

## Communication Strategies to Attract Public Interest in Trans Cirebon Services

Siti Aisah<sup>1</sup>, Rico Yohanes Lumban Gaol<sup>2</sup>, Farida Nurfalih<sup>3</sup>

University of Swadaya Gunung Jati, Indonesia

Email: aisah0364@gmail.com<sup>1</sup>, ricoyohanes33@gmail.com<sup>2</sup>, farida.nurfalih@ugj.ac.id<sup>3</sup>

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### Abstract

There is concern among the public regarding the lack of information about departure schedules, bus stop locations, and payment methods for the Trans Cirebon service. This qualitative study aims to examine the communication strategies employed by management to attract public interest. Data were obtained through observation, interviews, and literature review, then analyzed using the Miles and Huberman Model. The findings indicate that the primary issues are related to subsidies and inadequate information dissemination. The policy messages developed emphasize safety, comfort, affordable fares, and customer testimonials. The implementation program involves the *Dinas Perhubungan* (Transportation Department), *PD Pembangunan*, and *PT BIG*, with communication activities conducted through social media, public awareness campaigns, and direct outreach. Passenger feedback highlights the importance of utilizing social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram to enhance public interest in the Trans Cirebon service. The study recommends more comprehensive communication planning by establishing a dedicated communication team to analyze communication flow challenges and to select appropriate media and messages for effective engagement.

**Keywords:** Strategy, Interests, Services, Communication, Management

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### INTRODUCTION

In major Indonesian cities, traffic congestion is a daily occurrence, with a population density that exceeds two vehicles per person. To address traffic congestion, the Indonesian government has implemented various measures, including expanding public transportation options. The government's efforts include introducing city buses, which increase passenger capacity and provide comfortable and safe public transportation. Public transportation plays a crucial role in supporting mobility for residents traveling to various locations within the city of Cirebon. The government plays a vital role in providing adequate and comfortable public transportation. The Cirebon City Transportation Department has launched the Trans Cirebon program, aimed at addressing public transportation needs and reducing traffic congestion..

There is concern among the public, most of whom feel they have insufficient information about Trans Cirebon, such as departure schedules, stops, routes, and payment methods. This has led to low public interest in using public transportation. (Wijaya et al., 2021) found that “in interviews with PT. Bima Inti Global, the operator, it was revealed that the public still faces difficulties in obtaining information about the routes, stops, and departure schedules of Trans Cirebon.”

Trans Cirebon is equipped with various adequate facilities, but its

existence is still largely unknown to the public since it began operating. According to an online article (Nugroho, 2022), Dani Mardani, Chairman of Commission I of the Cirebon City Regional People's Representative Council, has requested an evaluation of the reasons behind Trans Cirebon's operations, as only three to five passengers are typically on board during a single trip. The numerous routes available are not a priority for the public, as evidenced by the fact that out of ten Trans Cirebon vehicles, only four are currently in operation. It is still found that planning has not been carried out thoroughly in terms of communication, even though communication planning plays an important role in overcoming obstacles to effective communication. According to John Middleton, 1978 in (Cangara, 2022, p.47), "communication planning is the process of dividing communication capabilities to achieve organizational goals.

Previous studies related to communication strategies were conducted by (Agus et al., 2023a) entitled "Evaluation of Operational Performance and Fares of Trans Cirebon Bus Corridor 1." The results showed that the bus has a capacity of 40 passengers, departs every 15 minutes, with a waiting time of 1 minute at the bus stop, 10 seconds at the bus stop, 15 minutes at the Dukuh Semar terminal, and a travel time of 60 minutes per corridor loop. Trans Cirebon meets 4 out of 8 established indicators and scores 7 points under the 2016 BRT Standards, but does not yet meet the Trans Cirebon standards. Another study was conducted by (Nurfalah et al., 2020) titled "Socialization of Communication Strategies for Village Government Services During the COVID-19 Pandemic in Argasunya Village, Cirebon City."

Mobile phones and websites influence communication strategies regarding family relations during the COVID-19 pandemic in Argasunya Village. Additionally, research was conducted by (Dzakiyul et al., 2024) titled "Communication Planning by the Transportation Department of Surakarta City in Socializing the Batik Solo Trans Program." POAC (planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling) is the communication strategy for the Batik Solo Trans program. Social activities are carried out during the planning phase, followed by organizing to assign roles and tasks. Then comes actuating, where all plans are implemented as planned, followed by controlling to monitor and evaluate.

There is a difference from previous studies in that this study uses Philip Lesly's theory in his book (Cangara, 2022, p.74), which has two important components consisting of organizations and the public. In the Organization component, there are four planning stages: analysis and research, policy formulation, program implementation planning, and communication activities. In the Public component, there are two planning stages: feedback and evaluation. Based on this background, the purpose of this study is to analyze the communication strategies.

The novelty of this research lies in its application of Philip Lesly's communication planning model to analyze and address the challenges faced

by Trans Cirebon, a public transportation service in Indonesia. Unlike previous studies that focused on operational performance or general communication strategies, this study uniquely integrates organizational and public components to diagnose issues such as subsidy reductions and inadequate information dissemination. By emphasizing the need for a dedicated communication team and leveraging modern social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, the research offers a tailored approach to enhancing public engagement and service visibility, thereby filling a critical gap in existing literature on transportation communication strategies.

The communication process is not without various obstacles and barriers, therefore communication requires communication planning to overcome these obstacles and barriers in order to achieve effectiveness in communication. In terms of its role and usefulness, communication planning strategy is used in implementing programs, whether for branding, marketing, disseminating ideas, cooperation, or developing communication infrastructure. (Cangara, 2022, p. 43) Lam Rivai (2004) states in the book (Meldona C Siswanto, 2011) that several experts have argued from various perspectives that communication planning strategy is an effort to renew and unify communication efforts. Meanwhile, according to John Middleton, 1947, in the book (Cangara, 2022, p. 47), “communication planning strategy is a process of dividing communication capabilities to achieve organizational goals. These capabilities not only involve mass media and interpersonal communication but also activities aimed at improving individual and group behavior and achieving specialized skills in the tasks assigned by the organization.”

Philip Lesly himself created a communication planning model that describes two main components in the process of developing communication plans (Cangara, 2022, p. 74). The main components in Philip Lesly's communication planning model are as follows:

1. The organization is the party that carries out the activities
2. The public is the target audience of the organization

Each component is divided into several parts to support the communication planning process, such as organizations, which have four stages: analysis and research, policy formulation, feedback, and evaluation.

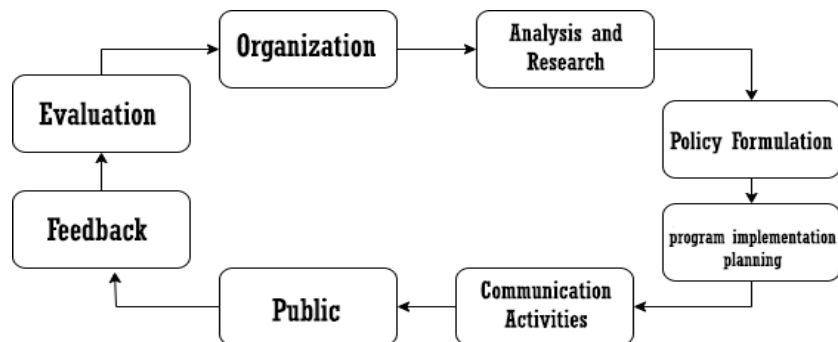


Figure 1. Communication Planning Strategy Model by Philip Lesly Source:

Communication Planning and Strategy Book (Cangara, 2022)

The organizations referred to are various entities that exist around us, such as government agencies, private companies, and social organizations. In this context, organizations and institutions require individuals to address communication issues within their activities, whether for branding, marketing, or other purposes. This organizational component serves as the driving force behind activities, comprising several stages that must be carried out by the organization. It consists of four main components: policy formulation analysis and research, program planning and implementation, and communication activities.

Analysis and research are the first steps in identifying the issues that will be faced. In the process of developing a communication plan, the organization that will carry out the activities will conduct analysis and research. Through these activities, it is hoped that the issues that the organization will face can be identified. After identifying the underlying causes of the issues, the next step is to identify the issues themselves. The organization will differentiate between one issue and another.

Policy formulation: At this stage, the organization will solve problems by creating communication strategies that have been previously analyzed and identified. Program planning is the stage where the organization must determine the supporting elements of the communication strategy that has been created previously. Communication activities are the final stage of the three stages outlined above. This involves creating and disseminating information through communication channels (groups, traditional media, new media, focus groups, the public)

Next, the public is the second component of the activity's target. There are two steps involved with the public, namely feedback and evaluation or adjustment. To obtain this feedback, the organization conducts research by distributing questionnaires, conducting interviews, or holding focus group discussions. This activity aims to gather ideas, complaints, and suggestions from the public. The results will be used as input for decision-making, improvements, enhancements, and adjustments to the programs implemented by the organization or implementing body. (Cangara, 2022, p. 75)

Previous research is useful in expanding the researcher's insight and knowledge in the research focus and theory previously used by several previous researchers. Therefore, the researcher compares the results of one study with another to serve as a reference or comparison in conducting this study. Previous studies related to the impact of BRT on the city of Makassar were conducted by Nurcahyadi (2017) in a study titled *The Impact of BRT on Public Interest in Meeting Travel Needs in the City of Makassar*.

The results identified three factors that influence public interest: safety, comfort, and travel fares, among the five variables tested in the correlation analysis. Two factors were found to have no significant influence: equality and

travel routes. A study conducted by (Agus et al., 2023) titled “Evaluation of Operational Performance and Fares of the Trans Cirebon Bus Corridor 1.” The results obtained from the evaluation of the Trans Cirebon Bus show that it has a bus capacity of 40 passengers, a headway of 15.25 minutes, a load factor of 8.16%, a waiting time of 15 minutes at the Dukuh Semar terminal, a 1-minute stop at the bus stop, a 10-second stop at the bus stop, a travel time of 60 minutes, and a travel speed of 22.02 km/h. In the study conducted on the Trans Cirebon Bus, 8 indicators were assessed, and 4 indicators were met. The Trans Cirebon Bus also received a score of 7 points according to the 2016 BRT Standard, so it cannot yet be classified as a Bus Rapid Transit system.

Further research was conducted by (Pratiwi et al., n.d.) entitled *Implementation of Philip Lesly's Planning Model by Basarnas Denpasar in Educating the Community on Disaster Response*. The results showed that the National Search and Rescue Agency (Basarnas) has a program to educate the Indonesian community by conducting training on search and rescue capabilities. The planning model used by Basarnas is the Philip Lesly planning model. This planning model has two main components: organization and public. The research conducted by (Dzakiyul et al., 2024) titled “Communication Planning by the Transportation Department of Surakarta City in Socializing the Batik Solo Trans Program.” The results show that POAC (planning, organizing, actuating, and controlling) is the communication strategy for the Batik Solo Trans program. Social activities are carried out during the planning stage, followed by organizing to assign roles and tasks. Then, actuating, where all plans are implemented as planned, followed by controlling to monitor and evaluate. Research conducted by (Permana, 2021), a student at Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University with a major in Communication Studies, titled *Communication Strategies for Tourism by the Banten Province Tourism Department in the Covid-19 Era*.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This study used descriptive qualitative research methods. Descriptive qualitative research involved collecting data in the form of written and spoken words, as well as images. The focus of this study was to analyze and collect data on the communication planning of the Transportation Agency for the Trans Cirebon service, as well as to identify problems in the research that had been formulated. The data collection techniques used in this study were interviews, observation, and documentation, which were conducted in the city of Cirebon. Data validation used triangulation techniques and field data analysis techniques using the Miles and Huberman (1984) model in the book (Sugiyono, 2013) for data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Informants included the Head of Transportation and Multimodal Division, PD Pembangunan Trans Cirebon Division, and Trans Cirebon users.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Communication Strategies to Attract Public Interest in Using Trans Cirebon Transportation Organization

Organizations are formed from a goal that they want to achieve. This goal cannot be achieved if individuals work alone; it is more effective to work together as a group. This is in line with Armasudiro's idea in Mustiqowati et al., p. (2021, p. 2), which states that an organization is like a system that manages the tasks and internal communication flow of a group. Within an organization, each individual has a role and responsibility to collaborate in order to achieve the established goals. In public transportation management, collaboration between institutions is a crucial aspect in creating an effective system.

The organizations that manage Trans Cirebon communication planning are the Cirebon City Transportation Agency, the Cirebon City Development Agency (PD), and PT BIG (Trans Cirebon). These three managers have their own roles and duties in managing Trans Cirebon. Then, in conducting this research, the researcher will analyze by applying Philip Lesly's planning model as follows:

### Analysis & Research

This stage aims to identify the root causes of problems in the plans made by the management. Based on the results of analysis and research, there are two root causes: operational subsidies and socialization. The first problem is subsidies, which occur due to a reduction in subsidy funds for Trans bus operations. This has resulted in operational limitations, with only three out of ten buses able to operate. This not only affects the operations of Trans Cirebon but also impacts work plans, such as public awareness campaigns, route expansions, and corridor developments.

The second issue is the socialization of Trans Cirebon, which is also affected by the reduction in subsidies. Here is an image of the Trans Cirebon website:



Figure 2. The Website of Trans Cirebon  
Source: <http://www.brtrtranscirebon.com/>

Activities that serve to provide information about Trans Cirebon, such as socialization, social media, and website management, are not yet adequate, resulting in the public receiving insufficient information about Trans Cirebon. Not only that, the absence of a communication team is also a cause of poor information dissemination.

### **Policy Formulation**

The next stage is policy formulation, which is the stage where the organization will solve problems by creating communication strategies that have been previously analyzed and identified. According to (Nurchayadi, 2017), the influence of BRT on the interest of the people of Makassar has five factors, namely security, safety, travel fares, service quality, and travel routes. Three factors that influence public interest in using BRT are safety, comfort, and travel fares (Hutagalung, 2023; Kusuma, 2021; Nugroho, 2017; Rizki, 2018).

The Cirebon Trans bus is equipped with various facilities that can be enjoyed by the public, such as CCTV, air conditioning, Wi-Fi, and punctuality. With three supporting factors, namely comfort, safety, and fare, Trans Cirebon has become one of the choices for mothers, fathers, and students who live in the upper part of the city where there is no public transportation. "Comfort, safety, and punctuality are the main guarantees of Trans Cirebon's services" (Results of Interviews with Trans Cirebon managers, 19 February 2025)

The management pays attention to providing adequate transportation for the people of Cirebon City. Its presence has been welcomed by the people of Cirebon City, as evidenced by customer testimonials who have enjoyed the various facilities available at Trans Cirebon (Dewi, 2020; Hidayat, 2021; Samsudin, 2019; Setiawan, 2022; Susanto, 2018). Customer testimonials themselves are the main factor in attracting customers, in the sense that customers who have ridden Trans Cirebon will share their testimonials with their relatives.

Here is a pamphlet for a competition organized by the management to attract public interest.



Figure 3. Trans Cirebon Competition Poster

Source: <https://www.instagram.com/p/Cf3jxTsJFcg/?igsh=MWVyYnJsa254MGg0Mg==>

In addition to passenger testimonials, the management also implements various strategies to attract passengers, including holding competitions open to both rural and urban communities, with terms and conditions determined by the management. Three winners are selected in each competition. Furthermore, every week, management personnel visit the field to engage with the community, build positive communication, and gather constructive feedback on Trans Cirebon services.

### Program Implementation Planning

At the program planning stage, there are several resources available, such as manpower, funds, and facilities that support the organization in its communication activities. In this case, the first resource is manpower, which means that the organizations involved in this communication planning consist of three organizations, namely the Cirebon City Transportation Agency as the policy regulator, the existence of routes, costs, and corridors as a result of requests from the people of Cirebon, and then a study was conducted as the first step in planning Trans Cirebon. PD Pembangunan, as the regional company authority appointed by the Mayor to manage Trans Cirebon, oversees the budget and operational control. Additionally, PT BIG serves as the operational frontline of Trans Cirebon, acting as a professional transportation company authority responsible for all operational aspects of Trans Cirebon, including preparing human resources such as drivers, bus attendants (PLB), and bus maintenance.

Furthermore, another indicator is the cost. Here, the researcher discusses the fares charged by Trans Cirebon for a 2-hour tour around Cirebon City, which costs only Rp. 5,000 for the general public and Rp. 3,500 for

students. According to the public, Trans Cirebon also guarantees comfort, safety, affordable fares, and is equipped with various supporting facilities such as air conditioning, CCTV, and Wi-Fi, making it an attractive option to draw public interest.

### Communication Activities

The final stage of the three components previously outlined involves creating and disseminating information through communication channels (groups, traditional media, new media, focus groups, and the public). In Cirebon itself, managers strive to conduct outreach activities at every event they participate in, explaining matters such as payment methods and route schedules. Outreach is not limited to events alone; managers also engage directly with the community by riding buses to interact with them firsthand. In implementing this approach, the management maintains ethical and respectful behavior toward the community. For example, when interacting with the elderly, they first show respect to create a sense of comfort, while with students and young adults, the management adopts a more relaxed approach. This approach has proven successful, as evidenced by the positive reception from some passengers, and the management has built friendships with customers. "I am sure it has an impact, because no work is wasted. Due to the large number of corridors that are passed through, it turns out that many people do not know about Trans Cirebon" (Interview with manager, February 19, 2025)

Not only that, the management also communicates with the origin and destination because, on average, people use Trans Cirebon for short trips, such as going to work, shopping centers, or simply touring the city of Cirebon. Origin refers to the starting point of the passengers, while destination refers to the final destination of the passengers. The following questionnaire serves as a communication tool to gather feedback from Trans Cirebon passengers.

The image shows a screenshot of a Google Form titled "SURVEY PELAYANAN OPERASIONAL BRT TRANS CIREBON". The form is displayed on a light purple background. At the top, the title is centered. Below the title, the sender's email "tugasacc22@gmail.com" is shown with a "Ganti akun" link. A note below the email says "Tidak dibagikan" (Not shared) with a lock icon. A red asterisk note indicates "\* Menunjukkan pertanyaan yang wajib diisi" (Indicates questions that must be answered). The form has a section titled "IDENTITAS DIRI" (Personal Information) with a purple header. Under this section, there is a text input field for "NAMA" (Name) with a red asterisk, and a label "Jawaban Anda" (Your answer) below it. Below the name field is a radio button selection for "Jenis Kelamin" (Gender) with a red asterisk. The options are "Laki - Laki" (Male) and "Perempuan" (Female).

Figure 4. Operational Service Survey Source

[https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeRJkU5O4ZrBJXvuMXtgxgCNvqoED18RtOcN1m2z26nWj4\\_4w/formResponse](https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSeRJkU5O4ZrBJXvuMXtgxgCNvqoED18RtOcN1m2z26nWj4_4w/formResponse)

In addition to outreach and promotion, Trans Cirebon disseminates

information through social media via Instagram @brttranscirebon. The public can also ask questions directly about service information such as bus stops, corridors, departure schedules, and Trans Cirebon fares via WhatsApp. Not only that, the management has prepared a customer satisfaction questionnaire for Trans Cirebon passengers to evaluate the management for the future.

### **Public**

The public tends to be a group that does not form a unity, where interactions occur indirectly. According to Soerjono Soekanto (Juariyah C Si, 2019), the public is a group that does not form a unity, where interactions between members arise indirectly through communication media. Therefore, public behavior is influenced by the attitudes of individuals in the group. The public can be defined as a group of individuals who share similar interests, needs, or tendencies. In Trans Cirebon, the residents of Cirebon City constitute the public, comprising various age groups, from teenagers to the elderly, with diverse educational backgrounds and occupations. To reach all these segments, messages will be tailored to their characteristics and needs so that they can be accepted by the community.

### **Feedback**

The public often obtains information about Trans Cirebon through word of mouth from friends and relatives, as well as through Instagram @brttranscirebon. From observations and interviews with passengers, they have never heard of or participated in any socialization activities organized by Trans Cirebon management, which has resulted in them lacking information and knowledge about the bus service. Passengers also feel that the facilities provided offer comfort, safety, and very affordable fares. Passengers believe that social media platforms like Instagram and TikTok should be utilized for disseminating information about Trans Cirebon, as this would help the public become more familiar with the Trans Cirebon service.

### **Evaluation**

Trans Cirebon management conducts evaluations through monthly meetings, where they gather opinions, criticism, and suggestions from the public regarding Trans Cirebon services. The public can provide criticism, suggestions, and opinions through questionnaires, Trans Cirebon WhatsApp, and by communicating directly with management, who conduct weekly surveys. Evaluations are conducted comprehensively, covering performance, operations, and activity agendas, in order to provide better services

## **CONCLUSION**

In this study, the researcher used Philip Lesly's communication planning model to analyze Trans Cirebon's communication design, looking at two main elements, namely Organization and Public. In the organization, there

are four stages: analysis and research, policy formulation, program design, and communication activities. The public stage consists of feedback and evaluation. The results of this study indicate that the communication planning carried out by Trans Cirebon's management is still inadequate, particularly in the stages of diagnosing information dissemination issues, formulating policies, and implementing communication activities. The socialization carried out by the management has resulted in minimal public interest due to a lack of information about Trans Cirebon services. This can be seen from the public's response, which still lacks information about Trans Cirebon services. The public hopes that the management will make better use of social media platforms like TikTok for information dissemination. Based on the research findings, a more comprehensive communication strategy is needed, including the formation of a dedicated communication team to manage the communication process—from analyzing issues to implementing communication activities—with a focus on selecting and utilizing social media platforms more effectively.

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