

SCENARIO PLANNING FOR THE INDONESIAN PR INDUSTRY: ENSURING INKE MARIS & ASSOCIATES' STRATEGIC GROWTH

Armand Erlangga Maris¹

¹Institut Teknologi Bandung, aemaris@gmail.com

ABSTRAK

Industri hubungan masyarakat (PR) di Indonesia mengalami transformasi pesat akibat disrupsi digital, perubahan perilaku audiens, serta meningkatnya adopsi kecerdasan buatan (AI) dalam praktik komunikasi. Dinamika ini menciptakan ketidakpastian yang dapat memengaruhi arah strategis dan daya saing jangka panjang perusahaan PR. Inke Maris & Associates (IM&A), sebagai salah satu konsultan PR terkemuka di Indonesia, perlu secara proaktif mengantisipasi perkembangan masa depan untuk mempertahankan relevansi di tengah lingkungan yang kompetitif dan tidak pasti. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif-kualitatif dengan metode perencanaan skenario untuk mengeksplorasi kemungkinan masa depan industri PR Indonesia. Data dikumpulkan melalui wawancara mendalam, observasi, kuesioner, serta diperkaya dengan data sekunder dari laporan industri dan regulasi nasional. Melalui proses analisis yang sistematis, penelitian ini mengidentifikasi dua ketidakpastian utama: (1) tingkat integrasi AI dalam layanan PR dan (2) laju perubahan permintaan klien. Berdasarkan kedua poros ini, dikembangkan empat skenario masa depan: Evolusi Bertahap, Digitalisasi Selektif, Disrupsi Terkelola, dan Transformasi Radikal. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa IM&A perlu meningkatkan kapabilitas digital dan berbasis data, berinvestasi dalam pengembangan talenta yang lincah, serta membangun kapasitas foresight strategis. Strategi yang direkomendasikan meliputi diversifikasi layanan di luar PR tradisional, penguatan perencanaan berbasis skenario, dan pembentukan jaringan kolaboratif dengan mitra teknologi dan riset. Studi ini memberikan kontribusi dalam penerapan perencanaan skenario di sektor komunikasi Indonesia dan menyediakan kerangka kerja untuk formulasi strategi adaptif di tengah ketidakpastian.

Kata Kunci : Perencanaan Skenario, Public Relations, Foresight Strategis, Kecerdasan Buatan, Inke Maris & Associates

ABSTRACT

Indonesia's public relations (PR) industry is undergoing a rapid transformation due to digital disruption, changing audience behaviors, and the increasing use of artificial intelligence (AI) in communication. These dynamics create uncertainties that could affect the strategic direction and long-term competitiveness of PR firms. As one of the country's leading PR consultancies, Inke Maris & Associates (IM&A) must proactively anticipate future developments to maintain its relevance in a volatile and competitive environment. This study uses a qualitative descriptive approach with scenario planning to explore possible futures for the Indonesian PR industry. Data were collected through in-depth interviews, observation, questionnaire, were further enriched by secondary data from industry reports and regulatory frameworks. Through rigorous analysis, the study identified two critical uncertainties that will shape the future: (1) the extent to which AI will be integrated into PR services, and (2) the rate at which client demands will change. Based on these axes, four distinct future scenarios were developed: Gradual Evolution, Selective Digitalization, Managed Disruption, and Radical Transformation. The findings suggest that

IM&A must enhance its digital and data-driven capabilities, invest in agile talent development, and build strategic foresight capacity. Recommended strategies include diversifying services beyond traditional PR, strengthening scenario-based planning, and forming collaborative networks with technology and research partners. This study contributes to the application of scenario planning in the Indonesian communications sector and provides a framework for formulating adaptive strategies in times of uncertainty.

Keywords: Scenario Planning, Public Relations, Strategic Foresight, Artificial Intelligence, Inke Maris & Associates

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INTRODUCTION

The evolution of communication technologies has significantly reshaped public relations (PR) practices worldwide. PR, once centered on traditional media and one-way messaging, now functions as a strategic process for building mutual relationships between organizations and stakeholders through both symbolic and behavioral approaches (Sakinah & Anisa, 2023). The symbolic perspective emphasizes influencing public perceptions after organizational decisions, while the behavioral perspective integrates PR into strategic decision-making to promote collaborative engagement with stakeholders. This shift reflects the growing demand for PR to serve not only as a promotional tool but also as an instrument for organizational credibility and trust-building.

Figure 1. Inke Maris & Association Services



Source: Inke Maris & Association Official Website (2024)

In the Indonesian context, the increasing penetration of the internet and social media has amplified the reach and immediacy of PR activities. As of 2024, nearly 139 million Indonesians, representing 49.9% of the population, actively use social media, creating both opportunities and pressures for organizations (Social, 2024). Digital platforms

enable brands to engage directly with audiences, bypassing traditional media gatekeepers, and allowing real-time, two-way communication (Laksmana, 2014). However, this dynamic environment also heightens reputational risks, as negative information can spread rapidly and uncontrollably, demanding stronger crisis communication strategies.

Technological innovations, particularly big data analytics and artificial intelligence (AI), have further transformed the PR landscape. These tools facilitate content personalization, real-time sentiment monitoring, and precise performance evaluation, enabling more targeted and efficient communication (Haryono, 2023). While offering strategic advantages, the integration of AI into PR also necessitates investment in digital infrastructure and the development of advanced analytical capabilities within organizations. The challenge lies in balancing automation with the human-centric aspects of PR, such as empathy, cultural sensitivity, and ethical considerations. The competitive environment in PR is also evolving, with non-traditional actors such as digital marketing agencies, influencers, and user-generated content creators entering the space. This diversification compels PR firms to differentiate themselves through innovative, technology-driven, and customized solutions (Pathak et al., 2023). In addition, the blurring boundaries between marketing and PR require practitioners to manage broader societal and political issues alongside commercial objectives (Tam et al., 2020). These changes underline the need for PR organizations to adopt proactive, adaptive strategies capable of

responding to rapid shifts in media consumption, regulatory frameworks, and audience expectations.

Inke Maris & Associates (IM&A), a leading independent PR consultancy in Indonesia, is navigating these multifaceted challenges. To remain competitive, IM&A is adopting scenario planning as a strategic framework to anticipate future industry developments and technological disruptions. This method allows the firm to explore multiple potential futures, identify emerging opportunities, and mitigate risks effectively (Suhariyono et al., 2021). By leveraging scenario planning, IM&A aims to strengthen its strategic foresight, enhance its adaptability, and maintain its position as a trusted partner for clients in an increasingly complex and digitalized PR environment.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organizational Strategy

The concept of strategy originates from the Greek words *stratos* (army) and *gein* (to lead), later evolving into *strategos*, referring to high-ranking military leaders. Historically, it denoted the art of leading an army to victory, but over time, the term expanded to encompass long-term planning and resource allocation within organizational contexts. In strategic management literature, corporate strategy is defined as the overarching approach that determines an organization's long-term direction, the industries it chooses to operate in, and the value it seeks to create (Coulter in Untoro, 2011; Collis & Montgomery in Untoro, 2011).

This strategy serves as a blueprint for aligning business activities, ensuring adaptability to environmental changes, and coordinating resources to achieve defined objectives. Corporate strategy operates on two levels: the corporate-level strategy and the business-level strategy (Wijaya, Rianawati, & Izharuddin, 2023). At the corporate level, decisions concern portfolio composition, geographic presence, and overall organizational culture. For example, Apple's decision to diversify into the music industry through the iPod and iTunes reflected a corporate-level choice that required organizational restructuring and cultural shifts.

Conversely, business-level strategy focuses on how a firm competes within specific markets, leveraging resources to create value and secure a competitive edge. This includes aligning internal capabilities with external opportunities, engaging with suppliers and customers, and responding to competitive pressures.

Scenario Planning

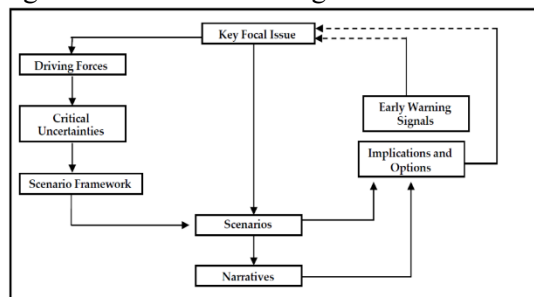
Scenario planning is a strategy used to strengthen and refine current decision-making, with a focus on its significant impact in the future. This strategy can also be defined as part of strategic planning that, in terms of methodology, allows organizations to predict various possible futures and manage challenges that may arise in order to achieve competitive advantage (Harbet & Sembiring, 2020).

The following are the key steps in the scenario planning framework, which are designed to provide systematic guidance in creating a resilient and adaptive strategy, including (Syukriadi & Sunitiyoso, 2021): identifying a key focal issue, a strategic concern that is both time-sensitive and high-impact for the organization. This is followed by analyzing driving forces, which encompass political, economic, social, technological, environmental, and cultural factors shaping the future landscape. Within these forces lie critical uncertainties, high-impact variables whose outcomes are unpredictable but will significantly influence the focal issue. By mapping these uncertainties onto a scenario framework, often using a 2×2 matrix, strategists generate multiple distinct futures, each representing a unique set of conditions and challenges.

Each scenario is then developed into a narrative, a coherent and contextually rich storyline that describes how the future might unfold. Narratives help stakeholders understand the implications of each scenario, fostering alignment and strategic readiness. This is followed by an implications analysis, which evaluates the potential consequences, both risks and opportunities, of each future pathway. Organizations also define early

warning signals, specific indicators that help detect which scenario is emerging, allowing for proactive adjustments to strategy (Satriawan, 2014). The scenario planning framework is illustrated in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Scenario Planning Framework



Lindgren and Hans (2003, in Harbet & Sembiring, 2020) propose a five-step model to operationalize scenario planning: tracking, which involves monitoring trends and identifying early signs of change; analysing, which interprets the significance of these trends using frameworks such as PEST; imaging, which creatively envisions possible futures; deciding, which prioritizes scenarios and selects strategic responses; and acting, which implements chosen strategies while maintaining adaptability through continuous learning and feedback. This cyclical process ensures that scenario planning is not a static exercise but an ongoing strategic capability. Figure 3 below illustrates the scenario planning according to Lindgren and Hans.

Figure 3. Scenario Planning Lindgren and Hans



This approach helps organizations integrate scenarios in every stage of strategic planning, from analysis to implementation. By following these steps, companies are not only able to anticipate various future possibilities, but also build a resilient and adaptive strategy to deal

with uncertainty in a systematic and structured way.

Public Relations

Public Relations (PR) is a communication activity carried out by the company as an effort to convey information to stakeholders. In Communication Sciences, PR is seen as a communication method that has distinctive characteristics, such as two-way communication that takes place in a reciprocal manner, information dissemination, persuasion, and the study of public opinion. Its objectives include achieving organizational goals and building harmonious relationships with the internal and external public. As a method of communication, PR has an important role in maintaining the image and reputation of the company through goodwill and responsible actions towards the public interest (Filayly & Ruliana, 2022).

According to Ruslan, the purpose of public relations includes developing a positive image of the company in the eyes of the external public, including consumers, and encouraging the achievement of understanding between the public and the company. In addition, public relations aims to update the synergy between marketing and public relations functions, introduce brands more broadly, build brand image effectively, and support marketing mix strategies (Suryanto, 2015). The main goal of public relations is to influence the general public through the delivery of messages that are not coercive. The message must be able to provide encouragement to individuals, thereby creating personal awareness among the public. In the event of unexpected events, it is important for the general public to understand that communication carried out by public relations comes from their own actions. This aims to avoid potential misunderstandings between the general public and public relations (Puspita, 2020).

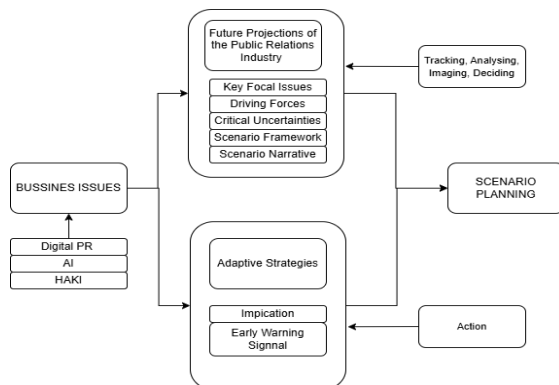
RESEARCH METHOD

Research Design

This framework is prepared based on the theories used in this study. The theories that are compiled are referred to as concepts, which

explain the relationship between the background and the research objectives to be achieved. The conceptual framework can be seen in the following figure 4

Figure 4. Conceptual Framework



Data Sources and Collection Techniques

The data collection in this qualitative research aims to understand the challenges faced by public relations in the future, as well as describe scenario planning as a strategic step to optimize the organization's ability at Inke Maris & Associates to face the ever-evolving industry transformation.

- a. Primary data is obtained directly from the company through in-depth interviews, questionnaire, and observations of ongoing public relations activities, thus providing a real picture of the organization's condition and its response to environmental changes.
- b. secondary data is collected from various sources such as academic journals, previous research books, and online references.

The data collection process involved multiple techniques:

- a. In-depth interviews with IM&A actors and key external stakeholders, including individuals involved in program implementation, policy advisory, and IM&A advocacy. The interviews were transcribed for thematic analysis.
- b. Documentation review, involving the systematic examination of internal records (such as IM&A's annual reports and marketing materials) and external references (such as statistical data from

BPS, relevant laws, and scholarly articles) to supplement and verify the findings.

This multi-method approach provided a holistic view of the issue, combining subjective experiences with objective data to draw well-informed conclusions.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was carried out in a qualitative descriptive manner with an inductive approach. The analysis stage starts from data collection which is then organized based on the main themes, such as public relations challenges, industrial transformation, and scenario planning. Data from interviews are analyzed through to identify patterns, themes, and relationships between concepts. The questionnaire responses were compiled into a Microsoft Excel spreadsheet and analyzed descriptively to support the scenario narrative development process. The observation results were categorized to provide operational context in public relations practice, while documentation and secondary data were compared to find gaps and strategic opportunities. This approach allows researchers to describe in detail existing conditions, identify potential threats and opportunities, and develop scenario recommendations to help Inke Maris & Associates improve its future adaptability.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents a comprehensive analysis of the future landscape of the Public Relations (PR) industry in Indonesia, alongside a detailed examination of adaptive strategies crucial for Inke Maris & Associates (IM&A) to maintain its competitive edge. The research primarily addresses the pivotal question of how IM&A can ensure its sustained relevance and strategic growth amidst the profound transformation of the PR sector, driven by an increasingly digitized and data-centric environment.

The core of this transformation is rooted in evolving digital public behaviors, the convergence of diverse media platforms, and the accelerating adoption of disruptive technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI) and Big Data analytics. The urgency of

this adaptation is underscored by empirical findings. A significant 90.9% of respondents, including IM&A stakeholders, PR practitioners, media, associations, and academia, strongly agreed (scoring 5 on the Likert scale) on the critical importance of digital and analytics competencies for PR consultants. This overwhelming consensus indicates that mastery of technology is no longer merely an advantage but an indispensable requirement for the long-term viability of the PR profession. The implication is clear: digital disruption is not a transient trend but a structural change, and organizational failure to respond will inevitably lead to substantial competency gaps across the industry.

Supporting this, an interview with a respondent, SN, revealed a direct perspective on the challenges: “Media sosial dan AI akan sangat dominan menjadi tantangan. Industri PR harus bisa mengoptimalkan kedua hal tersebut.” This statement highlights the perceived dominance of social media and AI as key challenges that the PR industry must actively optimize.

The dynamic nature of the PR industry is further shaped by a complex interplay of external forces, analyzed through the PESTEL framework:

- a. Political factors encompass government policies on personal data regulation and the ethical use of AI in public communications. General political stability also significantly influences agency operations and client advisory, particularly for Public Affairs services, a key area of IM&A's expertise. The continuous demand from clients to navigate intricate policy domains will sustain the need for government relations services.
- b. Economic conditions, both domestic and global, directly impact client communication budgets. However, the burgeoning digital economy simultaneously unlocks new opportunities in high-growth sectors such as fintech, e-commerce, and

healthtech, all of which require specialized PR support. IM&A's established proficiency in financial communications, including IPOs and M&A, remains highly relevant within Indonesia's dynamic investment climate. Economic fluctuations may also heighten the demand for crisis and issues management services.

- c. Social dynamics are characterized by shifting demographics, evolving social values, and profound changes in media consumption patterns. The pervasive use of social media and digital platforms fundamentally alters how audiences consume information and interact with brands and organizations. As previously noted, the sentiment from practitioners emphasizes the critical role of these digital shifts.
- d. Technological advancements, particularly in AI, Big Data analytics, and automation, are rapidly reshaping PR practices. These technologies enable capabilities such as real-time sentiment analysis, predictive analytics, and streamlined operational workflows, significantly enhancing efficiency and insight generation. The fusion of advanced technology with human strategic counsel is becoming increasingly crucial.
- e. Environmental concerns, driven by a growing global awareness of sustainability and climate change, necessitate that PR agencies integrate these issues into their communication strategies, reflecting a broader corporate social responsibility.
- f. Legal frameworks are continuously evolving, particularly concerning data privacy, intellectual property, and digital content regulation. Compliance with these regulations and adherence to ethical considerations are paramount for PR practices.

Within this complex environment, two critical uncertainties emerge as primary shapers of the future PR industry. The first is the extent of AI

integration into PR services, ranging from minimal, supplementary use to comprehensive, transformative integration. This spectrum directly impacts operational efficiency, the depth of insights generated, and the fundamental nature of PR tasks. The second critical uncertainty is the rate of change in client demands, which can vary from slow, incremental shifts to rapid, disruptive transformations in client expectations regarding PR services and their measurable outcomes.

These two critical uncertainties form the axes for four distinct future scenarios, each presenting unique challenges and opportunities for IM&A:

a. Gradual Evolution

This scenario is characterized by slow AI integration and a gradual pace of change in client demands. Traditional PR methods largely persist, with digital tools being adopted incrementally. IM&A would need to gradually enhance its digital capabilities while maintaining its core strengths in conventional media relations and stakeholder engagement.

b. Selective Digitalization

AI integration remains slow, but client demands change rapidly. This scenario compels PR agencies to selectively adopt digital tools and strategies to meet evolving client needs, prioritizing human-centric approaches where they offer distinct value. IM&A would focus on targeted digital investments that directly address immediate client requirements.

c. Managed Disruption

This scenario involves rapid AI integration but a slower evolution of client demands. PR firms extensively leverage AI for enhanced efficiency and advanced analytics, but must carefully manage the pace of technological adoption to align with

client expectations. IM&A would be at the forefront of AI adoption, using it to optimize internal processes and offer data-driven insights, while educating clients on the benefits of these advancements.

d. Radical Transformation

This is the most dynamic scenario, marked by both rapid AI integration and rapid changes in client demands. The PR industry undergoes a fundamental restructuring, with AI-driven solutions and highly dynamic client expectations necessitating continuous innovation and profound organizational adaptation. IM&A would need to be exceptionally agile, constantly re-evaluating its service offerings and internal capabilities to remain competitive.

To effectively navigate these potential futures, IM&A must implement robust adaptive strategies. This includes a significant focus on enhancing its digital and data-driven capabilities, investing strategically in agile talent development, and cultivating a strong capacity for strategic foresight. Specific strategic imperatives involve diversifying services beyond conventional PR offerings, fortifying scenario-based planning methodologies, and actively forging collaborative networks with technology and research partners. The adaptive strategy should prioritize the development of dynamic capabilities for strategy implementation, leveraging AI and Big Data for more precise performance measurement and proactively investing in relevant technologies. Furthermore, continuous monitoring of early warning signals is crucial. These signals include the increasing demand for measurable and data-driven PR performance from clients and the overall level of industry investment in AI and Big Data technology, which will enable timely adjustments to IM&A's strategic direction. (Aalin et al., 2025)

CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

This study concludes that the Indonesian Public Relations (PR) industry is undergoing a rapid and profound transformation, driven by digital technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), and evolving client expectations. For Inke Maris & Associates (IM&A), a leading PR consultancy, this presents both significant opportunities and challenges. The research identified two critical uncertainties shaping the future: the speed and sophistication of AI adoption in PR services, and the evolving nature of client demands towards digital and data-driven solutions. Based on these, four future scenarios were developed: Gradual Evolution, Selective Digitalization, Managed Disruption, and Radical Transformation. IM&A is currently positioned between the "Selective Digitalization" and "Managed Disruption" quadrants, indicating ongoing digital transformation but still progressing on full AI integration, with varied client demands across sectors. While IM&A benefits from its long-standing reputation, experienced talent, and strong networks, these strengths must be complemented by enhanced digital capabilities, new talent profiles, and proactive technology adoption to maintain strategic relevance.

Stakeholder insights consistently affirm that PR will remain indispensable, provided agencies evolve into strategic communication partners grounded in digital intelligence and ethical transparency. For IM&A, future competitiveness hinges on balancing its "high-touch" advisory strengths with "high-tech" tools for monitoring, analysis, and engagement. As one media sector respondent articulated, "PR professionals in the future must have editorial skills, how to write an interesting yet accurate narrative. Most importantly, they must be adaptive." This underscores the need for a new skill set that includes data literacy, understanding digital media algorithms, and sensitivity to social dynamics.

To navigate these dynamics, IM&A must accelerate its digital transformation, extending it to strategic decision-making through investments in AI-based media monitoring and sentiment analytics. Human resource

development is crucial, focusing on equipping professionals with digital and data literacy. Service portfolios need redesigning to include areas like ESG communications and data-driven public advocacy, aligning with increasingly digital-native and results-oriented clients. Furthermore, maintaining credibility and relevance demands prioritizing communication ethics and public participation, as highlighted by a corporate sector informant: "PR must be honest, transparent, and have empathy. If it is consistent, the public will continue to trust." This research also provides a foundational framework for future studies on AI integration, comparative digital strategies, and ethical AI use in public communication within the Indonesian context.

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