

Evaluating Crisis Communication Strategies on Stakeholder Trust with Emphasis on New Technologies

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Extended Abstract

Purpose

This research aims to analyze the impact of crisis communication strategies on stakeholder trust and satisfaction, emphasizing the mediating role of modern communication technologies in Iranian crisis management organizations. In the current era of complex crises, crisis communication, as the process of transmitting accurate, timely, and coordinated information, plays a vital role in damage reduction and trust maintenance. Despite advances in social media, data mining, and AI, a gap remains in understanding the interplay between communication strategies, technologies, and their effectiveness in relation to stakeholder trust. This research seeks to fill this gap by proposing a comprehensive localized model and an operational framework for policymakers and crisis managers in organizations such as the Red Crescent, the Police Force, and Emergency Services.

Design/methodology/approach

This applied research employs a descriptive-survey method with a quantitative approach. The statistical population comprised senior and middle-level crisis managers in key Iranian organizations across metropolises, estimated at more than 2,000 individuals. Using non-probability purposive sampling and Cochran's formula, 384 individuals were targeted, yielding 121 electronic questionnaires. The researcher-developed, 55-item Likert-scale questionnaire, adapted from international studies, measured four variables: Crisis Communication Strategies (Coombs, 2014), Modern Communication Technologies (Liu et al., 2021), Crisis Communication Effectiveness (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013), and Stakeholder Trust and Satisfaction (Xiao, 2025; Zhao, 2024). Content validity and reliability (Cronbach's alpha, CR) were confirmed. Data were analyzed using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS4, including measurement and structural model evaluation via bootstrapping. Fit indices (SRMR = 0.018, NFI = 0.925, GOF = 0.639) indicated strong model fit.

Findings

Crisis communication strategies have a positive and significant effect on communication effectiveness, and modern technologies further strengthen this effectiveness, ultimately leading to a significant increase in stakeholder trust. Crisis communication strategies,

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including preventive, reactive, and restorative measures, showed the greatest impact on communication effectiveness. Technologies such as social media, real-time information systems, data mining, and artificial intelligence improve the speed, accuracy, and transparency of communications. Communication effectiveness is the main predictor of trust; the direct path from technology to trust was not significant, but communication effectiveness played a positive mediating role.

Research limitations/implications

Key limitations include non-probability sampling and the small sample size (121), warranting caution in generalization. The focus on senior managers overlooks other stakeholders' perspectives, and the cross-sectional design prevents the analysis of trust dynamics over time. Future research should test the model across different crisis types, including natural, political, cyber, and pandemic-related crises, using longitudinal approaches with larger samples. Examining the moderating roles of local variables, including socio-cultural contexts, religiosity, sanctions, and media literacy, and incorporating emerging technologies, including blockchain, LLMs, and IoT, represent valuable future directions.

Practical implications

This research provides a nine-part operational roadmap for smart crisis management, including implementing the "Golden Hour" protocol based on Shingwekar's 3E model; establishing a national organization-public relations platform; founding a national digital command center with hybrid AI; forming a national data exchange consortium; standardizing crisis data visualization; and redesigning manager evaluation systems based on digital skills. These strategies address local challenges, including resistance to change, budget constraints, and technical expertise gaps, and are implementable within Iran's organizational context.

Social implications

Implementing these strategies shifts society toward a smart and resilient crisis management system, resulting in reduced public anxiety through transparent information, increased public participation in relief efforts, strengthened social capital and trust in official institutions, and equitable crisis service coverage across metropolises and border regions, thereby ensuring national resilience against future shocks.

Originality/value

The originality lies in presenting an integrated localized model for the first time in domestic literature; emphasizing the vital mediating role of communication effectiveness as a central mechanism in the crisis management model; providing a nine-part operational plan as a bridge between theory and practice; and demonstrating applicability in Iran's cultural and organizational context. This research also advances the theoretical literature by reconfiguring Coombs's classical SCCT model into a proactive, real-time, stakeholder-centered framework.

Keywords: Crisis Communication, Modern Technologies, Communication Effectiveness, Stakeholder Trust, Smart Crisis Management