

ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC PERCEPTION AND STRATEGIC BRAND COMMUNICATION IN ENHANCING PUBLIC TRUST TOWARDS THE ROYAL MALAYSIA POLICE

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Abstract

Public perception and communication are essential components in the branding process of any organisation, particularly for security organisations such as the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP). However, there is limited empirical evidence on how branding and communication strategies shape public trust within Malaysia's law enforcement agencies. This study attempts to bridge this gap by investigating public perceptions and experiences regarding RMP's branding, with emphasis on the importance of organisational communication, interactions and public trust. A total of 30 respondents were interviewed face-to-face to obtain in-depth insights into their opinions of the services and performance delivered by the RMP. Qualitative data analysis revealed that both perception factors and the communication approaches adopted by RMP officers when engaging with the public play crucial roles in shaping the organisation's image and brand identity. The findings highlight several key aspects, including branding elements within the RMP that require enhancement, public experiences in engaging with police officers, improvements to current branding strategies, challenges faced by the RMP in meeting citizens' needs based on its client charter, and effective branding strategies that should be implemented. Furthermore, the study emphasises the importance of consistent and empathetic brand communication in restoring and sustaining public confidence in the RMP's services. The results also indicate that strategic communication interventions, community engagement, and collaboration with external stakeholders can further strengthen the overall effectiveness of the RMP's branding initiatives. Overall, the study provides important implications for efforts aimed at enhancing the professionalism, integrity, and credibility of security institutions in Malaysia.

Keywords: Public perception, Police branding, Strategic communication, Royal Malaysia Police (RMP), Community engagement

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INTRODUCTION

Security organizations such as the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) play a vital role in maintaining national security, social stability, public order, and the well-being of citizens. However, public trust in law enforcement agencies remains inconsistent and fragile, as negative perceptions are often shaped by media coverage and social media narratives rather than direct experiences with the police (Khan, Ismail, & Musatin, 2024). Previous studies have indicated that the public's perception of police legitimacy is shaped not only by personal encounters but also by how the organization communicates, constructs its identity, and manages its public reputation (Sidek, Shaharudin, & Abdullah, 2024; Kim & Baniamin, 2022). In the digital age, strategic brand communication has become increasingly essential for public organizations such as RMP, which operate under continuous public scrutiny. Despite various initiatives, including strategic communication transformations, community engagement programs, and the strengthening of the client charter, the desired level of public confidence has not yet been fully achieved. This situation is further complicated by the rapid dissemination of information on social media, which often amplifies isolated issues of misconduct or miscommunication, ultimately distorting public perceptions and damaging institutional credibility (Taylor & Kent, 2014; Omar & Ibrahim, 2019).

While past research in branding and trust has predominantly focused on private sector organizations emphasizing the roles of brand personality, trust, and message consistency in building stakeholder relationships (He, Rahman, & Mat Nor, 2022), there remains limited empirical evidence on how branding and communication strategies shape public trust in law enforcement agencies within Malaysia. Most existing studies have concentrated on public satisfaction or operational performance without exploring the psychological and communicative mechanisms that shape trust and reputation in public institutions. Thus, a critical research gap exists in understanding how strategic brand communication can function as a tool to strengthen RMP's image and its relationship with the public. To address this gap, the study adopts three interconnected theoretical foundations. Perception Theory (Schwarz, 2012), which explains how individuals' interpretations and experiences shape trust and attitudes toward institutions; Branding Theory (Keller, 2013), which conceptualizes a brand as a reflection of values, integrity, and professionalism; and Strategic Communication Theory (Taylor & Kent, 2014), which highlights the importance of transparent, empathetic, and two-way communication in fostering long-term trust. These theories collectively form the conceptual framework of this study, linking public perception, strategic communication, and organizational branding as the core elements that shape public trust in the RMP. The integration of these frameworks provides a strong analytical foundation for understanding how communication strategies can reshape public attitudes and reinforce the credibility of law enforcement institutions.

Accordingly, this study aims to propose more effective branding and communication strategies to strengthen RMP's image, enhance its credibility, and rebuild public trust. The research is both theoretically and practically significant. Theoretically, it contributes to the growing body of knowledge on the relationship between organizational communication, perception, and institutional trust within the public sector. Practically, the findings will provide actionable insights for RMP's leadership and communication practitioners to design more transparent, consistent, and community-centered communication strategies that embody integrity, empathy, and professionalism. Ultimately, the study supports the Malaysian government's broader agenda to reinforce institutional integrity, promote accountability, and enhance public confidence in national law enforcement.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To qualitative explore public perceptions and experiences of RMP branding
2. To understand public perceived role of organisational communication and public interactions on trust in RMP.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perception Theory

Perception theory explains how people observe, interpret, and assign meaning to information based on their experiences, values, and social environment (Schwarz, 2012). In the context of organizational communication, public perception does not depend solely on what is communicated but also on how messages are received, understood, and interpreted by society. Each individual carries personal experiences and beliefs that shape how they perceive issues, including the image and actions of the police. According to Cao (2015), public perception of the police largely depends on the fairness and honesty people experience when interacting with police officers. When the public perceives the police as fair, firm, and empathetic, trust grows. In contrast, misunderstandings, misconduct, or harsh communication quickly create and spread negative perceptions. Sunshine and Tyler (2003) emphasize that procedural justice plays a greater role in shaping public trust than the outcome of police actions. In RMP's context, this theory is crucial to understanding how the public evaluates the organization's image and reputation. Positive perceptions can develop through good direct experiences, such as friendly service at police stations or clear communication during crises. However, a single negative incident that goes viral on social media can weaken public trust as a whole. Therefore, RMP must remain sensitive to how its actions and messages are interpreted by society, as perception serves as a "social mirror" reflecting the organization's true image.

Branding Theory

In the modern world, every organization, including security organizations such as RMP, is no longer viewed merely as a law enforcement agency but also as a social brand. Keller (2013) emphasizes that a brand is more than a logo or slogan, it represents the emotional identity and values felt by society. A brand develops through consistent experiences, trust, and perceptions over time. In this context, RMP's branding is not only about symbols, uniforms, or the motto "Firm, Fair and Prudent," but about how the organization embodies these values in people's daily lives. Florek and Insch (2011) note that the success of a public brand depends on how closely the organization's image aligns with the expectations and values of its community. Many developed countries have adopted police rebranding strategies to strengthen their relationship with citizens. In the United Kingdom, the Metropolitan Police launched the "We Are London" campaign to highlight inclusivity and the police's concern for ethnically diverse communities (Mawby, 2023). In the United States, the New York Police Department (NYPD) introduced the Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCO) initiative, which focuses on continuous communication with local communities rather than solely on law enforcement (Cao, 2015). These approaches show that branding for security organizations is not merely about appearance or image but about building long-term relationships based on trust and respect. In Malaysia's context, this theory provides an essential foundation for understanding how RMP can strengthen its presence as a respected brand, not through authority, but through empathy, courage, and integrity that resonate with the people.

Communication Theory and International Police Branding Strategies

Every organization, including security organizations such as the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP), is no longer viewed merely as a law enforcement agency but also as a social brand. Keller (2013) emphasizes

that a brand is more than a logo or slogan; it represents the emotional identity and the values perceived by society. A brand develops through consistent experiences, trust, and perceptions over time. In this context, RMP's branding is not only about symbols, uniforms, or the motto "Firm, Fair and Prudent", but about how the organization embodies these values in people's daily lives. Florek and Insch (2011) note that the success of a public brand depends on how closely the organization's image aligns with the expectations and values of its community.

In line with the communication theory, several developed countries have adopted police rebranding strategies to strengthen their relationship with citizens by building trust via public relations and brand communication. Globally, police branding strategies often emerge from the need to restore public reputation and legitimacy following trust crises, officer misconduct, or communication gaps between the police and the community (Sunshine & Tyler, 2003). Although each country adopts a different cultural and operational approach, the core goal remains the same to build relationships based on trust, openness, and social responsibility. For example, in the United Kingdom, the Metropolitan Police launched the "We Are London" campaign to highlight inclusivity and the police's concern for ethnically diverse communities (Mawby, 2023). In the United States, the New York Police Department (NYPD) introduced the Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCO) initiative, which focuses on continuous communication with local communities rather than solely on law enforcement (Cao, 2015).

In Germany, branding efforts emphasize crisis communication and reputation recovery, particularly following major incidents such as the 2010 Duisburg Love Parade tragedy. Schwarz (2012) found that police responses to public criticism on social media played a crucial role in rebuilding public trust. Through more transparent and empathetic communication, German police successfully re-established their image as a responsible organization that listens to citizens. Likewise, police branding strategies in Italy are grounded in cultural and moral values. According to Bertoli (2013), Italian institutional branding focuses strongly on human and social responsibility values in public messaging. This approach extends to police communication, which aims to portray law enforcement as collaborative community partners rather than symbols of institutional power. In Japan, the positive image of the police largely stems from the *Kōban* neighborhood police box system, which symbolizes friendly relations between authorities and local communities. This long-standing community policing model demonstrates how consistent presence, personal engagement, and trust-based communication can strengthen police legitimacy and public confidence.

These approaches show that branding for security organizations like RMP focuses on the organization's identity and public trust, rather than the services it provides. Branding is not merely about visual appearance or image, but about building long-term relationships based on credibility, trust, and respect (He, Rahman, & Mat Nor, 2022). These lessons provide valuable insights for countries like Malaysia in enhancing RMP's reputation and fostering meaningful relationships with the public. In addition, the Communication Theory provides an essential foundation for understanding how RMP can strengthen its presence as a respected organization not through authority, but through empathy, courage, integrity, and professionalism that resonate with the people (Kim & Baniamin, 2022).

Table 1 illustrates that police branding in developed nations integrates communication, community engagement, and social accountability as fundamental components of institutional identity. The examples emphasize that effective branding is achieved not through visual redesigns or slogans alone but through sustained interaction, fairness, and empathy in public service. The initiatives of the Metropolitan Police, NYPD, Bundespolizei, Polizia di Stato, and Japan's *Kōban* system collectively depict how trust is cultivated when the police are perceived as approachable, transparent, and socially responsible. These insights offer valuable direction for RMP, suggesting that future branding strategies should move beyond formal imagery to embrace human-centered communication that reflects integrity, inclusion, and mutual respect between law enforcement and the public.

Table 1 : Branding strategies of foreign police forces

Country	Police Branding Initiatives	Key Findings / Focus
United Kingdom	The Metropolitan Police implemented the “We Are London” campaign to enhance confidence among multi-ethnic communities.	Two-way communication, social visibility, and demonstrating empathy towards the community.
USA	The NYPD introduced the Neighborhood Coordination Officers (NCO) strategy with the slogan “Build the Block.”	Local community engagement increases trust and reduces social gaps.
Germany	The Bundespolizei introduced a visual and digital rebranding initiative following the Duisburg incident in 2010.	The focus was on crisis communication and police reputation management.
Italy	The Polizia di Stato introduced the campaign “Polizia: Una Forza Vicina” to strengthen its image of empathy and openness.	Strategies based on empathy and professionalism.
Japan	The Kōban system is used as a symbolic element of local police branding, where officers are stationed in small neighbourhood posts to assist the community.	Building trust through physical presence, friendliness, and efficiency.

Theoretical Framework

This study is grounded in three main theories. Perception Theory (Schwarz, 2012), Branding Theory (Keller, 2013), and Strategic Communication Theory (Taylor & Kent, 2014). Together, these theories explain the relationship between communication, perception, and trust within the context of the RMP. The Perception Theory highlights how public’s trust in RMP is shaped by personal experiences, interpretations, and observations of police behavior. Meanwhile, the Branding Theory emphasizes that a brand is more than a logo it represents the organization’s values and identity, which for RMP include integrity, justice, empathy, and professionalism. The Strategic Communication Theory focuses on two-way, transparent, and empathetic communication between the organization and the public, which helps build long-term trust and credibility. Overall, these theories support the idea that effective communication and strong brand identity can shape public perception, which in turn enhances institutional credibility and public confidence in RMP.

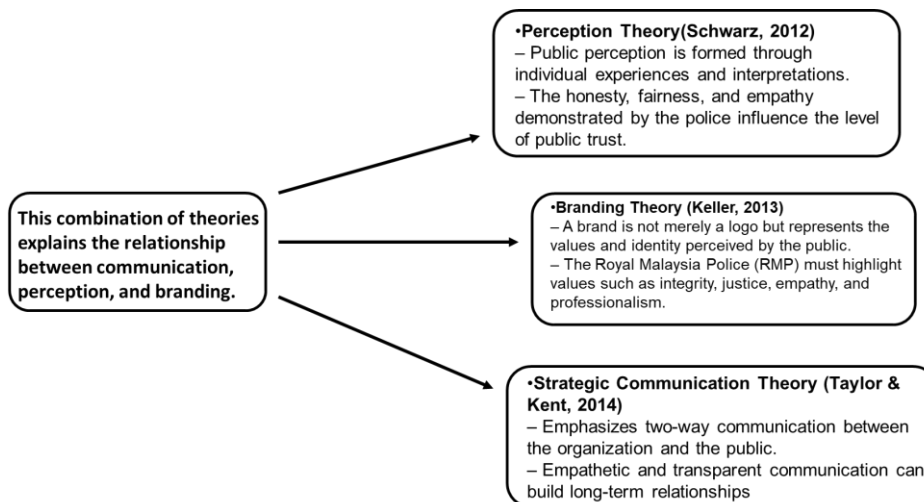


Figure 1: Theoretical Framework Component

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design to gain a deeper understanding of how the public evaluates and interprets the image and communication of the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) brand. A qualitative approach was chosen because issues such as perception, trust, communication, and social experience cannot be effectively measured through numerical data. According to Creswell (2013), qualitative methods are most suitable for exploring complex human experiences in natural settings, where meanings are shaped by individuals' perspectives and social contexts. This approach allows researchers to interpret how people construct opinions about institutions like RMP based on their experiences, social interactions, and exposure to information. Through in-depth interviews, the qualitative method helps uncover the meanings behind public perceptions, focusing not only on what participants think but also on why they hold those views. This method is particularly relevant for studies involving public trust and institutional reputation, where emotions, beliefs, and interpretations play key roles in shaping responses.

Data Collection

A total of 30 respondents from various demographic backgrounds participated in this study. The sample included individuals of different ages, genders, education levels, occupations, and places of residence. Respondents were selected through purposive sampling, which, as noted by Patton (2015), allows the inclusion of participants who possess relevant knowledge and experiences related to the research topic. The selection aimed to ensure diversity and depth of insight. Therefore, two categories of respondents were included:

1. **General Public** – individuals with no prior or direct interaction with the police, representing overall public perception of RMP's image.
2. **Experienced Participants** – individuals who had interacted with RMP officers, for example, during police-community programs or when seeking police services.

This approach ensured that both perceived and experienced viewpoints were represented in the data, providing a more comprehensive understanding of how people interpret RMP's brand and communication strategies. Data were collected through semi-structured, face-to-face interviews, which allowed flexibility in conversation while maintaining consistency across key topics. The interviews were conducted in a comfortable, informal setting to encourage openness and honest responses. Each session lasted approximately 30 to 45 minutes. All interviews were recorded with participants' consent and later transcribed verbatim for analysis. Ethical considerations, such as participant anonymity and data confidentiality, were strictly maintained throughout the study.

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis, following the steps proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). This method involved:

1. Familiarization with the data through repeated reading of transcripts.
2. Coding key phrases and identifying emerging patterns.
3. Grouping codes into broader themes that reflected participants shared meanings.
4. Reviewing and refining themes to ensure they accurately represented the data.

This process enabled the researcher to identify consistent themes related to public perception, trust, communication strategies, and organizational image. Thematic analysis was chosen for its flexibility and suitability in qualitative studies that explore meanings, attitudes, and lived experiences.

Respondent Criteria

Respondents were selected through purposive sampling to ensure diversity in background, experience, and interaction with the RMP. The respondents represented six categories public sector employees, private sector employees, self-employed individuals, retirees, students, and homemakers. Each group was chosen based on specific criteria to provide comprehensive and balanced perspectives on RMP's branding and public image.

Table 2: Criteria of respondents interviewed by category.

Category	Criteria	Total Respondents
Public Sector Employees	i. Served for more than five years.	3
	ii. Worked in departments such as investigations, public complaints, discipline, or corporate communications with experience in community affairs, safety, or organizational communication.	
	iii. Demonstrated a tendency to engage with the public and understood RMP's branding needs.	
	iv. Communicated clearly and shared constructive ideas on improving RMP's public engagement and branding efforts.	
Private Sector Employees	i. Malaysian citizens involved in urban community activities such as neighborhood associations or residents' groups.	8
	ii. Previously interacted with RMP through safety programs, patrols, or public complaint channels.	
	iii. Had experience collaborating with RMP on issues like rural safety, drug prevention, or trespassing.	
Self-Employed Individuals	i. Malaysian citizens who had prior interaction with RMP.	6
	ii. Active on social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter.	
	iii. Held experience in public awareness or CSR programs with RMP and understood government branding aspects.	
Retirees	i. Maintained a clean service record with no criminal involvement.	5
	ii. Formerly served in investigation, public complaints, discipline, or corporate communication units with relevant experience in community relations, safety, or organizational communication.	
	iii. Showed a tendency to engage with the public and understood RMP's branding requirements.	
	iv. Communicated clearly and effectively in expressing opinions and ideas.	
Students	i. Malaysian citizens involved in extracurricular programs such as the Police Undergraduate Voluntary Corps (SUKSIS) or RMP-led community activities in higher education institutions.	6
	ii. Possessed knowledge of policing and awareness of current RMP-related issues.	
	iii. Experience as complainants was considered an advantage.	
Homemakers	i. Malaysian citizens active on social media platforms such as Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and Twitter.	2
	ii. Maintained collaboration records with RMP and participated in community activities organized by Persatuan Keluarga Polis (PERKEP).	

The composition of respondents shown in Table 2 demonstrates that the study successfully captured a wide spectrum of perspectives from individuals with varying degrees of interaction and experience with the RMP. This diversity is crucial in qualitative research as it enhances the richness and reliability of the data by reflecting different social roles and expectations (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Patton, 2015). The inclusion of respondents from both government and private sectors, as well as students, retirees, and homemakers, ensures that the analysis represents a balanced cross-section of Malaysian society. Such demographic variety allows the study to identify recurring themes that transcend occupational or social boundaries, thereby strengthening the credibility and general interpretive depth of the findings.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded and transcribed for thematic analysis to identify patterns related to public perceptions of RMP branding. This approach provided a holistic understanding of how society views RMP's image and role within the context of branding. Once data collection was complete, the transcribed interviews were analyzed using ATLAS.ti 9, a qualitative data analysis software that helps researchers organize, code, and interpret textual data in depth (Frieze, 2019). In this study, ATLAS.ti was used to identify key themes and relationships related to RMP branding and public perceptions. Thematic analysis was conducted following Braun and Clarke's (2006) approach, which involves coding, categorizing, and interpreting emerging themes. Using ATLAS.ti enabled the researcher to create a codebook containing codes that represented key concepts within the data. These codes categorized data excerpts according to themes such as factors influencing positive or negative perceptions of RMP and elements that contribute to effective branding. One of ATLAS.ti's advantages is its ability to analyze code co-occurrence, revealing relationships and interactions among patterns within the dataset (Paulus & Lester, 2022). By identifying areas with high code frequency, the researcher could better understand similarities and differences in respondents' views and examine how public perceptions of RMP branding relate to aspects such as trustworthiness, credibility, and professionalism. The software also facilitated mapping relationships among codes, allowing the researcher to develop broader themes based on these connections.

Data Analysis Process Using ATLAS.ti 9

Word Cloud



Figure 2: Dominant words in the interview findings.

Word clouds are useful in qualitative research for visualizing frequently occurring terms, providing an overview of dominant themes and public sentiment (Heimerl et al., 2014; Paulus & Lester, 2022). The visualization highlights the most frequently mentioned terms by respondents when discussing their experiences and perceptions of RMP. Prominent words such as “public,” “officers,” “safety,” “community,” “branding,” and “trust” indicate that issues related to professionalism, integrity, and public engagement are central to how society perceives the organization. The clustering of terms like “communication,” “efficiency,” “service,” and “confidence” suggests that effective communication and quality service delivery play vital roles in shaping public trust. Meanwhile, smaller words such as “cybercrime,” “complaints,” and “bureaucracy” point to areas of concern or challenges that may impact the organization’s image. Overall, this word cloud provides a visual summary of public sentiment, emphasizing the balance between RMP’s strengths such as integrity and commitment and areas requiring improvement in its brand communication and service approach.

Word List

The word list feature in ATLAS.ti displays extracted words with their frequency of occurrence, allowing researchers to identify dominant concepts within the data (Frieze, 2019). Unlike word clouds, which emphasize visual representation, word lists provide structured numerical data that enrich the qualitative interpretation process (Paulus & Lester, 2022). By analyzing word frequency patterns, researchers can identify linguistic variations and thematic prominence, supporting a deeper understanding of public perception (Silver & Lewins, 2014). It offers a comprehensive view of the text structure and supports data-driven analysis, making it a valuable tool for understanding public perceptions of RMP. For example, if the word “security” appears 150 times while “justice” appears 80 times, it indicates which issues are more dominant in public perception.

Interview Transcript Coding

In this study, the coding process was conducted manually using ATLAS.ti 9, following the steps of open, axial, and selective coding as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1998). During open coding, all interview transcripts were carefully read, and meaningful phrases related to communication, trust, professionalism, and integrity were highlighted and coded. In the second phase, axial coding was used to group similar codes into broader categories such as community engagement, organizational image, and public perception of credibility. Finally, selective coding was applied to refine these categories into three key themes strategic communication, public trust, and organizational branding. This process ensured that data analysis remained systematic and consistent with the research objectives. For instance, recurring codes such as “transparency”, “quick response”, and “trust” reflected the public’s expectations of RMP’s brand and service delivery, while negative codes such as “bureaucracy” or “lack of empathy” indicated areas requiring improvement through enhanced communication and engagement strategies.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The analysis of the interview data aims to examine public perceptions of the branding and service delivery of the RMP. The interviews involved respondents from diverse segments of society who shared their views on RMP’s branding initiatives and their experiences interacting with the authorities. The primary focus of this analysis is to identify key areas that require improvement to enhance RMP’s image and strengthen public confidence in its services.

Question 1: Elements of RMP branding that need improvement to enhance public perception of service quality

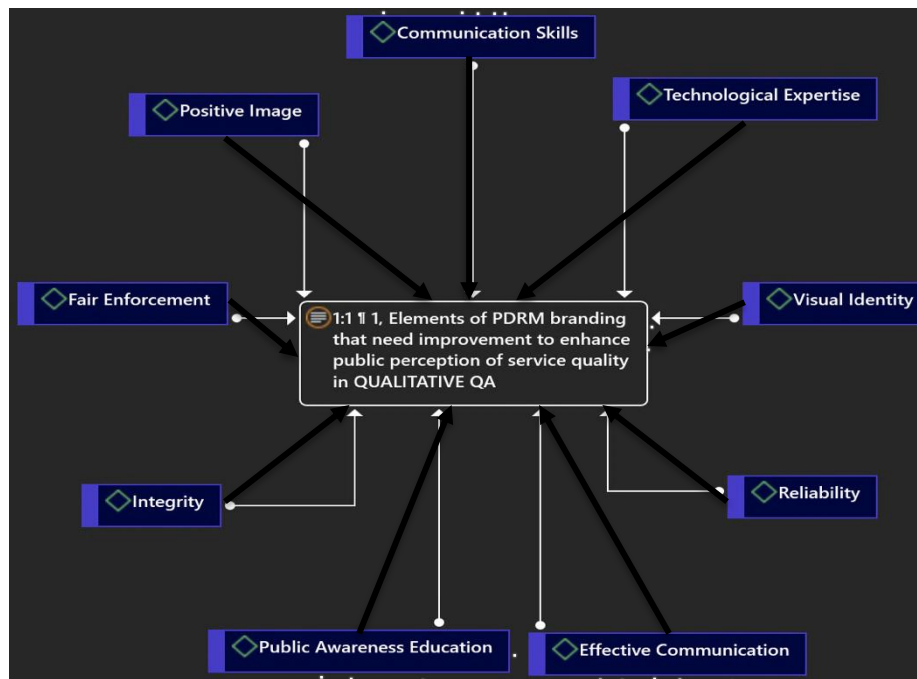


Figure 3: Questions related to RMP branding elements.

Figure 3 presents responses related to elements of RMP's branding that require enhancement to improve public perception of service quality.

The findings indicate that RMP's public image and service delivery can be bolstered through improved communication skills, visual identity, and technological proficiency, as these factors shape public trust and accessibility. These results are consistent with Taylor and Kent's (2014) strategic communication theory, which highlights that transparent and empathetic communication helps foster trust and long-term engagement with the public. Similarly, Keller (2013) argues that a strong brand identity built on professionalism and integrity enhances public confidence in organizational credibility. The respondents' emphasis on the need for consistent reliability and visual identity also aligns with the findings of Kim and Baniamin (2022), who found that public organizations that maintain a coherent and professional image are more likely to be trusted by citizens. Furthermore, the need for improved technological accessibility supports Omar and Ibrahim's (2019) observation that digital communication tools can enhance two-way interaction between law enforcement and communities. Thus, the findings of this study reinforce prior literature by showing that RMP's branding effectiveness depends not only on its operational performance but also on its ability to communicate trust, transparency, and professionalism through strategic communication and public engagement.

Question 2: How do you view the current branding approach implemented by RMP in delivering services to the community?



Figure 4: Perception of RMP's current branding in community service delivery.

Figure 4 illustrates public perceptions of RMP's current branding approach in community service delivery. Respondents generally perceived the existing approach as traditional, formal, and lacking modern appeal, suggesting the need for transformation toward a more inclusive, engaging, and transparent image. This perception supports Taylor and Kent's (2014) Strategic Communication Theory, which emphasizes that effective organizational branding must foster two-way communication and emotional engagement with the public to build long-term trust. Similarly, He, Rahman, and Mat Nor (2022) argue that strong public sector brands depend on consistent and empathetic communication that reflects the organization's values. Respondents also highlighted that RMP's current branding should more clearly represent its stance against corruption and response to cybercrime, aligning with Keller's (2013) Branding Theory that states credibility and moral integrity are essential dimensions of public trust. The findings also echo Omar and Ibrahim's (2019) study, which found that modern branding efforts in law enforcement must adapt to digital communication trends to maintain public relevance. Thus, these findings reveal that RMP's branding effectiveness depends on its ability to modernize communication channels, humanize its messaging tone, and maintain integrity as a core identity reinforcing the importance of transparent and inclusive engagement strategies in building community trust.

Question 3 : How can RMP develop more effective branding strategies to strengthen public confidence in the quality of its services?

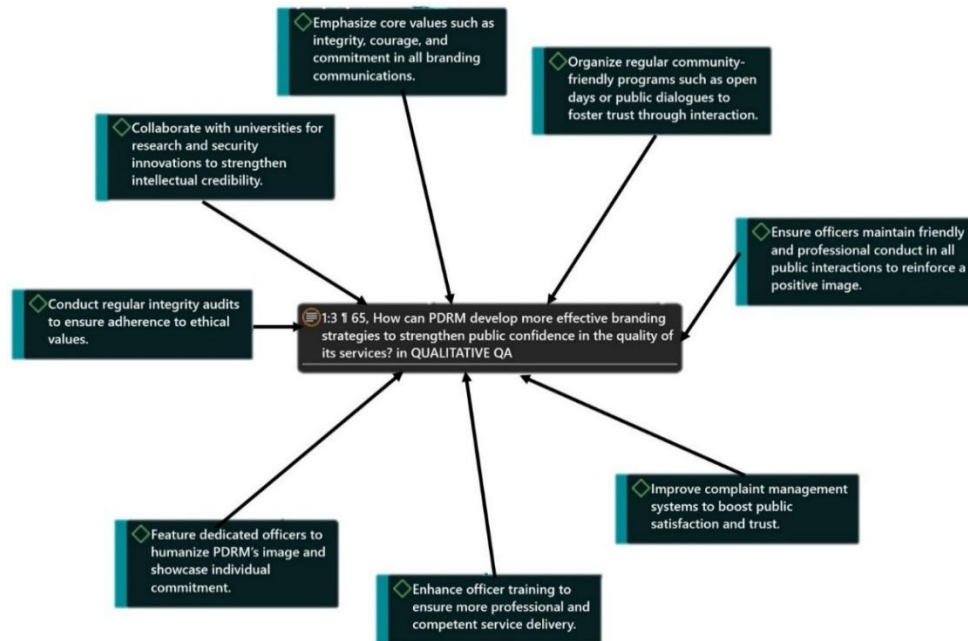


Figure 5: Ways for RMP to enhance branding strategies to build public confidence in service quality.

Figure 5 illustrates that respondents believe the Royal Malaysia Police (RMP) can strengthen public confidence in its services by adopting branding strategies grounded in professionalism, integrity, and community engagement. Respondents emphasized the need for consistent promotion of core values such as integrity, courage, and commitment, while highlighting the importance of transparent communication and frequent engagement between police officers and the public. These findings align with Taylor and Kent's (2014) Strategic Communication Theory, which stresses the importance of two-way symmetrical communication in building trust and fostering long-term relationships between organizations and their stakeholders. Similarly, Keller (2013) asserts that an organization's brand equity is reinforced when its communication reflects authenticity, reliability, and shared values elements that respondents associated with RMP's credibility. Respondents also suggested organizing regular community dialogues, open days, and collaborative programs with universities and research institutions to promote innovation, transparency, and modernization in policing practices. This observation supports the findings of Sidek, Shahrudin, and Abdullah (2024), who emphasized that strategic community partnerships enhance institutional image and public confidence. Moreover, He, Rahman, and Mat Nor (2022) argue that consistent engagement through branding and communication builds emotional connection and strengthens citizens' loyalty toward public institutions. The recommendation for periodic integrity audits, feedback mechanisms, and digital communication training reflects the principles of Organizational Theory, where performance legitimacy is sustained through ethical governance and effective communication (Creswell, 2013; Kim & Baniamin, 2022). This further demonstrates that enhancing RMP's brand requires not only operational reform but also consistent, human-centered messaging that highlights empathy, fairness, and professionalism reaffirming public trust in Malaysia's primary law enforcement body.

Question 4 : What are public perspectives regarding the main challenges faced by RMP in ensuring that their service delivery meets public expectations and the customer charter?



Figure 6: Key challenges for RMP in meeting public expectations and fulfilling the customer charter.

Figure 6 highlights several key challenges faced by RMP in meeting public expectations and fulfilling its client charter. Respondents identified issues such as corruption, delayed response to complaints, and political influence as major barriers that affect public trust and service quality. These findings support Kim and Baniamin's (2022) observation that transparency and accountability are crucial for sustaining public confidence in government institutions. Similarly, Taylor and Kent (2014) emphasize that consistent, open communication helps minimize distrust and strengthens credibility during crises. Respondents also mentioned resource disparities, limited manpower, and poor inter-department coordination, which reflect structural challenges described in Organizational Theory (Creswell, 2013). To address these, respondents proposed more frequent community engagement and leadership training aligning with He, Rahman, and Mat Nor (2022), who noted that capacity-building and communication reform are vital for enhancing institutional image and stakeholder trust. Overall, these results reinforce that improving professional ethics, communication efficiency, and operational transparency are key steps toward rebuilding public confidence in RMP's service performance.

Question 5 : How has your experience interacting with RMP shaped your perception of the quality of their services?

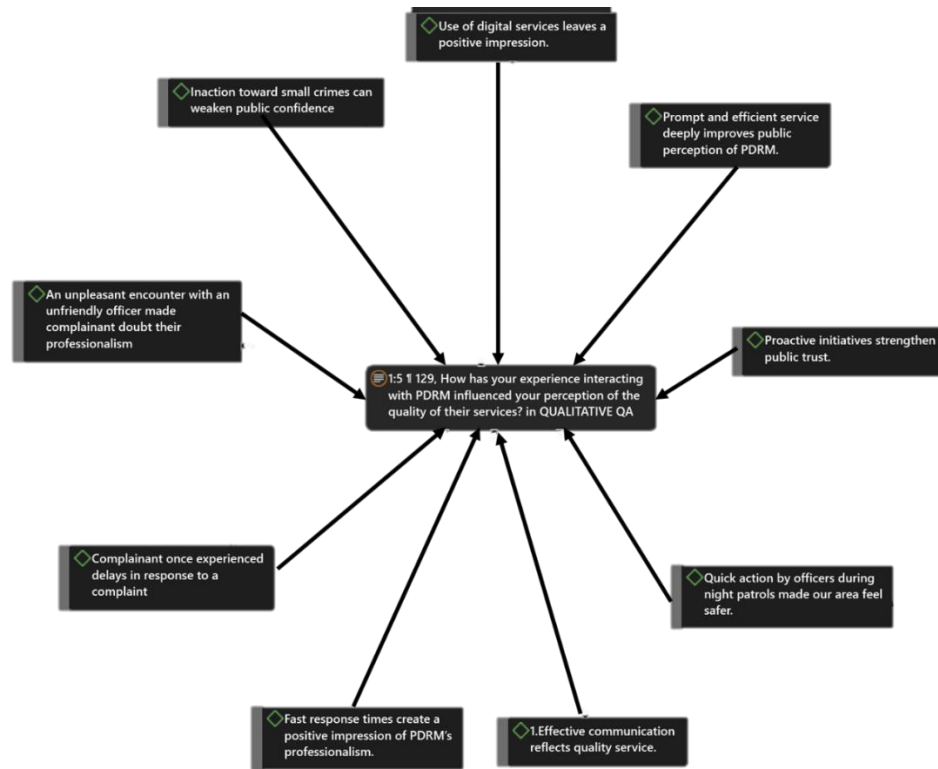


Figure 7: Impact of interactions with RMP on perceptions of service quality.

Figure 7 shows that public interactions with RMP play a crucial role in their perceptions of service quality. Respondents highlighted that prompt responses, effective communication, and courteous behavior enhance public trust, while delays or lack of empathy reduce satisfaction. These findings support Sunshine and Tyler (2003), who found that fair treatment and procedural justice increase public confidence in law enforcement. Similarly, Taylor and Kent (2014) emphasized that empathetic, two-way communication fosters stronger organizational relationships. The results also align with He, Rahman, and Mat Nor (2022), who note that professionalism and consistent engagement are essential to maintaining a credible brand image. Overall, the findings suggest that RMP's service reputation depends not only on enforcement efficiency but also on transparent, human-centered communication that reinforces public trust and social responsibility.

Table 3: Key recommendations for enhancing RMP's branding and public trust

Strategy Focus	Recommended Actions
Prioritize meaningful communication.	Every officer should be trained to engage with empathy, respect, and clarity. Simple gestures like active listening and polite conversation can leave lasting impressions.
Modernize RMP's public image.	Adopt fresh branding strategies through social media, short videos, and storytelling that showcase the real dedication and sacrifices of officers behind the uniform.
Promote transparency and accountability.	Strengthen internal systems to handle public complaints quickly and fairly, and share updates openly to show that integrity is being practiced, not just preached.
Bring the police closer to the people.	Organize regular community programs, open days, and youth activities that build trust through genuine interaction not enforcement alone.

Collaborate with academic and professional partners. Work with universities, communication experts, and civil organizations to assess and improve branding efforts continuously.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the findings revealed the importance of transparent engagement, consistent professionalism, and community-oriented interaction in promoting RMP's branding and communication strategies. Respondents emphasized that communication quality, officer behavior, and digital presence play crucial roles in shaping public trust and perceptions of RMP's credibility. These findings align with Strategic Communication and Branding Theories, which stress two-way and empathetic dialogue as the foundation for building public confidence, as well as the underlining role of authenticity and value-driven messaging in sustaining reputation. Furthermore, the results support the view that fairness and responsiveness enhance procedural legitimacy, while emphasizing the integration of local community values into public sector branding. Collectively, the results suggest that strengthening PDRM's image and credibility requires not only strategic communication but also ethical leadership, social inclusivity, and collaboration with diverse stakeholders to foster long-term public trust.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS STATEMENT

Muhammad Amin Bin Ibahrim: Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, formal analysis, investigation, writing original draft preparation, visualization, and project administration.

Khairul Aidil Azlin Bin Abd Rahman: Supervision, methodology validation, academic review, writing review and editing.

Nurhanisah Mohd Hawari: Data verification, language editing, proofreading, and manuscript refinement.

All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

AVAILABILITY OF DATA AND MATERIALS

The datasets generated and analysed during the current study are not publicly available due to confidentiality and privacy considerations involving research participants but are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

ETHICS STATEMENT

Not applicable.

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