

Reconstructing a Public Trust-Based Digital Crisis Communication Model to Address Disinformation and Misinformation on Social Media

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Abstract

This article aims to reconstruct a digital crisis communication model grounded in public trust to address information disorder on social media, with particular attention to Generation Z and the Strawberry Generation phenomenon. This research uses a qualitative literature review, analyzing 15 well-regarded national and international articles published over the last ten years. The literature was analyzed thematically to identify patterns related to crisis communication, misinformation, disinformation, digital media, public trust, and youth resilience. The findings indicate that effective digital crisis communication requires more than rapid clarification. It should integrate early detection, social listening, transparency, message consistency, fact-checking, two-way communication, empathy, and public engagement. The discussion further shows that public trust should be developed as critical public trust, enabling citizens to trust institutions while maintaining the ability to verify information critically. Generation Z should therefore be positioned not merely as information consumers but as active partners in strengthening information resilience. The study concludes that a proactive, participatory, and trust-based communication model is needed to address digital information crises. Future research should empirically test the proposed model across different generations and institutional contexts.

Keyword: Digital Crisis Communication, Public Trust, Disinformation, Misinformation, Social Media

Introduction

Dynamic social media is holistically transforming the way people seek, process, share, and discuss news. Information that previously required traditional media channels and lengthy editorial reviews can now be created and spread globally in mere seconds via digital platforms like TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, and WhatsApp. This transformation has created significant

opportunities for public communication because organizations, governments, and citizens can interact directly without relying entirely on conventional media. However, the speed, openness, interactivity, and algorithm-driven nature of digital communication have also created new vulnerabilities, particularly the growing spread of misinformation, disinformation, manipulated content, deepfakes, and other misleading forms of information. These challenges become even more critical during a crisis, when the public needs information that is both timely and accurate, while the digital environment may simultaneously be flooded with unverified content.

A similar situation is also evident in Indonesia. Interestingly, Generation Z constitutes the primary segment for internet services (34.40%), whereas Millennials account for 30.62%. In 2025, the number of internet users increased further to approximately 229.43 million, with internet penetration reaching 80.66%. These figures demonstrate that the digital environment is no longer merely an additional communication space; social media has now become integrated into the daily social life of Indonesian society, and is increasingly relied upon as the primary means of obtaining information. The Reuters Institute reported that 57% of Indonesians obtain news through social media platforms, while TikTok's role as a news source has increased to 34%.

Young people's mastery of the digital ecosystem makes Gen Z a crucial subject in the study of crisis communication in cyber space. Gen Z has grown up in an environment characterized by internet connectivity, mobile devices, visual content, instant communication, and a culture of sharing. However, familiarity with technology does not automatically translate into an equally strong ability to verify information. Komara and Widjaya (2024) found that although Gen Z has a strong connection to social media and demonstrates certain abilities in analyzing information, this group remains vulnerable to the circulation of false news. Information literacy and critical analytical skills are therefore essential for strengthening Gen Z's resilience against disinformation.

The issue becomes more complex when Generation Z is considered alongside the concept of the Strawberry Generation. This term should not be interpreted as a label suggesting that all members of Gen Z are weak or incapable of dealing with pressure. Rather, the Strawberry Generation concept reflects a paradox among some younger people: they may be creative, technologically adaptive, and innovative, while at the same time displaying greater sensitivity when confronted with social and psychological pressures. Pramudita, Latifah, and Riany (2025), For example, research shows that the quality of friendships and self-confidence in managing mental health have a significant impact on adolescent resilience in the context of the Strawberry Generation phenomenon. Together, these factors explained 28.7% of the variation in self-resilience.

Other studies on Generation Z in Indonesia have likewise indicated that self-efficacy and emotional maturity are associated with resilience. This comparison offers an important perspective for crisis communication. Gen Z can be understood as a highly digitally connected demographic group, whereas the Strawberry Generation is more appropriately viewed as a socio-psychological characterization of some young people who may be relatively sensitive to pressure. Therefore, the main challenge in digital crisis communication is not simply conveying accurate information, but to communicate it in ways that can be accepted, trusted,

understood, and prevented from intensifying anxiety or conflict among social media users. Research on communication transformation among the Strawberry Generation has also demonstrated changes in communication patterns between offline and online environments, including distinctive forms of language and expression in digital interactions.

The empirical threat posed by disinformation in Indonesia has become increasingly visible over the past two years. Throughout 2024, the Ministry of Communication and Digital (Komdigi) identified content containing false or misleading information (1.923 items). This finding suggests that false information is not an isolated phenomenon but an ongoing public communication challenge. In 2025, the Indonesian government also urged platforms such as TikTok and Instagram to strengthen their moderation of harmful content and disinformation because misleading information had contributed to public anger and mass mobilization. The government further highlighted the growing use of deepfake videos and the repurposing of old footage presented as if it depicted current events. These developments demonstrate how a digital information crisis can evolve into a crisis of public trust. When people encounter conflicting information from government institutions, the media, influencers, digital communities, and individual users, the fundamental question is no longer simply “Which information is correct?” but also “Whom should we trust?” In situations like this, crisis communication can no longer be seen as simply providing clarification after a problem or crisis occurs. Instead, it should be viewed as a strategic process for building shared situational awareness, maintaining institutional legitimacy, reducing uncertainty, and sustaining public trust.

Theoretically, Shahbazi and Bunker (2024) explain that the relationship between information, communication, and trust is very important to combat misinformation during a crisis. Research on crisis communication on social media reveals that digital platforms help build collective awareness, but risk damaging public trust if strategically managed poorly. Their research shows that trust is essential to combating hoaxes and strengthening public engagement during times of crisis. This opinion is further strengthened by research from van Zoonen, Luoma-aho, and Lievonon (2024) involving 2,600 participants, where the majority of respondents came from generation Z and millennials. Their findings reveal a paradoxical dimension of institutional trust. Confidence in detecting hoaxes can increase due to high levels of trust, but this can make people lazy to check the facts. This condition can produce an overconfidence effect, whereby individuals believe they can distinguish between accurate and inaccurate information simply because they trust the source. This finding is particularly important because it demonstrates that crisis communication cannot be addressed merely by increasing public trust. Trust must be developed alongside transparency, verification mechanisms, information literacy, and meaningful public engagement.

Based on a systematic review of 423 social media studies, Chen, Xiao, and Kumar (2023), concluding that misinformation is determined by the configuration of source characteristics, the form of the message, the surrounding situation, and the audience profile. They further emphasized that combating misinformation cannot rely on a single intervention but requires a combination of message-based, source-based, network-based, policy, and educational strategies. These findings suggest that crisis communication models based solely on one-way clarification are increasingly inadequate in an interactive social media environment. The limitations of clarification-based approaches are also evident in research on fact-checking.

Based on research on 1,156 active social media users, Wasike (2023) concluded that fact-checking alone is not effective enough to optimally stop the circulation of hoaxes or false information. Even when users knew that particular content had been fact-checked or removed, this did not necessarily prevent them from continuing to share it. These findings indicate a gap between the availability of accurate information and the effectiveness of communication strategies in building public trust, understanding, and concrete action.

According to Al-Omouh et al., (2023), public organizations (government) utilize social networks, during a crisis has a significant impact on how much the public trusts and supports public policies. Their study of 379 Facebook users found that government communication through social media has consequences for public trust and residents' response to the regulation regarding the crisis. Studies on police crisis communication strategies also highlight transparency, accountability, the amount of information provided, and public participation can influence public anger and trust. Other research on the human voice in communication shows that social media interactions that feel more human are far more effective in maintaining an organization's reputation during a para-crisis, especially if supported by a sense of community (social presence) and the organization's ability to listen to the public.

Research on government and non-governmental organization communications in Indonesia shows that addressing vaccine hoaxes requires clear crisis communication. This includes concrete actions, easily understood messages, empathy, a space for dialogue, correcting information, and transparency. Ahmad (2022), meanwhile, demonstrated that the social media ecosystem can create an environment of misinformation and algorithmic damage capable of exacerbating polarization. These results of this study confirm that disinformation it is not just about issues with inaccurate content. This condition is linked to algorithmic structures, patterns of information consumption, user behaviour, and the dynamics of trust within digital society.

Overall, the existing literature reveals several crucial research gaps. First, while prior research has extensively examined misinformation from the perspectives of digital literature, user behavior, fact-checking, and misinformation detection, very few studies have comprehensively integrated digital crisis communication, disinformation, misinformation, Generation Z, the Strawberry Generation phenomenon, and public trust into a single conceptual framework. Second, much of the crisis communication literature focuses on organizational strategies during an ongoing crisis but does not fully explain how organizations can establish communication mechanisms capable of anticipating, responding to, and restoring public trust continuously within an algorithm-driven environment. Third, studies of Gen Z tend to emphasize social media behavior and digital literacy, while the dimensions of psychological vulnerability, resilience, and the Strawberry Generation phenomenon have received limited attention within digital crisis communication research. Fourth, although existing studies demonstrate that trust can strengthen crisis communication, trust can also generate overconfidence and discourage individuals from critically verifying information.

In response to these gaps, this article proposes a reconstructed digital crisis communication model grounded in public trust. The proposed novelty does not simply involve adding public trust as another variable. Instead, it conceptualizes crisis communication as an ecosystem that connects response speed, transparency, message consistency, two-way communication,

human-centered communication, information verification, digital literacy, social listening, and public engagement as mechanisms for building trust. The model also incorporates the characteristics of younger users, particularly Generation Z and the Strawberry Generation phenomenon, as an important contextual dimension that may shape how crisis messages are received, verified, shared, or rejected.

From this perspective, digital crisis communication should no longer be viewed primarily as an effort to correct hoaxes after they have gone viral. Rather, it should be understood as an ongoing process of building trust before, during, and after an information crisis. The reconstructed model seeks to bridge two needs that are often treated separately: the institutional need to communicate information rapidly and the public's need for information that is credible, transparent, understandable, humane, and verifiable. Ultimately, effective crisis communications must not only reduce the spread of misinformation, but also strengthen community resilience in the face of information manipulation.

This article aims to update the digital crisis communication model that focuses on public trust to curb fake news content on social media, especially for Generation Z and the Strawberry Generation phenomenon.

More specifically, this study explores the patterns of hoax dissemination on social network and explains the link between crisis communication strategies and issue of public trust, and understand how Generation Z and the Strawberry Generation respond to emergency information. Furthermore, this study also identifies weaknesses in the existing communication model in order to design a new one that is more open, adaptive, and capable of maintaining public trust. This research is expected to enrich the theory of digital crisis communication while providing practical guidance for governments, public institutions, organizations, and social media stakeholders in dealing with an increasingly complex information ecosystem.

Literature Review

Digital Crisis Communication

Crisis communication is a planned step taken by an organization to convey information, calm the public, and maintain its good name when facing major problems. In the digital environment, crisis communication has changed significantly because the public is no longer merely a recipient of messages; people can also create, comment on, and distribute information. Hasanah and Destrity (2024) demonstrate that social media can be used for crisis communication both before a crisis and during its early stages through sensemaking messages, risk communication, and public education. Their findings suggest that digital crisis communication should not be limited to responding after a crisis has occurred, but should also serve as a mechanism for building public awareness and preparedness. Larisu and Zulham (2024) note that handling an organization's reputation and keeping public trust are vital for social media crisis communication. Thus, digital crisis communication is a strategic method that uses social media's fast, interactive, and open features to handle information and public relationships during a crisis. Theoretically, this study draws on Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). This theory outlines how an organization responds to a crisis needs to be aligned with the level of blame or responsibility assigned to it by the public or stakeholders.

This principle becomes even more important in social media environments, where public perceptions can change rapidly in response to emerging information. Hutagalung and Sutrisno (2025) emphasize that two-way communication is an important element of institutional resilience during a crisis because it enables organizations to respond to public needs while also receiving feedback from citizens. Hapsari and Ananda (2024) further demonstrate that effective crisis communication requires the integration of internal and external communication to maintain organizational trust and resilience. Accordingly, this study does not conceptualize digital crisis communication as a one-way process, but rather as a dialogic process that combines rapid response, transparency, message consistency, two-way communication, and the organization's ability to listen to the public.

Disinformation and Misinformation

Disinformation and misinformation represent two forms of information disorder that differ in their underlying characteristics but can both disrupt effective public communication. The main difference between the two lies in intent: misinformation is spread unintentionally even if its content is false, while disinformation is deliberately created and spread to commit fraud. In the social media environment, the distinction between these forms of information disorder can become increasingly difficult to identify because content may be taken out of context, selectively edited, combined with other materials, or amplified through algorithmic systems. Komara and Widjaya (2024) demonstrate that although Generation Z has a strong connection to social media, young users remain vulnerable to false information, making information literacy and critical analytical skills essential. This finding indicates that familiarity with technology alone does not necessarily make someone able to distinguish between reliable and unreliable information.

From a theoretical perspective, disinformation can be examined through the information disorder approach, which considers not only whether a message is true or false, but also the context, motivation, and processes through which information is produced and disseminated. Zhang (2024) revealed that the influence of each media platform on public trust during emergency situations differs, depending on the type of media and trust category studied. This finding suggests that the characteristics of an information channel can shape how the public evaluates institutions. Shahbazi and Bunker (2024) also found that the spread of misinformation during a crisis can damage collective situational awareness and reduce levels of trust in official sources. Accordingly, this study positions disinformation and misinformation as triggers of digital information crises that require communication strategies capable of providing credible, verifiable, consistent, and responsive information as public conversations evolve.

Public trust refers to the belief that institutions possess the competence, integrity, consistency, and commitment necessary to fulfill their responsibilities. Trust plays a strategic role in crisis communication, because people tend to more easily accept and carry out directions from agencies they consider trustworthy. Paskarina (2023), social media can shape the quality of public perception regarding pandemic management regulations, as well as determining citizens' level of trust in the government. Her findings indicate that under conditions of uncertainty, citizens require timely information through digital media, but the information they encounter also becomes part of the process through which trust in government is either strengthened or weakened.

Theoretically, public trust in this study is positioned as a mechanism linking the quality of crisis communication to public responses. In other words, communication that is transparent, consistent, timely, and dialogic does not necessarily generate a positive public response if people lack trust in the information source. Kumalasari et al. (2025) stated that transparent digital messaging makes people more aware. This trust and concern also help better resolve crisis situations. This finding indicates that trust does not operate independently but interacts with public participation. According to additional findings from Zhang (2024), social media can influence the level of public trust in crisis situations through their views on government performance. Therefore, this study conceptualizes public trust as a strategic communication asset built through transparency, competence, consistency, responsiveness, and public engagement rather than simply as a positive perception of an institution.

Generation Z in Digital Crisis Communication

Generation Z thrives in a digital environment where social networks serve as a vital means of communication, finding information, socializing, and shaping identity. These characteristics make Gen Z particularly relevant to the study of digital crisis communication because its members do not simply consume information; they can also become information amplifiers. Komara and Widjaya (2024) found that Gen Z has a strong attachment to social media while also facing substantial exposure to disinformation. Information literacy and critical thinking are therefore important components of Gen Z's resilience against misleading information. This perspective suggests that Gen Z should not be viewed simply as a technologically literate generation, but as a group with distinctive patterns of information consumption, interpretation, evaluation, and dissemination.

In the context of crisis communication, Gen Z's characteristics should also be considered in relation to how young people develop trust in information sources. Zhang (2024) shows that social media influences public trust through mechanisms that differ from those associated with traditional media. This is particularly relevant to Gen Z because much of its interaction with information takes place through digital platforms characterized by comments, sharing, likes, user-generated content, and algorithmic recommendations. Pramudita, Latifah, and Riany (2025) explain that the resilience of young people in facing the Strawberry Generation phenomenon is closely related to social relationships and beliefs about mental health. These findings suggest that young people's ability to cope with the onslaught of information pressure depends not only on digital literacy but also on psychological resilience and a positive social environment. Accordingly, this study positions Gen Z as both a strategically important and potentially vulnerable group within the digital crisis communication ecosystem.

Strawberry Generation

The concept of the "Strawberry Generation" describes a group of young people who are creative, adaptable, and technologically savvy, but are sometimes considered more vulnerable when faced with pressure. The concept should be applied carefully because the Strawberry Generation is not a demographic category directly equivalent to Generation Z. Pramudita, Latifah, and Riany (2025) Demonstrate through empirical data that, within the framework of the Strawberry Generation, adolescent self-resilience is linked to the quality of their friendships and their confidence in managing mental health. Their findings indicate that young people's capacity to cope with pressure can be influenced by social support and psychological resources. In digital crisis communication, this perspective is particularly

relevant because excessive, provocative, or emotionally charged crisis information can influence how young people understand and respond to an event.

The Strawberry Generation phenomenon can also be understood through changes in communication patterns between digital and non-digital environments. Adrian and Siahaan (2024) identify transformations in the communication patterns of the Strawberry Generation across offline and online environments, demonstrating how digital technology has shaped the ways in which young people express themselves and interact with others. This characteristic is important because crisis communication strategies that are excessively formal, one-directional, or unresponsive may not effectively align with the communication preferences of younger audiences. Hutagalung and Sutrisno (2025) Similarly, highlight the need for two-way communication to build strong institutional resilience during crises. Therefore, the Strawberry Generation concept provides a useful contextual perspective for understanding the need for communication that is more dialogic, empathetic, responsive, and human-centered.

Social Media as a Crisis Communication Ecosystem

In this study, social networks are understood not as communication channel but as information ecosystem in which institutions, citizens, influencers, communities, media organizations, and algorithmic systems interact simultaneously. This environment enables crisis information to spread rapidly, but it can also give misleading information substantial visibility and reach. Hasanah and Destrity (2024) Demonstrates that social media can be used to convey messages of clarity, increase public awareness, share risk information, and provide lessons for citizens. Social media therefore has significant strategic value in crisis communication when it is managed systematically and responsibly.

However, these benefits are accompanied by substantial risks. Shahbazi and Bunker (2024) Social media has proven to be able to strengthen collective understanding of a situation, but on the other hand, it can erode public trust due to data inconsistencies, the circulation of outdated information, or conflicts between official statements and alternative sources. Zhang (2024) confirming the role of social networks in public trust during a crisis differs from that of conventional media. Therefore, this research views social media as a strategic space for crisis communication, where organizations are required to manage information, interactions, data validity, and public trust simultaneously.

Method

This study employs qualitative methods and a literature review to explore and redesign the digital crisis communication model. This model focuses on public trust to minimize hoaxes on social networks. The literature focuses on the publication of scientific articles from the 2016-2025 period, covering research developments over the past ten years. Researchers selectively selected 15 journal articles based on the suitability of their content to the themes of crisis communication in the digital era, misinformation, disinformation, social media, levels of public trust, Generation Z, and communication strategies of agencies or governments when facing crises. The selected articles were drawn from reputable international and national journals and were traceable through academic databases such as Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, Springer, Taylor & Francis, and Google Scholar.

Priority was given to studies that had a DOI, had undergone peer review, and made clear theoretical or empirical contributions. For example, Shahbazi and Bunker (2024), who examined social media trust and misinformation during crises; Badu, Kruke, and Saetren (2023), which analyzes the relationship between how messages are delivered during a crisis and the level of public trust and MacKay et al. (2021), who investigated crisis communication through social media, demonstrate the strong connection between digital communication, misinformation, public trust, and public responses. Research focusing on the Indonesian context was also considered important, particularly the study by Lestari and Prastowo (2022), the use of social networks by the Indonesian government as a means to disseminate information, including for disaster risk mitigation. This study highlights challenges related to trust, credibility, misinformation, and the continued tendency toward one-way communication in government digital communication practices.

The 15 selected articles were examined through qualitative thematic analysis, which included identification, categorization, comparison, and synthesis of findings based on the core themes of the research. In the initial phase, this research identified the core concepts and theoretical basis of each literature, focusing on SCCT, crisis/risk communication, information chaos, digital communication, social media, and public trust. The second stage focused on comparing empirical findings concerning communication strategies, transparency, response speed, two-way communication, information verification, public engagement, and trust-building. The third stage involved identifying similarities, differences, limitations, and research gaps across the reviewed literature.

The findings were then synthesized to reconstruct a conceptual model linking disinformation and misinformation, digital crisis communication, transparency, responsiveness, consistency, dialogue, verification, and social listening, public trust, public resilience, with Generation Z and the Strawberry Generation phenomenon positioned as contextual characteristics of the audience. This synthesis is consistent with recent developments in digital crisis communication research, which indicate a gradual shift from reactive communication models toward approaches that are more proactive, adaptive, trust-oriented, and responsive to the characteristics of digital platforms. Accordingly, this study does not seek to conduct a meta-analysis or statistical testing. Instead, it aims to develop a conceptual synthesis and reconstruct a model based on consistent patterns and insights identified across both international and Indonesian literature.

Result

The qualitative literature review of 15 international and national journal articles published over the past ten years indicates that digital crisis communication has gradually shifted from a predominantly reactive approach toward one that is more proactive, dialogic, and trust-based. The synthesis identified five recurring themes: (1) the speed and accuracy of information responses, (2) message transparency and consistency, (3) two-way communication and public engagement, (4) information verification and literacy, and (5) Public trust is key to ensuring that emergency or crisis messages are well received. Shahbazi and Bunker (2024) While social media is useful for fostering shared understanding during a crisis, its misuse can undermine public trust in information from official agencies. These findings are consistent with a comprehensive analysis of 26 studies on crisis communication, which grouped them into three basic patterns: command-control, uncertainty management,

and trust-based collaboration. The review also highlighted social media as one of the most prominent channels for communicating with the public during emergencies.

The second finding shows that disinformation and misinformation should not be viewed merely as problems of inaccurate information. They can also develop into broader crises of public trust. Muhammed and Mathew (2022), in their review of 28 studies, found that misinformation on social media poses a significant threat to public interests and occurs across a range of contexts, including disasters, health, and politics. Their review further suggests that the spread of misinformation needs to be understood through the interaction between its underlying causes, the characteristics of the misinformation itself, and its consequences for society. In the Indonesian context, Sarjito (2024) similarly found that hoaxes and disinformation can weaken public trust in government, intensify polarization, and threaten social stability. These findings suggest that crisis communication cannot rely solely on clarification after false information has already spread. Instead, it requires communication mechanisms capable of detecting problematic information at an early stage, providing timely and understandable explanations, and maintaining the credibility of information sources.

The third finding concerns the role of public trust. The literature consistently positions trust as a central factor influencing whether people accept, question, or reject crisis-related messages. Shahbazi and Bunker (2024) identify trust as an important component in developing shared situational awareness, while van Zoonen, Luoma-aho, and Lievonen (2024) reveals a more complex and contradictory relationship between trust in institutions and user responses to information whose veracity is unclear. Research on 2,600 respondents (the majority from Generation Z and Millennials) shows that high trust in an institution can increase a person's confidence in recognizing false information, but at the same time actually reduces their urge to check its truth independently. This finding indicates that public trust should be accompanied by a culture of verification. In other words, effective crisis communication should not seek to create passive trust, but rather foster critical trust, a form of trust supported by transparency, evidence, and the willingness to verify information.

The fourth finding highlights Generation Z as both a strategic and vulnerable group within the digital disinformation ecosystem. Komara and Widjaya (2024) show that Generation Z has a strong connection to social media and possesses certain abilities to assess and filter information. Nevertheless, this generation remains vulnerable to false information, highlighting the need to strengthen information literacy and critical analytical skills. The risk of easily believing misleading content is influenced by personal background (demographics), way of thinking (cognitive bias), and social interactions or peer pressure. Moreover, a cross-national study involving 66,242 respondents across 24 countries found that Generation Z was among the groups more vulnerable to misinformation compared with several other generational groups. These findings reinforce the importance of incorporating the characteristics and information behaviors of younger generations into digital crisis communication models.

The fifth finding demonstrates that one-way communication is increasingly inadequate for addressing digital information crises. The literature points toward a growing emphasis on two-way communication, through which the public is not only positioned as a recipient of information but also given opportunities to provide feedback, report questionable content,

and participate in clarification processes. Based on the review of emergency communications, social media is divided into three types, where interactive two-way communication is much more effective in maintaining safety and improving crisis management. Based on this synthesis, the study proposes that effective digital crisis communication requires an integrated approach combining rapid response, transparency, consistency, two-way communication, information verification, social listening, digital literacy, and public trust-building. Together, these elements provide a foundation for moving digital crisis communication beyond reactive correction toward a more proactive, participatory, and trust-oriented model.

Discussion

Reconstruction of Digital Crisis Communication

This research proves that the conventional model of digital crisis communication, where organizations are the sole source and the public is merely the recipient, is no longer relevant. In the era of social media, people are now able to independently produce, interpret, and disseminate their own information. As a result, organizations are no longer the sole actors controlling the flow of information. Crisis communication has consequently evolved into a process of negotiating meaning among institutions, citizens, media organizations, influencers, digital communities, and platform algorithms. Shahbazi and Bunker (2024) Support this argument by showing how social media helps disseminate important information during a crisis, but also threatens public trust if the communication strategy is poor. Therefore, the reconstruction of the model should shift its focus from simply asking “How should an organization communicate information?” to a broader question: “How can an organization build an information ecosystem that the public can trust and independently verify?”

The reconstructed model proposed in this study consists of three interconnected layers. The first layer is information crisis management, which includes early detection, social listening, identification of disinformation sources, fact-checking, and issue mapping. The second layer is digital crisis communication, which emphasizes response speed, transparency, message consistency, two-way communication, empathy, and the use of accessible language. The third layer focuses on public trust-building, which is expected to strengthen institutional credibility, encourage public participation, and enhance societal resilience against false information. This structure is consistent with findings from systematic reviews of emergency communication, which emphasize the need to move beyond a traditional command-and-control approach toward a model based more strongly on trust and collaboration.

Disinformation and Misinformation as Crisis Triggers

The findings indicate that disinformation and misinformation should be positioned as strategic inputs within a digital crisis communication model rather than being treated merely as problems that emerge after a crisis has already developed. False or misleading information can create uncertainty, intensify public fear, shape negative perceptions, and encourage people to make decisions based on unreliable information. Muhammed and Mathew (2022) demonstrate that misinformation can spread across highly sensitive domains and potentially disrupt public interests. In the Indonesian context, Sarjito (2024) similarly shows that hoaxes and disinformation can undermine public trust in government and contribute to greater social polarization.

These findings suggest that organizations need to develop preventive communication mechanisms, rather than relying primarily on corrective communication. When an organization responds only after a hoax has gone viral, alternative narratives may already dominate the information environment. Digital crisis communication therefore needs to begin with an early warning system supported by social listening, continuous monitoring of public conversations, identification of emerging narratives, and mapping of information sources. Through this approach, organizations can intervene earlier, before disinformation escalates into a broader reputational crisis.

Public Trust as the Core of the Model

The findings place public trust at the center of the reconstructed model; however, trust should not be understood as blind or unquestioning acceptance. Van Zoonen et al. (2024) Discovering the weakness of trust, where high confidence in an institution makes someone feel very adept at recognizing fake news and ultimately lazy about checking the facts themselves. This finding suggests that the more an institution is trusted, the greater its responsibility to ensure that the information it provides is transparent, verifiable, and consistent.

Referring to this basic idea, this study proposes the idea of critical public trust, which means a form of public belief that is not rigid, but remains open to testing, evaluation, and active participation. This concept differs from conventional trust, which may simply expect the public to accept information provided by an institution. Under critical public trust, people trust an institution because it demonstrates competence, integrity, transparency, consistency, and openness to correction. This approach becomes increasingly important because Shahbazi and Bunker (2024) show that declining trust in official information channels can intensify misinformation problems and undermine shared situational awareness. Critical public trust therefore seeks to balance institutional credibility with an informed and questioning public.

Generation Z as an Active Actor in Crisis Communication

The findings further indicate that Generation Z should be positioned as an active actor in crisis communication rather than merely as a target audience. Generation Z does not simply consume information through social media; its members also comment, share content, create their own narratives, and influence opinions within digital networks. Komara and Widjaya (2024) show that Generation Z has a strong attachment to social media while remaining vulnerable to disinformation. A review of 151 studies on adolescents' responses to misinformation indicated young users' overconfidence in their ability to distinguish between misleading information.

For this reason, crisis communication aimed at Generation Z should go beyond instructional messages such as “do not believe hoaxes.” Instead, communication should provide clear reasons, credible evidence, reliable sources, sufficient context, and meaningful opportunities for participation. Meanwhile, the concept of the Strawberry Generation can be used as a perspective for understanding dimensions of resilience and sensitivity among younger people when dealing with information-related pressures. Communication strategies should therefore adopt language that is more human, visual, interactive, and empathetic, while maintaining factual and academic accuracy. Such an approach positions Generation Z not

simply as an object of crisis communication, but as a partner in strengthening information resilience.

Conclusion

Based on the qualitative literature review of 15 reputable international and national journal articles published over the past ten years, this study concludes that the development of social media has fundamentally changed crisis communication. Communication has shifted from a predominantly one-way process into a communication ecosystem that is faster, more interactive, more participatory, and increasingly difficult for any single institution to control. Disinformation and misinformation should no longer be viewed merely as problems of inaccurate information. They can become triggers of broader information crises that generate uncertainty, public anxiety, polarization, reputational damage, and declining public trust. This situation is further complicated by the prominent role of Generation Z, one of the largest and most active groups of internet users, who participate not only in consuming information but also in producing and distributing it. At the same time, the Strawberry Generation phenomenon provides an additional perspective on the importance of resilience, social support, and more empathetic communication when young people face information-related pressures in the digital environment.

The synthesis of the literature demonstrates that effective digital crisis communication requires the integration of early detection, social listening, rapid response, transparency, message consistency, information verification, two-way communication, empathy, and public engagement. Public trust emerges as a central element connecting the quality of institutional communication with how people receive and respond to crisis-related information. However, trust should not be cultivated as passive compliance with institutional messages. Instead, this study proposes the concept of critical public trust, in which trust is accompanied by the willingness to verify information, think critically, and participate in the communication process. The findings above indicate that this study reconstructs a digital crisis communication model linking disinformation and misinformation, early detection and social listening, digital crisis communication, critical public trust, public participation and information resilience.

Generation Z and the characteristics associated with the Strawberry Generation are positioned as important contextual dimensions for understanding how younger audiences receive, evaluate, and disseminate crisis-related information. The model therefore contributes conceptually by shifting the crisis communication paradigm from a reactive and corrective approach toward one that is proactive, dialogic, participatory, and grounded in trust.

Based on the findings, government institutions, public organizations, and other relevant organizations should develop proactive digital crisis communication systems by establishing early warning and social listening mechanisms capable of detecting emerging issues, negative narratives, hoaxes, and disinformation before they escalate into larger crises. Responses to false or misleading information should be delivered quickly while still being supported by a rigorous verification process. Rather than simply using social media for official announcements or corrections, organizations should engage in genuine conversations with the public. Crisis messages should be transparent, consistent, accessible, human-centered,

and supported by evidence or sources that can be independently verified. Such an approach is important for building public trust that is based not only on emotional confidence but also on the credibility and verifiability of information.

For Generation Z and groups associated with the Strawberry Generation phenomenon, communication strategies should be adapted to their distinctive patterns of digital interaction. Institutions should develop content that is visual, concise, interactive, and educational without compromising factual accuracy. Digital literacy and fact-checking skills should also be strengthened so that young people are not positioned merely as consumers of information but can become active agents of information resilience within their social networks. Future research should empirically test the reconstructed model using quantitative, mixed-methods, or social network analysis approaches. Future research could compare Generation Z with other generations to see if “Strawberry Generation” traits act as factors influencing digital crisis communication and public trust.

Theoretically, this study expands the discussion on Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) by applying it to a digital communication environment that is very different from traditional media. SCCT offers a crucial foundation for determining crisis strategies based on the attribution or assignment of responsibility for the crisis at hand. SCCT offers a crucial foundation for determining crisis management strategies linked to crisis attribution.

However, the dynamics of social media demonstrate that crisis response strategies must also account for algorithmic processes, user participation, disinformation, the speed of information diffusion, and real-time changes in public perceptions. The reconstructed model expands this perspective by integrating information disorder, digital communication, public trust, social listening, and public resilience into a single conceptual framework.

Another important theoretical implication is the introduction of the concept of critical public trust within digital crisis communication. Public trust is not positioned as a condition in which people simply accept all information provided by institutions without questioning it. Rather, trust is understood as a relationship built through credibility, transparency, consistency, openness, and opportunities for verification. From this perspective, the ultimate goal of crisis communication is not simply to gain public trust, but to cultivate a form of trust that is healthy, critical, informed, and resilient against information manipulation.

Practically, the findings provide a basis for governments and organizations to develop a Digital Crisis Communication Management System consisting of four core functions: monitoring, verification, response, and engagement. The monitoring function is responsible for identifying emerging issues and narratives; verification ensures that information is accurate before it is communicated; response enables organizations to provide information rapidly, consistently, transparently, and in a human-centered manner; and engagement ensures that the public has opportunities to ask questions, provide feedback, and participate in the clarification process. For public communication managers, the findings also highlight the importance of shifting the focus from simply fighting hoaxes toward building societal information resilience. This means that organizations should not rely solely on removing or refuting false information. They also need to enhance the public’s ability to identify trustworthy sources and reliable information, understand context, and avoid publishing content before its accuracy has been verified. This

approach is particularly relevant to Generation Z because young people are not merely communication targets; they are also important actors in the reproduction and distribution of information across digital networks.

At the policy level, governments need to develop digital crisis communication policies that integrate information transparency, fact-checking, digital literacy, protection against information manipulation, engagement with digital platforms, and mechanisms for inter-agency coordination. Policy should not focus exclusively on removing problematic content, as content removal alone does not necessarily address the underlying causes of information disorder. Instead, policy should encourage the development of an information ecosystem in which citizens can access official information that is timely, credible, understandable, and independently verifiable.

The broader implication of this study is therefore the need for a paradigm shift in crisis communication policy from information control toward information resilience. Governments and public institutions should not only seek to control information during a crisis but also strengthen society's capacity to respond independently to information manipulation. Based on this framework, Generation Z should not be considered simply as a group that is easily influenced by disinformation, but rather as a strategic partner in realizing a trusted, inclusive, and strong digital communications ecosystem.

Research limitations, this study has not yet tested the empirical validity, reliability, or effectiveness of the reconstructed digital crisis communication model based on public trust. Although the model was developed through a synthesis of findings from 15 selected articles, this literature synthesis is insufficient to confirm that the relationships between the model's components hold true within the context of digital crisis communication in society. Consequently, the resulting model remains conceptual and requires further validation through empirical data.

Future research could test the model using a mixed-methods approach, quantitative surveys, comparative case studies, or digital communication experiments. Such testing could serve to validate constructs, examine relationships between variables, and evaluate the effectiveness of digital crisis communication strategies in restoring the trust of a critical public, strengthening information resilience, and engaging younger audiences.

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