

STRATEGIC PERSUASION: SECURING COMMUNITY SUPPORT FOR INTERNET INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT

By

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Article History:

Received: 25-08-2024 Revised: 02-09-2024 Accepted: 22-09-2024

Keywords:

Community, Infrastructure Development, Internet Service Provider, Persuasive Communication, PT Linknet Tbk **Abstract:** The development of internet infrastructure is crucial for fostering economic and social progress in the digital age. However, obtaining approval from local communities for such projects can be challenging due to concerns about environmental impact and disruptions. This study analyzes the persuasive communication strategies employed by PT Linknet Tbk (First Media), an Internet Service Provider (ISP), to secure permits for infrastructure development. Using a qualitative case study approach, the research explores how different persuasive techniques were applied to engage communities and reduce resistance. Key strategies include the association technique, where the project is linked to long-term community benefits such as enhanced internet access; the integration technique, involving community participation and addressing concerns; the reward/pay-off technique, offering incentives; and the red herring technique, shifting focus from temporary disruptions to long-term gains. The findings show that these strategies effectively increased community support, streamlined the permit process, and minimized potential The study concludes that persuasive conflicts. communication is vital in building positive community relations and ensuring the successful implementation of infrastructure projects, particularly in regions where community approval is essential.

INTRODUCTION

The advancement of information technology, particularly the internet, has become an integral part of modern society. Internet access not only facilitates communication and information exchange but also serves as a key determinant in the development of the digital economy (Jakubelskas 2021). In Indonesia, the dissemination of internet infrastructure is crucial, especially for Internet Service Providers (ISPs) to support internet services accessible to all societal layers. However, internet infrastructure development in certain regions often encounters challenges, particularly in obtaining consent from local communities who may feel disrupted by the presence of such infrastructure (Strover,



Chapman, and Waters 2004). This study focuses on analysing the persuasive communication techniques applied by PT Linknet Tbk in obtaining community consent for building internet infrastructure. In this context, persuasive communication is a critical key to minimizing conflicts (Adăscăliței 2022) and enhancing community support for the development project.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Persuasive communication is a key element in corporate communication strategies (Ganiem and Kurnia 2019), particularly in infrastructure development that requires community consent. Previous studies have highlighted the importance of persuasive communication in bridging the gap between companies and local communities.

Burgon & Huffner (2002) describe persuasive communication as an effort to influence attitudes and opinions in alignment with the communicator's goals, with a non-coercive approach. Effective persuasive communication often involves messages designed to create contradictions or inconsistencies in the audience's attitudes or behaviors, ultimately leading to the desired change (Oschatz and Marker 2020). In the corporate context, persuasive communication techniques are essential to garner community support for development projects.

Another study by Chatra et al. (2019) emphasizes the importance of communication in infrastructure projects in Indonesia, where the relationship between contractors and the community plays a crucial role in project success. The study indicates that effective communication helps contractors and companies gain community support and reduce potential conflicts. Similarly, Erisanti & Amalia (2023) reveals the importance of community relations strategies as part of corporate social responsibility (CSR) programs in fostering harmonious relationships between companies and local communities.

The *theory of community relations*, as proposed by Argenti (2014), states that engagement with local communities is a crucial aspect of corporate communication. Such engagement helps shape positive perceptions of the company and reduces resistance from communities regarding development projects (Gold, Muthuri, and Reiner 2017). This aligns with the Mirawati's (2021) findings, who underscores the significant role of persuasive communication in influencing community behavior to support company-led projects.

In persuasive communication, multiple techniques are employed to effectively shape audience perception and gain community support. These include *association*, *integration*, *reward/pay-off*, *order/structuring* (tataan), and *red herring* techniques (Taufik et al. 2021). The order or structuring technique refers to the careful arrangement of information in a logical, sequential manner to ease understanding and minimize confusion (Boritz 1985). By presenting a clear, step-by-step process of how a project will benefit the community and mitigate any adverse effects, companies can reduce opposition and enhance transparency (Zinko 2015).

These studies collectively suggest that adopting the right persuasive communication approach enables companies to build better relationships with communities, facilitating smoother project approvals and implementation of infrastructure developments.

Theoretical Framework

This study employs the theoretical framework of persuasive communication and community relations. Persuasive communication theory focuses on efforts to influence





attitudes, perceptions, and actions through well-crafted messages (Burgon & Huffner 2002). Persuasive communication is non-coercive, instead encouraging and educating the audience to accept the communicator's desired outcomes.

In this study, the model of persuasive communication utilizes the following several key techniques.

Association Technique

This technique links the infrastructure project with clear and relevant benefits for the community, such as improved access to education and the digital economy via the internet. This relates to framing theory, where the message is framed to direct the community's attention toward the project's positive aspects (Tversky and Kahneman 1981).

Integration Technique

Based on relationship management theory, this technique emphasizes the creation of strong relationships between the company and the local community. Companies need to integrate themselves into the community through meetings, open dialogues, and involvement in social activities. This technique aligns with the idea that trust and transparency are fundamental to maintaining good relationships between companies and communities (Argenti 2014).

Reward/Pay-Off Technique

This technique is rooted in Gouldner's (1960) reciprocity theory, which asserts that when individuals receive something of value, they feel compelled to give something in return. In this context, offering compensation or direct benefits, such as free Wi-Fi access or digital training to the community, fosters a sense of shared responsibility and encourages support for the project.

Order/Structuring (Tataan) Technique

The order or structuring technique involves organizing and presenting information in a logical, systematic manner to enhance understanding. This approach helps to reduce confusion and apprehension in the audience by explaining the process in steps, from the initiation of the project to its completion, emphasizing transparency. This technique relates to cognitive load theory, which suggests that a well-structured message reduces the mental effort needed to process complex information (Sweller 1988). When communities understand the step-by-step benefits and mitigations, they are more likely to provide their support for the project. By clearly laying out the timeline, benefits, and mitigation plans, companies can effectively manage expectations and minimize resistance from the community.

Red Herring Technique

This technique is used to divert community attention from potential negative impacts by emphasizing the long-term benefits of the project. This aligns with the distraction hypothesis, where focus is shifted toward more positive aspects, minimizing resistance to the project.

In addition to persuasive communication theory, Argenti's (2016) community relations theory is also central to this study. This theory highlights the importance of maintaining good relations between companies and local communities to create a favorable environment for successful project implementation. A solid community relationship not only helps gain support but also reduces the risk of conflicts that could delay or halt the project.



By combining these theories, this research aims to understand how the persuasive communication strategies employed by PT Linknet Tbk assist in gaining community approval for internet infrastructure development.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study adopts a qualitative approach using a case study method to explore in depth the persuasive communication strategies employed by PT Linknet Tbk in obtaining community approval for the development of internet infrastructure. The case study method was chosen as it allows for a comprehensive exploration of the specific context in which persuasive communication is applied, focusing on the interactions between the company and the community directly affected by the project.

Informants for this study were selected purposively based on specific criteria relevant to the research objectives (Tongco 2007). The key informants included *Mr. B & Mr. H*, representatives from PT Linknet Tbk's Community Relations team, who were directly involved in the licensing and communication process with the community. They were selected for their practical knowledge and experience in applying communication strategies within the project. Additionally, *Mr. S*, as head of neighborhood association (RW), were interviewed as they played a pivotal role in representing the community's perspectives and negotiating with the company. Furthermore, *Mr. A*, as community leader in representing residents whose properties were directly impacted by the construction were also included to provide a first-hand account of their acceptance or rejection of the project.

The main criteria for selecting informants were their direct involvement in the licensing process and their influence within the community. The total number of informants included four individuals: two representatives from PT Linknet Tbk, a head of RW, and a community leader.

Data collection was conducted through in-depth interviews and direct observation. Semi-structured interviews were used, allowing the researcher to delve deeper into the specific communication strategies employed, such as association, integration, reward (payoff), order/structuring (tataan), and red herring techniques, and how these were perceived by the community. Direct observation was also conducted during the licensing and negotiation process between PT Linknet Tbk and the community, capturing both formal meetings and informal interactions in the field.

The data gathered from interviews and observations were analyzed using thematic analysis. First, all interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim to ensure that no critical information was lost during the analysis process. Transcripts were carefully reviewed and coded manually by identifying emerging themes and topics. These initial codes were related to the various persuasive communication techniques employed by PT Linknet Tbk. The identified codes were then used to categorize the major themes, which included the effectiveness of each communication technique, challenges encountered in engaging with the community, and the community's response to the project. Themes were further categorized according to the specific communication techniques used.

Data validity was ensured through data source triangulation, where data from multiple informants were compared to verify the consistency and accuracy of findings (Kern 2018). Methodological triangulation was also employed by comparing data obtained from



interviews and observations to ensure that both sources yielded consistent results. Member-checking was carried out by providing some informants with an opportunity to review and verify the interview transcripts.

Ethical considerations were strictly followed throughout the research. All informants provided informed consent by signing a consent form that outlined the purpose of the study, the methods used, and assurances of confidentiality. Informants were given the freedom to withdraw from the study at any time without consequences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION Results

This study analysed the persuasive communication strategies used by PT Linknet Tbk to obtain community approval for the development of internet infrastructure. The data collected from interviews with key stakeholders, including local community leaders and the company's community relations team, revealed several key techniques that were successfully employed. These techniques include *association, integration, reward/pay-off, order/structuring (tataan)*, and *red herring* (Taufik et al. 2021).

Association Technique

PT Linknet Tbk effectively linked the infrastructure development project with long-term community benefits, such as improved internet access for educational and economic purposes. Interview respondents, such as local leaders, acknowledged that the company framed the project as a crucial step toward enhancing the digital economy in their area. This technique helped build positive associations between the project and the community's future development. The following are associated quotes.

"To obtain permission from the community, PT Linknet Tbk used the association technique in data mining to identify patterns of needs, concerns, and preferences in the community. Surveys were conducted to gather data from the area where the infrastructure would be built." (Mr. B, PT Linknet Tbk's Community Relations Team).

"The Community Relations team conducted surveys beforehand in the area where the internet infrastructure would be built. Through these surveys, the team could identify local community leaders and assess the technical conditions of the area." (Mr. S, Head of RW).

"By associating the internet infrastructure development with long-term benefits, such as improved access to education and the digital economy, the company successfully persuaded the community to grant permission." (Mr. A, Community Leader).

Integration Technique

Through regular meetings with community leaders and residents, PT Linknet established strong relationships with key influencers in the community, such as local government representatives and RT/RW leaders. Interviewees highlighted that these engagements played a critical role in addressing concerns and fostering trust between the company and the community. The integration approach ensured that the community was involved in the project, which mitigated potential opposition. The following are associated quotes.

"The message conveyed during meetings with community leaders was to clearly explain the project's objectives, avoiding confusion within the community." (Mr. A, Community Leader) "During meetings with the RT/RW, the company explained that the project would bring



benefits to the community and committed to addressing any concerns that arose." (Mr. B, PT Linknet Tbk's Community Relations Team).

"PT Linknet regularly attended community meetings to discuss project developments and answer questions raised by residents." (Mr. S, Head of RW).

"The company also invited community representatives to participate in open discussions about the potential social and environmental impacts of the project, aiming to enhance transparency and a sense of ownership." (Mr. B, PT Linknet Tbk's Community Relations Team).

Reward/Pay-Off Technique

The reward or pay-off technique involved offering tangible benefits to the community, such as free Wi-Fi access in public areas and training programs in digital literacy. The interviews revealed that these rewards not only facilitated easier project approval but also enhanced the company's reputation. Community members, especially those directly affected by the construction, expressed appreciation for the additional services provided. The following are associated quotes.

"PT Linknet Tbk provided compensation in the form of free Wi-Fi services at several agreed-upon locations, as well as financial incentives for those whose land was used for the project." (Mr. B, PT Linknet Tbk's Community Relations Team).

"By providing compensation and free Wi-Fi services, the community felt acknowledged and were more willing to grant permission for the internet infrastructure development." (Mr. S, Head of RW).

"Additionally, PT Linknet offered CSR programs in the form of free digital training for the surrounding community as part of additional compensation." (Mr. B, PT Linknet Tbk's Community Relations Team).

"The compensation provided was not only monetary but also services that enhanced the community's quality of life, such as free internet access for a year at public facilities." (Mr. A, Community Leader).

"Financial incentives were given to landowners affected by the project, which helped expedite the approval process." (Mr. B, PT Linknet Tbk's Community Relations Team).

Order/Structuring (Tataan) Technique

The structuring technique was key in presenting the project in a clear, step-by-step format. The community relations team carefully outlined the timeline of the project, potential challenges, and mitigation plans to ensure transparency. The respondents mentioned that the clear and systematic explanation of the project helped them better understand its stages and the measures taken to address any potential disturbances. This approach significantly reduced confusion and hesitancy among community members. The following are associated quotes.

"In the dissemination process, the PT Linknet team structured the information delivery step by step, allowing the community to understand the benefits of the project before discussing more technical aspects." (Mr. B, PT Linknet Tbk's Community Relations Team).

"The communication process was carried out sequentially, starting from general understanding to specific issues, ensuring that all parties comprehended all relevant details." (Mr. A, Community Leader).

Red Herring Technique

This technique was used to divert the community's focus from potential negative



aspects of the project by emphasizing the long-term positive impact of the infrastructure, such as faster internet connectivity and the potential for job creation. Respondents acknowledged that while some concerns were raised regarding the construction process, the emphasis on broader social benefits minimized resistance. The following are associated quotes.

"The benefits of the project, such as improved internet access and digital education, were emphasized, while potential negative impacts were minimized or redirected." (Mr. B, PT Linknet Tbk's Community Relations Team).

"Compensation or CSR programs, such as the installation of CCTV cameras in the neighborhood, were also used to divert the community's attention from minor issues that could arise during the construction process." (Mr. S, Head of RW).

Discussion

The results indicate that PT Linknet Tbk's use of multiple persuasive communication techniques were crucial in gaining community approval for their infrastructure development project. Each technique played a unique role in addressing different facets of community concerns and expectations.

The association technique demonstrated the importance of linking infrastructure projects to tangible, long-term benefits for the community. By framing the project as beneficial for education and economic growth, PT Linknet was able to create positive associations in the minds of the residents. This approach aligns with the findings of Mirawati (2021), who emphasized the significance of persuasive communication in influencing community behavior through strong positive framing.

The *integration technique* was effective in building trust between the company and the community. Frequent interactions and open dialogues provided a platform for the community to express concerns and for the company to offer solutions, reinforcing the importance of relationship management in corporate communication (Argenti 2014). This technique ensured that the community felt included and informed, reducing the likelihood of opposition and conflict.

The *reward/pay-off technique* further strengthened community relations by offering immediate benefits, such as free Wi-Fi and training programs. This finding is consistent with (Gouldner 1960) *reciprocity theory*, which posits that individuals feel compelled to reciprocate when they receive something of value. The rewards offered by PT Linknet helped create goodwill, making the community more willing to support the project.

The use of the *order/structuring* (tataan) technique proved essential in organizing and presenting the project in a logical, clear manner. This approach helped the community better understand the steps involved in the project, reducing confusion and apprehension. By clearly explaining the process and timeline, PT Linknet ensured that the community was aware of what to expect, which aligns with *cognitive load theory* (Sweller 1988), where structured information reduces the mental effort required to process complex details.

Finally, the *red herring technique* was particularly effective in diverting attention from potential negative impacts of the construction process. By focusing on the broader benefits of the project, such as improved internet access and future opportunities, PT Linknet was able to mitigate concerns related to short-term disruptions. This strategy mirrors the *distraction hypothesis*, where attention is shifted toward positive outcomes, minimizing



resistance to the project.

In conclusion, PT Linknet Tbk's success in obtaining community approval can be attributed to its strategic use of these persuasive communication techniques. By combining association, integration, reward, structuring, and red herring techniques, the company was able to address various community concerns, enhance transparency, and foster positive relations with the community. These findings underscore the importance of a multifaceted approach to persuasive communication in corporate-community interactions (Ganiem and Kurnia 2019), particularly in infrastructure development.

Table.1 is containing the themes and subthemes from the discussion above:

Table. 1 Themes & Subthemes

No	Theme	Subtheme
1	Association Technique	Linking the project to long-term community
		benefits (education, economy)
		Framing the project as a step towards digital
		growth
		Positive associations between the project and future
		development
2	Integration Technique	Engaging with local leaders (RT/RW) and
		government representatives
		Building trust through regular community meetings
		Ensuring community involvement in project
		discussions
3	Reward/Pay-Off Technique	Offering tangible benefits (free Wi-Fi, digital literacy
		training)
		Enhancing the company's reputation with
		community members
		Easing project approval through direct benefits
4	Order/Structuring (Tataan)	Presenting the project in a clear, step-by-step
	Technique	format
		Outlining the timeline, challenges, and mitigation
		plans to ensure transparency
		Reducing confusion and hesitancy by providing
		structured information
5	Red Herring Technique	Diverting focus from potential negative impacts
	-	Emphasizing long-term benefits (faster internet, job
		creation)
		Minimizing resistance through positive framing of
		the project

Source: Personal Documentation

This table organizes the key themes and subthemes based on the persuasive communication strategies discussed in the results.





CONCLUSION

This study explored the persuasive communication strategies employed by PT Linknet Tbk in securing community approval for the development of internet infrastructure. The findings highlight that the company effectively utilized five key persuasive techniques: association, integration, reward/pay-off, order/structuring (tataan), and red herring. Each technique played a distinct role in addressing various concerns, fostering trust, and ensuring transparency.

The *association technique* linked the project to tangible community benefits, such as improved internet access for education and economic growth, which helped create positive perceptions about the project.

The *integration technique* facilitated open communication and strong relationships between the company and the community, minimizing opposition.

The *reward/pay-off technique further* motivated the community's approval by providing immediate benefits, such as free Wi-Fi and digital training.

The *order/structuring (tataan) technique* provided clear, step-by-step explanations of the project, which helped reduce confusion and increased community understanding.

The *red herring technique* successfully shifted attention from potential short-term disruptions to the long-term advantages of the project, reducing resistance. Overall, these strategies ensured that the community felt engaged, informed, and appreciated, which contributed to the successful acquisition of permits for the infrastructure project. The multifaceted approach employed by PT Linknet Tbk demonstrates the

importance of combining different persuasive communication techniques to achieve desired outcomes in corporate-community interactions.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations can be made for companies seeking community approval for infrastructure development:

Enhance Community Engagement through Early Integration

Companies should involve community leaders and key stakeholders from the early stages of project planning. By fostering open communication and involving the community in decision-making processes, companies can build trust and reduce resistance to the project.

Utilize a Multi-Technique Approach to Persuasion

Employing a combination of persuasive techniques, such as association, integration, reward, and order/structuring, is critical for addressing the diverse concerns and expectations of the community. A well-rounded strategy helps ensure that all aspects of community needs are met, increasing the likelihood of project approval.

Focus on Long-Term Benefits

While addressing immediate concerns, companies should consistently emphasize the long-term benefits of infrastructure development. Highlighting the positive impacts on education, the economy, and community well-being helps shift the focus away from potential short-term inconveniences.

Provide Tangible Rewards to Strengthen Community Relations

Offering direct benefits, such as free access to services or community development programs, helps companies foster goodwill and reciprocity within the community. These rewards not only incentivize approval but also enhance the company's reputation.



Maintain Transparency and Structured Communication

Presenting information in a clear, logical, and systematic manner helps reduce confusion and allows the community to better understand the stages and benefits of the project. Transparency in communication fosters trust and minimizes the risk of conflict during project implementation.

By adopting these recommendations, companies can increase the effectiveness of their communication strategies and improve their chances of gaining community approval for future infrastructure development projects.

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