [3],[12]	Reform siloed communication units into AI-integrated fluid PR structures aligned with board-level strategy	Competitive resilience; intangible asset recognition as primary value driver

Conclusion

The status of public relations (PR) at PT Telkom Indonesia is affirmed no longer as a mere communication support unit, but as a strategic reputation architect, a function that directly determines the company's market value through the integration of technical excellence and persuasive communication [3],[12]. Success in integrating digital sovereignty narratives and Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) commitments is analyzed as a fundamental differentiator in maintaining stock stability amidst global technological disruption. The role of PR as a navigator within the organization's dominant coalition is evidenced by management's ability to transform technical issues into solid reputational capital, which has been empirically validated through outstanding achievements at the industry's premier awards.

This conceptual research concludes that the proposed Integrated PR-Management (IPM) model serves as an essential framework for telecommunications companies facing digital geopolitical uncertainty. The alignment between business profitability, social legitimacy, and national sovereignty is identified as an inseparable unity in efforts to maintain domestic market dominance [5],[6]. Through the orchestration of credible narratives at international

forums, PT Telkom Indonesia is positioned as a resilient entity, in which digital reputation is recognized as the most valuable intangible asset, ensuring long-term business sustainability.

Limitation and Suggestions

This study acknowledges several inherent limitations stemming from its exclusively conceptual and secondary-data-based methodology. As a conceptual research paper, the analysis relies heavily on secondary data, including official corporate reports and industrial benchmarks. While these sources provide a comprehensive overview of strategic initiatives, the absence of primary empirical data, such as in-depth interviews with PR practitioners or direct surveys of investor perceptions, limits the ability to quantify the precise causal relationship between the proposed IPM model and specific financial outcomes [8]. The reliance on this qualitative approach means that while the study offers theoretical depth, it does not provide the statistical validation that would come from a primary quantitative study. Consequently, all propositions derived from the IPM model should be regarded as theoretical in nature and require empirical testing before causal inferences can be drawn.

Furthermore, the scope of this research is primarily focused on the telecommunications industry within the Indonesian context. Given the unique regulatory landscape and the specific role of state-owned enterprises in national digital infrastructure, the findings may not be directly generalizable to private telecommunications companies or organizations in other sectors with different political and economic dynamics [5]. The reliance on a single case study, while providing necessary context, necessitates caution when applying the model to broader international or cross-industry environments where the influence of national sovereignty narratives may vary significantly. The absence of cross-national comparative data represents a further constraint on the external validity of the IPM model.

For future research, it is recommended that scholars conduct empirical testing of the IPM model through quantitative methods. Large-scale surveys involving institutional investors and public opinion polls could provide statistical validation for the correlation between PR-led ESG narratives and the reduction of the cost of capital. Furthermore, longitudinal studies would be valuable to track the long-term impact of digital sovereignty communication on corporate reputation and regulatory support over several years, especially as global satellite competition intensifies and the digital landscape continues to evolve.

Additionally, future studies could expand the scope by conducting a comparative analysis between state-owned telecommunications companies across various developing nations. Investigating how different cultural and political environments shape the strategic management of digital sovereignty and ESG integration would provide a more nuanced understanding of the global applicability of the proposed PR framework. Integrating advanced sentiment analysis tools and artificial intelligence to measure the real-time effectiveness of

these strategic narratives would also enhance the precision and predictive power of future academic inquiries in this field.

Conflict of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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