

Social Media And Culture In Crisis Communication: Marwako Restaurant Crises Management In Ghana

Ibn Kailan Abdul-Hamid¹, Winston Asiedu Inkumsah², Andrews A. Akolaa³, Linda Ethel Naa-Akaibi Narh⁴

¹University of Professional Studies P.O. Box LG 149, Legon, Accra, Ghana ikabdul-hamid@upsamail.edu.gh

²University of Professional Studies P.O. Box LG 149, Legon, Accra, Ghana winston.inkumsah@upsamail.edu.gh

³University of Professional Studies P.O. Box LG 149, Legon, Accra, Ghana andrews.akolaa@upsamail.edu.gh

⁴University of Professional Studies P.O. Box LG 149, Legon, Accra, Ghana Email: linda.narh@upsamail.edu.gh

Corresponding Author:

Ibn Kailan Abdul-Hamid University of Professional Studies P.O. Box LG 149, Legon, Accra, Ghana Email: ikabdul-hamid@upsamail.edu.gh

Abstract

This study evaluated the opportunities and problems that interactive media presented to Marwako during times of crisis. The current study, which took a case study method, looked at how Marwako used social media to handle emergencies in Ghana in 2022. The study's key conclusions are that: 1) emergency response strategies should be based on assessments of fault by cultural insiders; 2) cross-cultural differences exist in how specific response plans, like apologies, are perceived and used; and 3) the cultural context of influential social media users is crucial.

Introduction

Crises can have a significant impact on business's interested parties. According to Coombs (2007), an organisational crisis is "the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens significant stakeholder expectations, can seriously impair an organization's performance, and can generate negative outcomes" (p. 2). Every industry, social setting, and organisational structure has crises. Whilst they are frequently unanticipated and detrimental to the business's usual operations, they are common and expected. The way an organization communicates during and after a crisis can either exacerbate or mitigate the negative consequences of the crisis. If the crisis is effectively managed, it can aid in regaining control over the organisation, enhancing the reputation of the business, and winning back the trust of stakeholders. Ulmer, Seeger, and Sellnow (2007) agree when they found that organizations that communicate effectively during a crisis are more likely to regain the trust of their stakeholders. However, crisis communication can be complex and challenging, especially in the digital age. Veil, Buehner, and Palenchar (2011) argued that digital technologies have made it more difficult for organizations to manage and communicate during crises. Particularly with regard to social networking sites, organisations have distinct difficulties due to its customer-focused approach. In order to evaluate business issues concerning the Ghanaian fast food chain Marwako, this study uses a case study methodology. The purpose of this study was to demonstrate how cultural subtleties can be used to engage stakeholders in Ghana during the food poisoning crisis around Mother's Day by utilising social media content makers, particularly the role of powerful content creators.

In Ghana, the popularity of quick meals is rising. Only formal restaurants had a 68% prevalence of the meal, and 65% of survey participants who ate fast food frequently, or at least once a week, reported doing so (Omari, Jongerden, Essegbey, Frempong & Ruivenkamp, 2013). Ghana is going through fast urbanisation, economic growth, and salary enhancement, which has led to a surge in the number of middle-income individuals living there. Because the food industry is projected to grow more, it follows that both the manufacture and consumption of out-of-home meals, such as quick-service restaurants, would rise (Omari and Frempong, 2016).

Additionally, there is a change in how Ghanaian customers use interactive platforms, and social media is now a crucial strategic communication tool for both educational and participatory activities for many businesses. Due to its potential to provide reasonably priced targeting and categorization reasons for conveying remedies regarding products and its associated difficulties to customers, the acceptance and employment of social networking sites nowadays provides an appealing avenue for company expansion (Odoom, Anning-Dorson and Acheampong, 2017). Ghanaian consumers now heavily rely on social networking sites when making purchases (Osei and Abenyin, 2016). Given that the majority of individuals have access to the Web and frequently use it, social networking platforms have evolved into trendsetters for society. Particularly, online social networking portals have become the primary way clients look for various goods and services, and they are also some of the most effective marketing tools for restaurants (Khan et al., 2019). For instance, stakeholders employed social media platforms to seek out information concerning matters encompassing health, societal well-being, and environmental concerns (Achampong, Azanga & Agbeno, 2020). Further, people frequently search for information on food-related topics. On social networking sites, scandals involving food that make the news are known to incite passionate debate. Thus, studying the socially controlled crisis intervention of the Ghanaian food service chain Marwako should offer insightful information to other fast-food brands, crisis communication theorists, and practitioners.

The research is guided by the following structure: while the third part of the study addresses the research methods, the second part of the study provides a review of relevant literature. The analysis and discussion are in the fourth part of this study.

Review of Literature

The following part presents a theoretical backdrop that was synthesised from academic publications on social media crisis communication and related topics that were found during our search of the field's literature. Brief reviews of social media, crisis management and situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) (Coombs and Holladay, 2002), the usage of social networking sites in business crisis management, and the cultural setting of crises management in Ghana are provided in this part.

Social media

Social media is conceptualized as a collection of internet-based applications that extend from the conceptual and technological underpinnings of Web 2.0, facilitating the generation and sharing of content produced by users (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Whatsapp, Facebook, and Instagram are the major online communication platforms in Ghana (Statista, 2023). Participants can make updates to their status, remark on others' statuses, tag other users, and perform other actions using the channels (Jiang, Deng, Li & Liu, 2021). A status update is a message that users of social media continually publish on their accounts on social media, according to our definition.

The business landscape for organizations has undergone transformation due to the advent of social media, offering a spectrum of prospects and complexities (Hanna, Rohm & Crittenden, 2011). In terms of advantages, social media engenders several merits for organizations. Primarily, it facilitates the cultivation of a dynamic and interactive rapport between organizations and their stakeholders, thereby affording the capacity to attentively heed their perspectives and promptly address their inquiries (Castriotto, Floredu, Di Guardo & Cabiddu, 2013). Subsequently, it furnishes organizations with expeditious access to contemporaneous data generated by their stakeholders in real-time, allowing them to gather insights into stakeholder demographics and acquire input pertinent to their offerings (Schniederjans, Cao & Schniederjans, 2013). Also, it has engendered a cost-effective mode of interaction for businesses, underpinned by the visibility of organizational responses to inquiries posed by various customers, including those relevant to their own concerns (Bygstad & Presthus, 2012). These advantages have impelled organizations to harness the potential of social media for an assortment of objectives, encompassing marketing endeavors, dynamic stakeholder engagement, responsive actions

to stakeholder requests, prompt and economical feedback collection on their products and services, as well as the fostering of innovative concepts (Floreddu et al., 2014).

Conversely, social media has engendered complexities for organizations (Veil, Buehner & Palenchar, 2011). It has forged a domain wherein stakeholders are empowered to swiftly disseminate information concerning organizations and articulate their perceptions thereof, while businesses find themselves with diminished governance over the narratives revolving around them (Effing & Spil, 2016). This curtailment of organizational authority within the social media sphere has elevated organizational susceptibilities, thereby amplifying the incidence and gravity of organizational challenges (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

Given the emphasis of this study on the significance of proficient social media utilization, particularly the involvement of important online journalist, through a discerning comprehension of cultural intricacies to effectively involve stakeholders in Ghana amidst the food poisoning crisis on Mother's Day, the forthcoming section will delve into a comprehensive exploration of crisis communication via social media. However, prior to delving into the assessment of social media's role in crisis communication, it is imperative to first appraise crisis communication itself and its corresponding strategies.

Crisis communication and situational crisis communication theory

A crisis for a business is an unforeseen occurrence that undermines significant stakeholder expectations and can significantly affect the efficiency of an organisation and create adverse consequences (Coombs & Holladay, 2011). Companies and customers may experience economic, physical, health, and other types of impact when emergencies are not handled well (Heath & Millar, 2004). Crisis communication is a crucial component of managing crises because it has the power to improve or damage a company's image and lessen or aggravate negative effects (Marra, 1999). An organization's dissemination of crisis communication information amidst a crisis is what we refer to as a crisis response (Hale, Dulek & Hale, 2005).

Previous scholarly investigations in the domain of crisis communication have focused on the fundamental aspects of crisis response, encompassing both informational dimensions (Sturges, 1994) and the formulation of effective response strategies (Coombs, 2007). Sturges (1994) delineated three distinctive categories of information distribution intended for interested groups. Firstly, instructive information pertains to guidance offered to interested parties with the objective of safeguarding their physical well-being in the face of a crisis. Secondly, adaptive information serves to aid stakeholders in psychological coping by extending empathy or clarifying the crisis situation. Lastly, internalized information signifies the informational content that stakeholders assimilate to construct a cognitive depiction of the firm (Sturges, 1994). It is noteworthy, however, that Sturges (1994) observed that disseminating internalized information during a crisis may potentially lead interested parties to construe the firm as driven by personal gains.

Coombs has extensively delved into the domain of crisis response methodologies, characterizing them as the actions and communications an organization undertakes in the aftermath of a crisis occurrence. In accordance with Coombs (2011), a crisis response strategy is underpinned by the utilization of crisis communication techniques to attain specific objectives. Coombs (2011) identified four distinctive clusters of crisis response techniques, namely denial, diminishment, rebuilding, and bolstering. Denial strategies are geared towards affirming that the organization bears no culpability for the crisis event. Diminishment strategies aim to mitigate the perception that the crisis situation is within the organization's control or that its repercussions are deleterious. Rebuilding strategies endeavor to reinstate the organization's standing by offering restitution and expressing remorse. Bolstering strategies are designed to foster robust affiliations with interested parties.

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), formulated by Coombs and Holladay in 2002, holds potential to guide enterprises in selecting optimal responsive strategies to mitigate the reputational jeopardy tied to crises (Coombs, 2007). SCCT holds a prominent position within the realm of crisis communication, as evidenced by its frequent citations, as highlighted in An and Cheng's (2010) comprehensive meta-analysis of crisis communication scholarship spanning the last three decades. Despite being conceived prior to the widespread adoption of social media, SCCT could offer valuable insights for researchers aiming to comprehend the utilization of social media by organizations for crisis

response, given its detachment from specifying the crisis communication medium while advising optimal response strategies.

Before enacting a crisis response plan, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) advocates the provisioning of informative and adaptable information, presenting a two-phase procedure for accomplishing this task. In the initial phase, the enterprise is required to discern the crisis type and its relevant audience (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Within this framework, Coombs and Holladay (2002) propose ten distinct crisis archetypes, which they classify into three overarching categories: victim-oriented, accidental, and preventable. The categorization delineates three distinct clusters attributing varying degrees of organizational responsibility to the crisis. In circumstances classified within the victim cluster, the firm is seen as a target of the crisis rather than its instigator. In cases aligned with the accident cluster, the crisis is construed as unintended and beyond the organization's control. Crises ascribed to the preventable cluster suggest the organization's deliberate involvement in actions that precipitated the crisis.

In the subsequent phase, the organization opts for response strategies contingent upon the crisis type cluster and whether the organization bore a negative prior reputation or encountered analogous crisis scenarios. Progressing from denial through diminishment to rejuvenating, the approaches assume an escalatingly conciliatory stance, implying increasing accountability for the crisis's occurrence (Coombs, 2007). As the risk to reputation heightens, a preference for more conciliatory strategies is recommended (Coombs, 2011).

With the foundational theories of crisis communication and response strategies elucidated, our focus now shifts to examining the broader role of social media in crisis communication.

Social media and business crisis communication

Social media possesses distinctive attributes that render it an attractive tool for organizations to employ in crisis communication, owing to its interactive nature, extensive outreach, and capacity to facilitate firm rejoinders to interest group interactions (Jin et al., 2014; Omilion-Hodges & McClain, 2015; Schultz, Utz & Georitz, 2011). Conversely, social media has introduced complexities to the landscape of crisis communication for businesses, given its propensity for interest groups to engender content, monitor an firm's crisis responses, and orchestrate collective actions against the firm (Gruber et al., 2015; Xia, 2013).

Customers and other important stakeholders anticipate prompt social media crisis communication from businesses (Gruber et al., 2015). Adverse information and falsehoods will spread over social networking sites if businesses don't do this, which will damage their image and constituents' behaviours (Oh, Agrawal & Rao, 2013).

Despite social media's growing significance in crisis communication (Schultz et al., 2011), a number of academics point out that businesses still have gaps in their knowledge on how to use social networking sites effectively in times of disaster (Floreddu et al., 2014 Jin et al., 2014). This ignorance can lead to poor crisis management and jeopardise the competitiveness of the firm. By examining how firms interact with constituents on social networking sites amid a crisis, the present study raises company consciousness and adds to managerial and scholarly understandings of the topic.

Prior researchers propose that organizations utilize social media to furnish updates on their status (Freberg, 2012) as well as to engage in responding to messages from stakeholders amidst a crisis (Ott & Theunissen, 2015). These responses may adopt various formats, encompassing both information provision and the deployment of response strategies (Coombs & Holladay, 2002), as expounded in the preceding section. The fundamental categories of stakeholder messages are delineated through the investigation conducted by Helsloot and Groenendaal (2013) within the domain of emergency management. These categories encompass queries, recommendations, the dissemination of information, and humor-laden messages. Although Helsloot and Groenendaal's (2013) exploration adopts an emergency management framework, their research serves as an apt point of origin for comprehending the array of message genres that stakeholders might convey to an organization via social media within a business crisis context. Consequently, these groupings of stakeholder messages, as elucidated by Helsloot and Groenendaal, provide the groundwork for scrutinizing how organizations harness social media to craft responses to each cluster of stakeholder messages.

After an examination of social media, crisis communication, SCCT, and the utilization of social media in crisis communication, the subsequent subject for consideration pertains to the role of cultural context in crisis communication within the context of Ghana.

Cultural context in crisis communication in Ghana

The association between communication and crisis is not only evident but also critically significant when contemplating crises and devising crisis management strategies. Embedded within this context is the role of culture, which can be conceived as a multifaceted entity encompassing knowledge, belief systems, artistic expressions, moral codes, legal norms, customs, and an array of acquired competencies and behaviors exhibited by members of a society. Rooted in this delineation, it can be contended that the essence of what constitutes a crisis is inherently intertwined with cultural influences or predispositions. Consequently, communication concerning crises is also molded by cultural dimensions, given that communication is an intrinsic facet of culture.

Certainly, the existing empirical body of knowledge underscores the substantial impact of culture on communication patterns. Considering this, several scholars and researchers have proposed communication approaches to be employed or adhered to in contexts involving conflict or crisis. While disparities exist among these recommended strategies, a shared tenet across them all is the recognition that within the communication elaboration framework, possessing an understanding of the preferences of the recipient, the characteristics encompassing their societal, occupational, cultural, and psychological milieu, as well as discerning their requisites, holds pivotal importance in achieving effective communication within such circumstances.

The inference drawn from this assertion is that in the absence of a profound comprehension and insight into the cultural milieu within which a crisis unfolds, the efficacy of the crisis communication strategy is susceptible to falling short of its envisioned objectives.

There have been arguments made that highlight the shortcomings of Western-oriented communication approaches in dealing with crisis circumstances in Sub-Saharan regions. This is mainly because cultural standards for direct or interpersonal interaction during these circumstances vary widely, and because communicating across different cultural paradigms presents complex challenges. This viewpoint makes it essential to investigate the many ethnic and multicultural cohorts, comprehending their expectations and the subtle ways they evaluate, appraise, and explain their positions during times of crisis. This understanding is crucial for creating crisis communication plans that address the demands and reactions of various audiences, which calls for a naturally adaptable and dynamic approach to the crisis communication process itself.

Among the extensively studied cultural dimensions, individualism/collectivism holds a prominent position, denoting the extent to which individuals are harmoniously incorporated within social collectives (Hofstede, 1984). Ghana, like many sub-Saharan African countries, is characterized broadly by the practice of communal collectivism (Hofstede & Bond, 1984), exhibiting especially strong ties to extended families, clans, and ethnic groups. They make clear distinctions between those who belong to these in-groups and others who they consider outsiders (Murithi and Crawford, 2003). Additionally, Ghanaians feel a substantial responsibility to share scant resources among those within the in-group (Blunt and Jones, 1997). Although urban areas of sub-Saharan Africa tend to have a more individualist orientation, the strong influence of African collectivism is still prevalent in Ghana (Beugre, 2002). Ghanaians have an indirect communication style and do not typically state what they really think, especially when they are talking to somebody in a higher position of power. Ghanaians are raised to value trust and cooperation. From a young age, children are taught to be honest, to keep their promises, and to help others (Adomdza, 2015). Further, Ghanaian culture emphasizes the importance of community and cooperation. This creates a sense of trust and mutual reliance among community members (Darkwah, 2015). Risk-related content is more prone to reach social media followers through forwarded messages originating from individuals within their social connections. This characteristic imbues such message transmissions with heightened credibility due to the implicit endorsement by acquaintances. Furthermore, given Ghana's classification as a high power-distance society, wherein hierarchical power dispersion is accentuated (Hofstede, 1984), the formulation of messages must be courteous in nature, disseminated by prominent social media users possessing substantial persuasive influence due to the elevated status associated with the source (Zhu, Anagondahalli & Zhang, 2017). In other words, because in Ghana, it is common for people to show deference to those who are in authority, messages created

and posted on social media platforms must use respectful language and shared by influential social creators and users with enormous persuasive power because of the source's high status (Zhu, Anagondahalli and Zhang, 2017).

Methodology

The present study adopted a case study approach in line with the methodology outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018). As stipulated by Yin (2014), case study research entails a comprehensive examination of a case, or cases, within their inherent contemporary context or natural environment. This case can pertain to various entities, ranging from individuals and small groups to teams or organizations. As articulated by Creswell and Cheryl (2017), the case study approach is aptly suited for handling research inquiries that pivot on explicating the underlying reasons and mechanisms behind a given phenomenon. The purpose of this research was to illuminate how the utilization of social media content creators and their corresponding posts can mitigate the impact of a crisis, with specific emphasis on the role of important online content developers by sensitively navigating cultural intricacies to effectively engage interested parties in Ghana, specifically within the context of the food poisoning crisis during Mother's Day in 2021.

Consequently, this aligns with the category of interrogative inquiries concerning the procedural aspects, thus affirming the judicious selection of the case study design in our research.

Background of Case company

Marwako was used as the case company for this study. They were selected because they used social media to blast essential messages and engage their target audience in order to minimize the effect of a crisis.

Marwako Fast Food Limited is a contemporary fast-food establishment officially registered under in Ghana in the year 2006. Renowned for its exceptional culinary offerings and exceptional customer service, the restaurant has garnered widespread public acclaim and recognition within the fast-food sector, constituting an integral facet of its identity. The core mission of the company revolves around a commitment to revolutionize the realm of fast-food dining by ensuring the provision of high-quality cuisine within a hygienic milieu. Furthermore, the company aspires to bridge societal disparities by affording standardized service to all individuals, irrespective of their socioeconomic strata, thus fostering inclusivity and equal access. Their largest target audience includes a diverse young adults aged between 15 to 45 years. Also, more men consumed Marwako fast food than women because men do not often cook or lack basic cooking skills. Although more men than women eat in fast food restaurants, women are increasingly patronising Marwako fast food restaurants as traditional gender perceptions are changing.

Marwako restaurant and Fast Food offers an assortment of culinary choices, including dishes such as chicken served with fried rice, roasted chicken accompanied by potato chips, grilled chicken paired with fried rice, and grilled chicken complemented by potato chips. Further selections encompass a diversity of offerings such as beef shawarma sandwich, chicken sandwich, sheesh taouk sandwich, beef kebab, and falafel sandwich. The establishment also provides a variety of pizzas and burgers. In addition to its culinary selections, Marwako offers an array of fruit juices, including tangerine, orange, and mango variants. Moreover, the restaurant extends its offerings to encompass a range of ice cream flavors, including but not limited to chocolate, vanilla, blackberry, strawberry, apricot, pistachio, mango, and lemon.

In Ghana and especially in Accra you can find all the internationally known fast food restaurants. However, the most well-known Ghana fast food chains like Marwako offer more than the usual from KFC, Burger King and Dominos.

Despite being popular, Marwako in recent years has had food-safety related scandals in Ghana. In May 2022, a number of customers of Marwako Fast Foods, fell ill after eating at the restaurant's East Legon branch. The customers reported symptoms of food poisoning, including vomiting, diarrhea, and stomach cramps. This scandal had a significant impact on the restaurant chain. The company's reputation became damaged, and it lost a significant number of customers. Despite the attendant challenges with the closure by Food and drugs authority of Ghana after its investigations, Marwako has been effective in responding to the food poisoning scandal.

Marwako Fast Food Crisis Management

Marwako Fast Food crisis began in May 2022, when customers took to twitter to complain of food poisoning after eating there. Many consumers were hospitalized with many of the alleged victims referencing the eatery's East Legon branch as the possible source of their discomfort. Through the spokesperson of the company, they admitted the scandal and apologized to the victims. This apology was recorded and posted on Pulse Ghana twitter page. The apology post was retweeted 22 times, had 85 likes and 279 comments were left on Pulse Ghana twitter account, the majority of which were positive comments. For example, a user commented, "The response speed is impressive! This crisis management! It for learning." An opinion poll conducted on eziban.com indicated that 62% of customers still trusted Marwako Fast Food limited.

Despite the acceptance of responsibility, the crisis continued to receive negative media coverage and public criticism when the investigation by FDA on samples of food, juice drinks and swabs taken from the environment at Marwako Fast Food Limited revealed that there was microbial load(pathogens) which could be linked to food borne disease of the customers. Twitter account of customer went buzzing with closure of the facilities, which led to the FDA adhering to such calls. Again, some victims of the food poisoning at Marwako Fast Food Limited threatened to take legal action against the Company to demand compensation for their medical bills. This was because the restaurant has failed to keep its promise of bearing the cost of their hospitalisation, despite earlier assurances. On hearing this situation, the company through its PR and on their interactive platforms as well as on news media admitted that these concerns may be genuine and pleaded for those affected to reach out for assistance.

In conclusion, Marwako's effective response approach has turned out as a reference for solving challenges through social media.

Analysis and Discussion

Marwako is a fast-food company registered in Ghana. The company encountered a food poisoning scandal that came to light through the power of social media and after investigations by FDA the company's reputation suffered and their customer numbers decreased. However, their effective and prompt response on social media, addressing FDA concerns and addressing the bills issue of affected customers contributed to their solving the crisis. The way and manner of the apology constitutes merely a solitary factor contributing to the indicative results; an examination through a cultural lens of the Marwako scandal is presented in the subsequent section to offer additional elucidations.

The role of culture in crisis communication

The proposition to incorporate culture as a significant determinant in crisis management has been progressively garnering attention (Falkheimer & Heide, 2006), particularly for multinational corporations operating within culturally distinct local business contexts. The crises investigated within this study reaffirm the significance of culture as a crucial contextual element in the domain of crisis communication, aligning with this call.

Initially, it should be noted that culture functions as a moderating factor in the connection between the extent of organizational accountability and the selection of responsive tactics. Coombs (2007) proposed that the formulation of strategic crisis responses must be contingent upon the degrees of culpability and reputational risk. However, this case employed theoretically appropriate response strategies. employed the most elevated tier of responsive tactics (such as issuing apologies and offering compensations) to reinstate confidence in their brand. Marwako's choice of an apology as a response strategy, while maintaining alignment with its level of responsibility, surpassed the anticipations of interested groups and consequently augmented the level of trust between the organization and its various stakeholders. It is interesting to note that the quick apology of Marwako's combined with using contents creators and other news platforms to publish their apology was the game changer which exceeded the expectation of stakeholders.

Moreover, culture exerts an influence on individuals' comprehension and utilization of crisis management tactics. For instance, disparities in cultural orientations give rise to variations in the interpretations and roles attributed to the act of offering an apology (Maddux, Kim, Okumura & Brett, 2011).

In Western cultures characterized by individualism, an apology signifies an acknowledgment of guilt and personal accountability. Consequently, organizations often exhibit reluctance to apologise because they worry about the legal repercussions that could arise from formal admissions of culpability. Conversely, in collectivist societies such as Ghana and other sub-Saharan African nations, apologies are interpreted as an acknowledgment of the suffering experienced by the recipient. Here, a public apology by a business conveys empathy and is not necessarily linked to legal implications. However, due to concerns about preserving social reputation within collectivist cultures, public apologies from organizations are infrequently observed (Huang et al., 2016). In this context, Marwako's public apology to their local clientele defied their expectations, constituting a positive breach of norm, thereby mitigating the crisis's seriousness.

Last but not least, it is imperative to underscore that incorporating culture as a moderating factor in the analysis of crisis communication through social media not only enriches existing crisis theories but also extends their applicability. In alignment with the Social Media Crisis Communication (SMCC) model, the utilization of renowned content creators as the prominent representatives of an organization's challenges significantly shapes crisis consequences, owing to their considerable sway over diverse segments of social media users, non-users, and conventional mass media outlets. In the Marwako situation, the use of their PR person who was popular with both old and new media platforms and as a result led the way, helped in guiding public opinions and emotions. The persuasiveness of the PR person and the content he created in addition to use of other social media platforms to publish their apology may be readily comprehended considering Ghana's communal and high-power distance nature. In our high power-distance society, the perspectives of respected individuals, including significant content producers, can quickly and effectively energise the public's perceptions. Furthermore, as previously addressed in the introduction, communal societies construct trust grounded in relational structures among individuals (Shin & Park, 2014). This inclination towards relational trust leads social media followers to place their faith in information received through social media platforms, particularly when the information bears the "endorsement" of their acquaintances. Hence, while the SMCC model's forecast concerning the pivotal function of influential content creators across traditional and contemporary interactive platforms remains valid, the interplay of culture tempers this association, intensifying the impact of influential PR individuals and platforms within collectivist, high-power distance societies. In terms of practical application, organizations must recognize that influential content creators and platforms garner heightened influence within specific cultural contexts, necessitating vigilant surveillance of digital domains for their presence.

In encapsulating the outcomes of this investigation, two significant theoretical insights emerge. Initially, given that the determination of attribution level and risk intensity should be appraised through the lens of stakeholders' perceptions (Heath, 2006), an adept comprehension of indigenous cultural norms can assist organizations, particularly foreign-affiliated eateries, in more effectively gauging attribution and devising appropriate responses. Secondly, while a public apology carries legal connotations within Western contexts, this does not hold true within Ghana; thus, foreign-owned restaurants must acknowledge this contextual variance.

In summary, the scrutiny of Marwako's crisis management exhibited the intricate interplay among culture, organizational dynamics, and social media in crisis response. Precisely, this research offers crucial illumination on the operational dynamics of crisis management in the realm of social media, through the lens of Ghanaian culture. The study advocates for academics and professionals to incorporate the nuances of regional and cultural milieus in the evolution of crises to formulate proficient strategies and retorts in crisis communication.

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ORCID iD

Winston Inkumsah

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