

# The Role of Image Maintenance and Image Creation Factors in Indonesia's Coal Industry by PT. Asiatic Universal Indonesia from the Perspective of Job Feasibility Analysis and the Impact of Economic Growth in East Kalimantan Province

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## ABSTRACT

This study is grounded in the global and national challenges faced by the coal industry, particularly the tension between its economic contribution and the increasing environmental and social pressures. In Indonesia, coal remains a key driver of economic growth and employment, especially in resource-rich regions such as East Kalimantan. However, the industry is often associated with negative perceptions related to environmental degradation, which threatens its social legitimacy. The purpose of this study is to analyze the role of image maintenance and image creation strategies implemented by PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia and to examine their impact on job feasibility and regional economic growth. This research employs a descriptive qualitative method, using in-depth interviews, document analysis, and limited observation to obtain comprehensive insights from various stakeholders, including company management, employees, local communities, and government representatives. The findings indicate that image maintenance strategies, such as regulatory compliance, CSR programs, and transparent communication, play a significant role in maintaining public trust and securing the social license to operate. Meanwhile, image creation strategies focusing on economic contributions, job creation, and technological innovation help reshape public perceptions of the coal industry. These strategies collectively contribute to improving job stability, enhancing workforce quality, and increasing employee satisfaction. In conclusion, image management in the coal industry is not merely a communication tool but a strategic mechanism that directly affects employment feasibility and regional economic growth. Effective integration of image maintenance and image creation can ensure business sustainability, strengthen stakeholder relationships, and support long-term economic development, particularly in coal-dependent regions like East Kalimantan.

**Keyword:** *The Role of Image Maintenance Factors; Image Creation in the Coal Industry Sector of East Kalimantan; Sustainable Development.*

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## INTRODUCTION

Actually, the average coal industry business actor already knows that it has long been the backbone of the Indonesian economy, contributing significant state revenue, creating millions of jobs, and meeting domestic energy needs (North, 1990). However, amid the onslaught of climate change and global pressure for the energy transition, the industry is facing tremendous pressure from a variety of quarters, including environmental activists, local communities, and investors. The public image of the coal industry is often tarnished by negative perceptions of deforestation, pollution, and land conflicts, which threaten its social legitimacy and operational sustainability (Freeman, 1984). In this context, image maintenance and image creation are an inseparable communication strategy for coal companies to ensure their survival and acceptance in society (Argenti, 2007).

PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia, as one of the key players in the national coal industry, operates in an area that is rich in natural resources but also vulnerable to environmental and social issues. The company's existence not only influences Indonesia's macroeconomic landscape, but also directly shapes the lives of thousands of individuals through job creation

and contribution to the local economy, particularly in East Kalimantan Province (Carroll, 1991). Therefore, how PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia manages its image—both by maintaining an existing positive image (image maintenance) and building a new desired image (image creation)—is crucial. It's not just about reputation, but also about social license to operate, the ability to attract and retain talent, and influencing government policies that support investment (Cheney et al., 2011).

This paper aims to analyze in depth the role of image maintenance and image creation strategies implemented by PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia (Dozier et al., 1995). We will explore how these strategies affect the public, government, and local communities' perceptions of companies. Furthermore, this study will examine the direct impact of this image management effort on the feasibility of work, namely, the availability, quality, and sustainability of the work offered by the company and its contribution to the economic growth of the East Kalimantan Province region. A comprehensive understanding of these dynamics is expected to provide valuable insights for communications practitioners, policymakers, and other companies in similar sectors to develop more effective and responsible communication strategies, in order to strike a balance between economic benefits and environmental and social sustainability.

Within that regional context, the present study is specifically important because the uploaded manuscript locates the case in PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia's coal operations in Muara Badak, Kutai Kartanegara, East Kalimantan, and links the company's image maintenance and image creation efforts to job feasibility and regional economic growth. This case is analytically valuable because Muara Badak is part of a coal-influenced district economy and therefore offers a concrete setting in which corporate communication, community perception, employment expectations, and development claims intersect. As framed in the manuscript, the company's reputation is tied not only to external stakeholder acceptance but also to the sustainability of work opportunities and the wider economic narrative built around mining activities.

Previous research accessible through Google Scholar and Scopus has established that CSR, stakeholder relations, and social license are crucial in extractive sectors. (Rela et al., 2020) found that CSR in an Indonesian mining setting significantly supported community resilience, suggesting that social programs may strengthen acceptance around mine sites. (Morsing & Schultz, 2006) showed that achieving a social license in Indonesia requires more than formal programs because implementation often faces practical and relational challenges. (Van Riel, 1995) further demonstrated, through an Indonesian nickel smelter case, that community perceptions of environmental follow-up programs matter for evaluating whether company commitments are seen as meaningful by affected communities. Together, these studies show that legitimacy in mining is socially negotiated and strongly influenced by how corporate actions are perceived on the ground.

More recent studies deepen this picture by showing that mining legitimacy must also be understood in relation to transition and post-mining realities. Sutrisno et al. (2023) developed an adaptive-capacity framework for Indonesian post-mining communities, while Sutrisno et al. (2024) found that community perceptions of CSR influence quality of life and readiness for

change during mine transition. Siahaan et al. (2025) likewise argue that post-mining sustainability in Indonesia depends on the interaction between institutional mechanisms and behavioral readiness. These findings are highly relevant, but they mostly emphasize transition preparedness, community adaptation, and post-mining sustainability; they do not yet explain in sufficient detail how ongoing image maintenance and image creation in an active coal company shape job feasibility and present-day regional economic legitimacy before closure occurs (Frynas & Yamahaki, 2016).

This is where the research gap becomes visible. Existing literature has generally examined CSR, social license, environmental compliance, or post-mining adaptation as separate themes, and many studies focus on broad mining sectors rather than a specific coal company operating in a strategically important district of East Kalimantan (Schultz et al., 2000). In addition, prior studies tend to emphasize either community outcomes or corporate sustainability narratives, while the linkage between image management, employment feasibility, and subnational economic growth remains underexplored (Frooman, 1999). The uploaded manuscript therefore opens an important space to analyze image maintenance and image creation not merely as communication techniques, but as mechanisms that mediate operational legitimacy, labor stability, and development claims in a coal-dependent region (Kotler & Lee, 2005).

The urgency of this research is reinforced by the fact that Indonesia's coal sector is still expanding economically even while global and domestic transition pressures intensify. The IEA indicates that coal demand has reached a plateau and may decline slightly by 2030, while Indonesian policy discourse is increasingly framed by ESG, downstreaming, and energy-transition concerns. For coal-producing regions, this means reputational risk is no longer abstract: firms that fail to maintain public trust may face weakened investor confidence, community resistance, or policy vulnerability even before demand structurally declines. Studying how a company manages its image in such a period is urgent because it helps explain how coal enterprises seek to preserve legitimacy in a narrowing window between current profitability and future transition uncertainty.

The novelty of this study lies in its integrative perspective. Rather than treating corporate image as a purely symbolic or public-relations variable, this research positions image maintenance and image creation as strategic processes with material implications for job security, stakeholder relations, and regional development performance. It is also novel because it focuses on a company-level coal case in Muara Badak, linking micro-level communication practices with meso-level labor outcomes and macro-level economic consequences in East Kalimantan. In other words, the study does not ask only whether the company is perceived positively, but how that perception is constructed, maintained, and converted into social legitimacy that supports employment continuity and economic contribution.

Based on that background, the purpose of this study is to analyze the role of image maintenance and image creation factors in PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia's coal business and to examine how those factors influence job feasibility and economic growth in East Kalimantan Province. The study is expected to contribute theoretically by extending stakeholder,

legitimacy, and corporate communication perspectives into the context of active coal operations in Indonesia; empirically by providing a grounded case from Muara Badak; and practically by offering insights for companies, policymakers, and local stakeholders on how communication, responsibility, and development claims can be aligned more credibly. Accordingly, the main objectives are to identify the company's image-maintenance and image-creation practices, assess their relationship with employment feasibility, and explain their contribution to regional economic growth. The expected benefits are a stronger academic basis for future mining communication studies, more evidence-informed corporate strategies, and a more balanced understanding of how coal firms can pursue economic relevance while responding to rising social and environmental expectations.

## **METHOD**

The implementation of this research is very easy to do because the compiler is also part of the company's leadership and the average data is available because most of the data has been done so that it is well milked using a *descriptive qualitative* approach to provide an in-depth and comprehensive picture of how PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia performs image maintenance and image creation and its impact on job feasibility and economic growth.

### **Research Design**

The descriptive qualitative approach was chosen because it aims to understand the phenomenon holistically from the perspective of the participants. This design allows researchers to dig into rich and detailed information about processes, perceptions, and experiences without having to quantitatively measure variables. Emphasis is placed on narrative descriptions and interpretation of findings. However, some of the interview data for the update was reconfirmed directly.

### **Research Subject**

The subject of the study will include: *Communication Management/CSR of PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia*: To understand the strategy, program, and goals behind the company's image maintenance and image creation efforts. *Employees of PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia (various levels)*: To gain an internal perspective on the company's culture, working conditions, and how they see the company's efforts in managing its image. *Local Community Representatives around the area of operations*: To understand the public's perception of the company, its operational impact, and the effectiveness of its CSR programs. *Local Government Officials (East Kalimantan Province)*: To gain views on the company's contribution to the regional economy, regulatory compliance, and support for development programs. *Environmental/Social Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) Representative*: To understand criticism and input from the perspective of an external monitor.

### **Data Collection Techniques**

**In-depth Interview Elements**: It is the main technique to dig up detailed and in-depth information from the research subject. Interviews will be semi-structured, allowing for the

flexibility to explore topics that come up during the conversation. The questions will focus on: The company's image maintenance and image creation strategy and program. Perception of the company's image in the eyes of the public and stakeholders. Experience related to employability (stability, salary, safety, career development). Views on the company's contribution to the regional and national economy. Issues and challenges faced in managing image and operations.

Then *Document Analysis*: Review the company's internal and external documents such as: Sustainability reports. The company's annual report. Public communication materials (press releases, websites, social media). CSR program and community partnership documents. Government publications or NGO reports related to coal companies/industries. News articles or mass media coverage about PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia.

In addition, *Participatory Observation (limited, if possible)*: Make a brief visit to the operational area or location of the CSR program (with the company's permission) to get a first-hand overview of the company's practices and its interactions with the community. This observation will complement the interview data.

### **Data Analysis**

The data collected from interviews and document analysis will be analyzed using *thematic analysis* methods. The steps include: *Transcription*: Converting the interview recording into written text. *Coding*: Identify recurring themes, concepts, and patterns in the data. This can be descriptive code (e.g., "environmental CSR program"), interpretive code (e.g., "difficulty building trust"), or analytical code (e.g., "the interconnection of image and social legitimacy"). *Categorization*: Groups similar codes into broader categories. *Identify Themes*: Develop the central themes that emerge from the categories, which will serve as the basis for discussion. *Interpretation*: Explain the meaning of the themes found, relate them to the literature review, and draw conclusions.

Thus, the author assesses that validity and reliability are very maintained through data triangulation, namely comparing information from various sources such as interviews, documents, and observations as well as conducting member checking, which is confirming interpretation with participants, if possible.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The discussion will integrate findings from descriptive qualitative research with theories from the literature review. This section will elaborate on how PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia implements image maintenance and image creation, as well as analyze its impact.

### **Production Overview**

In the research conducted by the author with a coal geology consultant, it was found that the high coal content in East Kalimantan is mainly concentrated in 3 (three) areas, namely the Barito Basin, the Kutai Basin, and, the Tarakan Basin based on the results of a study by *Alexander Horkel, Vienna, December 1999: On the Plate-Tectonic Setting of the Coal Deposits*

of Indonesia and the Philippines. Muara Badak District is included in the Kutai Basin (Kuitai basin).

This mining geological study states that the series of tertiary layers in East Kalimantan began with the Eocene-Oligocene transgression at the end of the continental plate at the location of the Sunda shelf, followed by the Oligocene - Miocene regression which can be compared with the orogenic phase and Mio-Pliocene transgression

**Table 1 Districts within the Kutai Kartanegara Regency**

Yes	Districts	East Longitude	Latitude	Area (km <sup>2</sup> )
1	São Paulo	117° 13' - 117° 36'	0°24'LS - 0°54'LS	2.104,8
2	Beard Flower	115° 46' - 116° 28'	0°27'L - 0°02'LU	7.764,5
3	Kenohan	115° 57' - 116° 33'	0°11'LU - 0°12'LS	1.923,9
4	Bangun City	116° 27' - 116° 46'	0°07'LS - 0°36'LS	1.798,8
5	Loa Janan	116° 49' - 117° 08'	0°34'LS - 0°45'LS	233,4
6	Permit Cost	116° 29' - 117° 03'	0°26'LS - 0°54'LS	1.045,7
7	Marang Kayu	117° 06' - 117° 30'	0°13'LS - 0°07'LS	1.165,7
8	Muara Badak	117° 07' - 117° 32'	0°11'LS - 0°31'LS	835,1
9	Javanese Estuary	116° 59' - 117° 24'	0°43'LS - 0°55'LS	754,5
10	Muara Kaman	116° 28' - 117° 09'	0°39'LU - 0°18'LS	1.302,2
11	Muara Muntai	116° 31' - 116° 35'	0°18'LS - 0°45'LS	1.045,7
12	Muara Wis	115° 58' - 116° 31'	0°00'LU - 0°29'LS	2.251,9
13	Samboja	116° 50' - 117° 14'	0°52'LS - 1°08'LS	1.015,9
14	Sanga-sanga	117° 01' - 117° 17'	0°35'LS - 0°45'LS	644,2
15	Sebulu	116° 41' - 117° 08'	0°02'LS - 0°34'LS	7.294,5
16	Help	115° 26' - 116° 18'	1°28'LU - 0°18'LU	5.114,7
17	Stuttgart	116° 47' - 117° 04'	0°21'LS - 0°34'LS	859,5
18	Tenggarong Seberang	116° 58' - 117° 08'	0°07'LS - 0°27'LS	437,0

Source: BPS Kutai Kartanegara Regency

### Transportation Infrastructure System

Kalimantan is a coal production hub, producing more than 90% of its coal from Indonesia (now the world's second-largest exporter). Kalimantan is endowed with rivers and coal mines located near the coast, allowing coal transportation to be carried out without intensive and costly infrastructure development. However, the facilities provided by nature are now inadequate along with the development of coal production in Kalimantan which has shot up rapidly from 2 million tons (1985) to 145 million tons (2005).

This is where Porter (1985): Michael E. Porter, in his work "Competitive Advantage: Creating and Sustaining Superior Performance," introduced the concept of value chains and the importance of corporate image in creating competitive advantage. Although Porter focuses more on economic advantage, its implications for the image are particularly relevant. A positive image (image maintenance) can attract investors, customers (in this case, coal buyers), and top talent. Effective image creation, for example, through the promotion of sustainable practices, can differentiate PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia from its competitors, allowing access to more selective markets or better financing. A strong reputation can reduce transaction costs and increase loyalty (Porter, 1985).

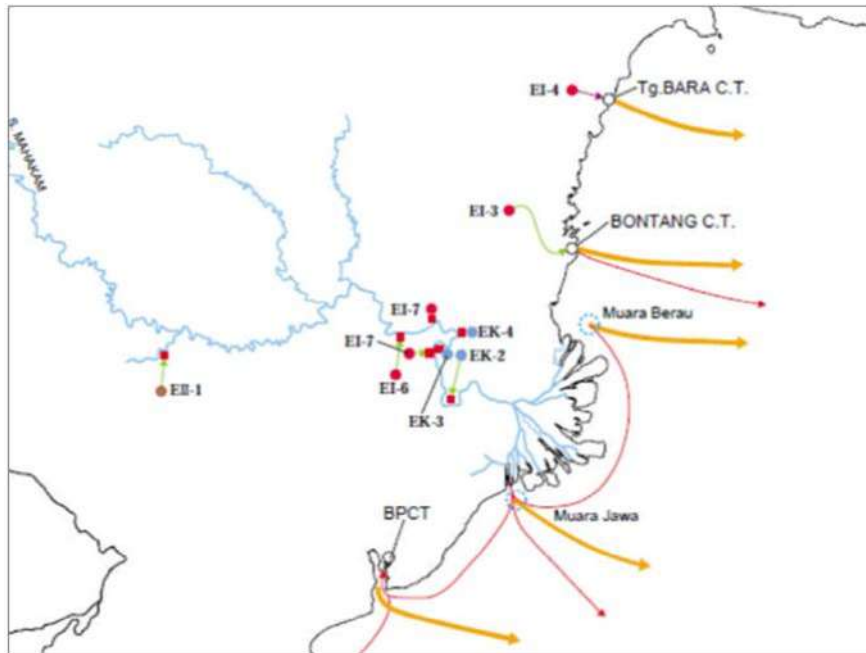


Figure 1 Coal Transportation System in East Kalimantan Region

Nature endowed Kalimantan with ease of transportation through the existence of long rivers and beaches where there are coal mines nearby. This is compared for example to the coal mines in South Sumatra which, despite their large reserves, cannot be "out" because they are limited by the availability of transportation infrastructure, especially railways. These rivers in Kalimantan are also the ones that used to be and still are the mainstay for passing timber taken from the forests of Kalimantan, in addition to being a place for the traffic of other commodities.

The pattern of coal transportation that developed in Kalimantan is from the mouth of the mine using trucks/conveyors to the loading port on the coast, from the mouth of the mine to the *stockpile* on the riverbank, then transported by barge and *tug* ship to the loading port on the riverside/coast/middle of the sea. From the port the coal is shipped to the export destination by ocean ships. There are also barges that transport coal from riverside ports/*stockpiles* directly to the domestic market. The frequency and volume of *transshipment* are either very high in this transport pattern, or inefficient.

The development of coal infrastructure in Kalimantan has been focused on export ports, which are mostly carried out by the private sector. In Kalimantan there are 13 coal ports/terminals, some of which have large *handling* capacity (Tanjung Bara, North/South Pulau Laut, Balikpapan) and some are river *terminals*. The *handling* capacity of coal ports in Kalimantan is now around 100 million/year.

Most of the coal ports in Kalimantan are made specifically to serve certain companies (*dedicated*), and only the *Balikpapan Coal Terminal* and *Indonesia Bulk Terminal* can be used for common *purposes*. According to economist *Stiglitz (2002)*: Joseph E. Stiglitz, Nobel laureate in economics, often discusses economic issues of development and the role of multinational corporations in the local economy (Stiglitz, 2002).

In many of his works, Stiglitz highlights how foreign and domestic investment can spur economic growth, but also pose social and environmental challenges. From his perspective, the successful image maintenance by coal companies such as PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia will largely depend on how they manage negative externalities (e.g., environmental impacts) and ensure a fair *distribution of benefits* to local communities. Image creation that focuses on concrete social and economic contributions, such as the creation of quality jobs and the development of local skills, will be key to gaining social acceptance and government support, ultimately affecting the employability and regional economic growth (Stiglitz, 2002).

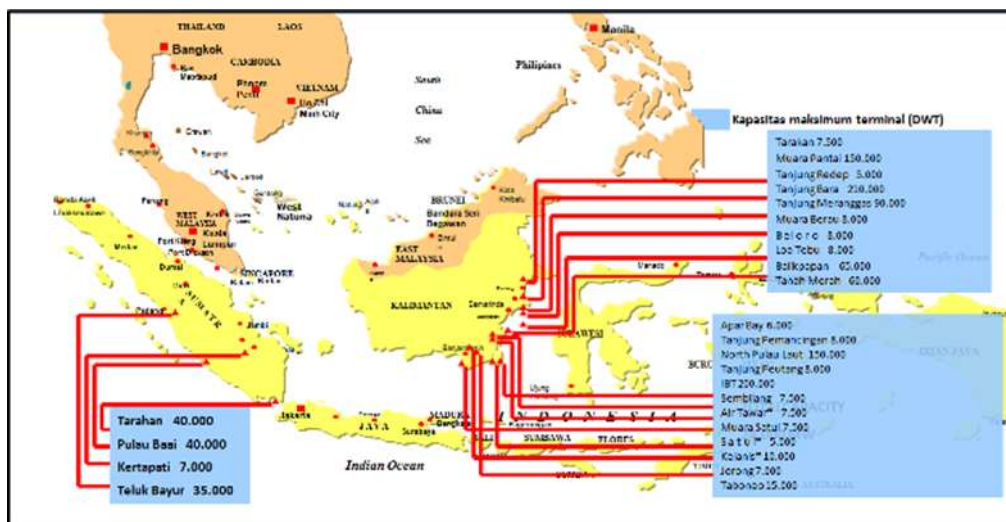


Figure 2 Map of coal port infrastructure in Indonesia

### Coal Business Prospects

Coal demand in the future seems to be increasing considerably. At least this can be proxied by the need for coal imports from several developed and developing countries.

The bright coal outlook is also likely to be supported by coal supply issues and strong demand growth from China and India. As for South Africa, the country may not face supply issues, but the country may face further downside risks. This is because the European coal market, South Africa's main buyer, is under a slight pressure due to the impact of the Greek crisis. Nevertheless, South Africa's exports will return to normal, as in general coal demand from South Africa coal remains supported by low freight rates and increased trade competitive position vis-à-vis the Asian market. Meanwhile, Australia's coal exports in the coming years are expected to increase further in line with Newcastle's full capacity operation. In addition, this increase in exports was also driven by increased production from the first phase of NCIG and the expansion of the Kooragang Island coal terminal. Meanwhile, in the coming years, Australia will also get additional supplies due to the commencement of operations at Moolarben (6.2mtpa in 2011) and Narrabri (5mt in 2013).

Indonesia's role itself has experienced quite spectacular growth in coal consumption in the last ten years. The sharp increase in the amount of consumption is due to a sharp increase in demand for coal as an energy source, especially for power plants, both domestically and in importing countries. It is not surprising that in line with that, the number of coal mining

companies in Indonesia has also grown rapidly, especially in recent years. Until 2014, for example, there were 251 coal mining companies in Indonesia. In line with the prospects for the coal business which is expected to improve above, Indonesia's coal exports are expected to continue to grow, albeit at a lower growth rate than in previous years.

Indonesia's coal exports in the future are likely to be dominated by quality or low-calorie coal, namely coal that has high humidity and low energy content. However, Indonesia will be faced with the problem of higher shipping costs. The dominance of low-quality coal is inseparable from China and India as Indonesia's main coal markets, which do need low-quality coal for their new power plants. Of course, this assumes that the construction of power plants in the two countries will not be disrupted. In the world coal trade arena, Indonesia will have an increasingly important role from year to year both as a producer and as an exporter. In 2013, Indonesia was in the seventh position as the world's largest coal producer with a contribution of 4.2% and in the second largest position as a coal exporter with a total export volume of 320 million Mt

### **Impact in General**

By looking at the data above, we can get an idea that the impact of all production, both from mining to transportation and mobilization of loading on large ships, is very large. So that the company must be agile in the form of a reliable management team of all elements. So below are two factors, namely external and internal to overcome it so that the reputation is maintained, especially environmental issues.

### **Strategi Image Maintenance**

According to the book "Effective Public Relations," Cutlip, Center, and Broom emphasize the importance of *reputation management* at the core of public relations practice (Broom, 2013). They argue that image maintenance involves continuous efforts to maintain positive perceptions through strategic communication, crisis response, and the fulfillment of social responsibility. Therefore, PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia performs image maintenance through several main channels:

1. *Regulatory Compliance and Environmental Standards*: The company consistently highlights its commitment to environmental government regulations (EIA, land reclamation, waste management). This is not only a legal obligation, but also an image maintenance strategy to show responsibility. However, questions often arise from NGOs regarding the effectiveness of implementation on the ground.
2. *Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Program*: CSR is the main pillar. Programs such as local education development, health services, village infrastructure, and community economic empowerment (e.g., sustainable agriculture) are actively communicated. The goal is to build good relationships with the community, reduce potential conflicts, and show that the company cares about local well-being. This is in line with Grunig's view of symmetrical two-way dialogue, where companies seek to meet the needs of the community (Grunig, 2006).

3. *Transparency and Crisis Response*: Companies strive to be transparent in reporting on production, tax, and CSR program data through annual and sustainability reports. In the case of an incident or criticism, a quick response and explanation becomes essential to prevent widespread negative perceptions. However, challenges remain in managing narratives on social media, which are often fast-moving.

### **Strategi Image Creation**

(Broom, 2013) *Coollip and broom state that* image creation is a proactive process to form new perceptions or change existing perceptions by highlighting previously unknown values, innovations, or contributions of a company. For companies like PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia, this means consistently communicating its commitment to responsible mining practices and its positive contribution to society and the country. So that image creation by PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia tends to focus on:

1. *National and Regional Economic Contributions*: Companies actively promote their role as significant taxpayers and royalties to the government, as well as national foreign exchange contributors from coal exports. This narrative aims to position the company as a vital entity for Indonesia's macroeconomy, in line with Stiglitz's view of the role of the company in economic development (Stiglitz, 2002).
2. *Job Creation and HR Development*: Emphasis is placed on the number of jobs created (direct and indirect) as well as skill development programs for local employees. This includes technical and leadership training. This is in response to public concerns about the direct economic benefits of mining operations.
3. *Use of Technology and Innovation*: Companies often highlight investments in more efficient and environmentally friendly mining technologies (e.g., more energy-efficient machines, advanced wastewater management systems) to create an image as a modern and responsible entity. This is an attempt to change the image of the coal industry which is often considered "dirty" and obsolete.

### **Employment Feasibility Impact**

According to *Grunig & Hunt (1984)*: In "*Managing Public Relations*," introduce relevant public relations models, especially symmetrical two-way models. This model underscores the importance of dialogue and mutual understanding between organizations and their public (Grunig & Hunt, 1984). For effective image maintenance, companies must actively listen to public concerns, respond transparently to them, and adjust their practices where necessary. In the context of image creation, this dialogue helps companies understand the narrative that needs to be built to align with public values and expectations, so that the image is built to be authentic and accepted.

So that PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia's image maintenance and image creation efforts have a significant impact on the feasibility of the work: *Job Stability*: A positive image of the company, especially in the eyes of the government and investors, as well as relationships with the social community that can ensure operational stability. This stability directly correlates with job security for thousands of employees. When a company has a strong social license to

operate, the risk of operational disruption due to social or regulatory conflicts is reduced, making jobs more secure.

*Quality of Work:* Through CSR and HR development programs, companies seek to upskill local employees, which in turn improves the quality of their work and career potential. A good company image also helps attract top talent, which contributes to a more professional work environment. *Employee Perception:* Employees tend to be more proud to work in companies that have a positive image and are considered responsible. This can improve employee morale, productivity, and retention, in line with Porter's idea that a good image attracts talent.

### **Influence of Economic Growth**

Meanwhile, according to expert *Cornelissen (2017)*: In "*Corporate Communication: A Guide to Theory and Practice*," Joep Cornelissen comprehensively discusses how corporate communication shapes and manages identity, image, and reputation. He highlighted that image maintenance and image creation are integral parts of the broader corporate communication strategy (Cornelissen, 2017).

So that the impact of image maintenance and image creation is not only limited to the feasibility of the job but also extends to a larger economic scale: *Increased Investment and Investor Confidence:* A solid and responsible corporate image can attract further investment, both from within and outside the country. Investors tend to choose companies with low reputational risk. This is in line with North's view that institutions and good reputations reduce transaction costs. *Regional and National Revenue Contributions: Taxes, royalties, and dividends* paid by PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia are a vital source of revenue for state and regional coffers, especially East Kalimantan Province. Successful image maintenance ensures the smooth operation of the company, which means that this revenue contribution continues to flow. *Development of Infrastructure and Business Environment:* The company's presence and activities often trigger the construction of supporting infrastructure (roads, electricity, public facilities) around the operating area. In addition, the positive image of the company can attract other supporting businesses, creating a multiplier effect in the local economy. This is in line with Stiglitz's view of the company's role in regional development (Stiglitz, 2002). *Conflict Mitigation and Social Stability:* With effective image maintenance, especially through community dialogue and CSR programs, the risk of social conflict with local communities can be minimized. This social stability is crucial for a healthy investment environment and sustainable economic growth.

Overall, the theory and conditions in this discussion show that PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia's efforts in image maintenance and image creation are strategic investments that provide multidimensional benefits. Success in building and maintaining a positive image not only underpins the company's operations, but also contributes directly to job worthiness and regional and national economic growth. However, the challenge of continuously adapting to changing public expectations and global environmental issues remains an ongoing homework for companies.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on a descriptive qualitative analysis of the image maintenance and image creation strategy implemented by PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia, it can be concluded that these two factors play a fundamental role in ensuring the sustainability of the company's operations, supporting the feasibility of work, and making a significant contribution to the economic growth of East Kalimantan Province and Indonesia as a whole.

PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia is actively involved in image maintenance through compliance with environmental regulations, the implementation of sustainable CSR programs, and transparency and responsiveness efforts in communication. This aims to maintain a social license to operate and reduce negative perceptions. Meanwhile, image creation focuses on highlighting the company's economic contributions (taxes, royalties, exports), job creation, local human resource development, and investment in environmentally friendly technology.

The impact of this image management effort is strongly felt in the feasibility of the job. The company's positive image guarantees operational stability, which directly translates into the safety and sustainability of work for thousands of employees. In addition, through CSR and HR development programs, the company improves the quality of employees' skills, enhancing their competitiveness in the job market. For regional and national economic growth, the company's contribution through taxes and royalties is an important pillar. A good image also attracts investment, encourages infrastructure development, and creates an economic multiplier effect around the operating area, while reducing the risk of social conflicts that can stifle growth.

Although PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia has shown commitment in managing its image, challenges remain in dealing with the dynamics of global environmental issues and the increasingly high public expectations of the coal industry. Long-term success will depend heavily on the company's ability to continue adapting, innovating, and consistently demonstrating a real commitment to responsible and sustainable business practices, aligned with what is communicated.

This research confirms that in a sensitive industry such as coal, image management is no longer just a complement, but the core of a sustainable business strategy. For PT Asiatic Universal Indonesia, investment in image maintenance and image creation is a prerequisite for maintaining social legitimacy, attracting and retaining talent, and ensuring a stable and sustainable economic contribution to East Kalimantan and Indonesia. Going forward, the company's ability to build authentic and positively impactful narratives, while effectively addressing criticism and adapting to the demands of the energy transition, will be a key determinant of its long-term success.

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