EDITORIAL
Crisis Communications
and Reputation Management

Welcome, dear readers, to the latest issue of the *Southeast Asian Media Studies Journal*. Issue 7.1, titled *Crisis Communications and Reputation Management in Southeast Asia*, brings together a range of insightful research on these timely and critical topics. Many individuals have contributed to the successful completion of this issue, upholding the highest quality standards. Special thanks are due to Associate Editor **Jonathan J. Felix** of RMIT University, Vietnam, and Assistant Editor **Jason Paolo Telles** of Monash College, Australia, for their strong support.

This issue features six research articles that explore various aspects of crisis communication strategies and reputation management across the region. In *Media Framing of Disaster Responses in the Philippines*, **Alyssa S. Manalo** examines how Philippine online news outlets, including ABS-CBN, GMA, and Rappler, frame government responses to natural disasters. Using content analysis, Manalo finds that media coverage often adopts the "attribution of responsibility" frame, where local government actions are generally portrayed positively, emphasizing community-focused efforts, while national government responses are critiqued for delays and inefficiencies. The study highlights a consistent reliance on institutional sources, with little representation of affected residents. This potentially limits the public's understanding of the full scope of disasters. The findings suggest that while political conflicts are necessary for holding governments accountable, there is a need for more balanced coverage that emphasizes preparedness, recovery, and the voices of marginalized communities. Manalo calls for a more solution-oriented approach to disaster reporting that integrates political analysis and community-centered information. Her study also encourages further research into how these media frames influence public perception and response, with a view toward enhancing the effectiveness of disaster communication strategies in the Philippines.

Building on this focus on communication during crises, **Nheru B. Veraflor's** study, titled *Class Suspension Posts as Risk Communication during Typhoons in the Philippines*, analyzes how local government units in the Philippines use social media, particularly Facebook, to communicate class suspensions during typhoons. Through qualitative content analysis and framing theory, Veraflor identifies three main frames used in these announcements: the politician frame, the policy frame, and the precautionary frame. These frames not only convey the suspension of classes but also integrate important risk communication messages about weather conditions, safety precautions, and rationalizations for the cancellations. The study highlights the local authorities' strategic use of multimedia elements, such as graphics and hashtags, to enhance message reach and visibility. The author argues that while these posts serve as effective tools for disseminating disaster-related information, they could benefit from more proactive, risk-centered messaging that promotes community engagement and preparedness, rather than only reinforcing government legitimacy.

As digital media continues to shape disaster communication, **Katherine T. Valencia's** study, *Reimagining Journalistic Practices and Digital News Production during Public Health Crises*, explores the transformation of journalistic practices during the COVID-19 pandemic. Using the Digital News Exchange (DNX) in Bacolod City, Philippines, as a case study, Valencia examines how news platforms shifted to digital spaces, prioritizing content that was specific to certain platforms to communicate health information. The study reveals that while digital platforms provided new opportunities for dissemination, they also reinforced elite discourses by featuring dominant voices and limiting critical engagement. The author suggests that the digital age offers promising opportunities for journalism but also poses challenges, such as self-censorship and the dominance of official narratives. She advocates for a more participatory media landscape that empowers audiences to engage with content in a meaningful way, whereby the boundaries of traditional media practices are expanded.

In a more politically charged environment, **Roselle Espina's** research article, titled *Trolling and the Trolled: Underground Black Propaganda Campaigns in the Philippines to Influence Online Opinions*, investigates how political trolling, particularly through black propaganda, manipulated public opinion on social media during the 2022 Philippine elections. Using a mixed-methods approach, Espina explores political actors' use of social media to smear the reputation of opponents, create artificial engagement, and sway voters. Her study shows that the public's low to moderate awareness of political trolling leaves them vulnerable to manipulation. She concludes that political trolling remains a persistent threat in the digital age, which reinforces the need for greater media literacy to combat disinformation and preserve democratic discourse. This concern for the menace of misinformation underscores the broader challenges to crisis communication strategies in the digital era, where media manipulation can influence public perception and response.

Against this backdrop of digital influence, **Adjemore A. Manabat's** study, *Intersections of Metaphor and Mythology in a COVID-19 Vaccination Campaign*, offers an alternative approach by examining the creative use of folklore and metaphor in a Philippine COVID-19 vaccination campaign. By viewing campaign materials through the lens of conceptual blending theory, Manabat reveals how Philippine folklore, particularly mythical creatures, were strategically used to localize the health crisis and overcome vaccine hesitancy. The research highlights the importance of tailoring health campaigns to local cultural contexts, illustrating how metaphors and myths can make public health messaging more relatable and effective. Manabat advocates for integrating local cultural symbols into crisis communication strategies, especially in multilingual societies like the Philippines, to ensure the inclusivity and effectiveness of health campaigns.

Finally, in *Malaysian Youth's Social Media Usage: Navigating Disasters, Politics, and Misinformation in the Digital Age*, **Mastura Mahamed** shifts the focus to the role of Malaysian youth in navigating digital platforms during crises. Her study reveals that young people, especially those who are deeply immersed in social media platforms like TikTok and Instagram, use these spaces to access information, shape public discourse, and engage in activism. Her research highlights how youth tend to trust content endorsed by peers and influencers, rather than official sources, which complicates traditional crisis communication efforts. She calls for adapting crisis communication strategies to better resonate with the Malaysian youth, recommending collaborations with

influencers, gamified digital literacy programs, and integrating mental health support into crisis messages. Her study emphasizes the need for youth-centered approaches to crisis communication. This recognizes the opportunities and challenges posed by social media in shaping an informed and resilient society.

Alexander J. Klemm
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
October 2025

ABOUT THE EDITOR

ALEXANDER J. KLEMM holds a Licentiate in English Studies and Film Studies from the University of Zurich and a PhD in Media and Communications from the European Graduate School. He is a full professor at Paragon International University in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, where he serves as Director of the Office of Research and teaches courses in digital arts and design as well as business administration. His research focuses on the representation of Southeast Asian cultures and societies in Western print and audiovisual media. He has served as managing editor-in-chief of the *Southeast Asian Media Studies Journal* since 2021.

Email: eic.seamsj@gmail.com

Original Call for Papers

SEAMSJ Issue 7.1:
Crisis Communications and Reputation Management in Southeast Asia

SEAMSJ issue 7.1 will explore the unique nuances and multifaceted nature of crisis communications in Southeast Asia, with a particular focus on consumer crises while also encompassing political, health, and environmental crises. Furthermore, it will address innovations in teaching crisis communications at the tertiary level to ensure industry-ready graduates.

As Southeast Asia continues to navigate an era marked by rapid change and uncertainty, effective crisis communications have emerged as a critical area of inquiry. The region faces a unique landscape characterized by diverse cultures, political systems, and socio-economic challenges, all of which influence how crises are perceived and managed. From consumer crises triggered by product recalls and corporate scandals to larger-scale political upheavals, health emergencies like pandemics, and environmental catastrophes, the nuances of crisis communications in Southeast Asia warrant comprehensive exploration. This special issue aims to unpack these complexities and highlight the various strategies employed by organizations, communities, and authorities in response to various crises.

In particular, this issue will delve into consumer crises, examining how businesses communicate with their stakeholders in times of turmoil. The impact of social media, the role of public sentiment, and the importance of transparency will be explored to understand how organizations can mitigate damage and restore trust. The relationship between media affiliations and cultural practices in the region cannot be overlooked; many media outlets often align with or support ruling governments, which may hinder critical discourse or avoid igniting controversy during sensitive times. This dynamic significantly shapes public perception and the effectiveness of crisis communication efforts, highlighting the need for a nuanced understanding of media's role in crisis contexts.

The evolving landscape of higher education also presents an opportunity to rethink how crisis communications are taught at the tertiary level. As industries increasingly demand graduates who are adept at navigating crises, it is essential for academic programs to adapt their curricula to meet these needs. This issue will include discussions on pedagogical innovations, experiential learning, and interdisciplinary approaches that equip students with the skills necessary to thrive in real-world scenarios. By bridging the gap between theory and practice, we can foster a generation of industry-ready professionals who are prepared to tackle the multifaceted challenges of crisis communications in Southeast Asia.

AREAS OF INTEREST

Submitted abstracts should focus on perspectives on crisis communication and reputation management in Southeast Asian contexts, either from a practical perspective or from a higher education teaching viewpoint. As such, proposed abstracts could touch on any of the following areas of interest:

Types of Crises

- *Consumer Crises* | Examine issues affecting consumers, such as product recalls, brand reputation management during crises, and corporate responses.
- *Health Crises* | Focus on communication strategies during pandemics, disease outbreaks, and public health emergencies.
- *Natural Disaster Crises* | Explore response strategies to natural disasters and public emergencies.
- *Political Crises* | Investigate communication strategies during political maneuvering, political instability, protests, and governmental change.
- *Social Media Crises* | Reflecting on the changing role that social media plays in crisis formation and 'snowballing'.

Through the Following Lenses of Interest

- *Case Studies* | Detailed analyses of various types of crises across Southeast Asia. Each case study will focus on the communication strategies employed and their effectiveness.
- *Agency and In-House Practices* | Examine how communication agencies and in-house teams manage different types of crises, including consumer-related issues.
- *Innovations in Teaching* | Both in:
  - *Curriculum Innovations* | Explore new methods and approaches in teaching crisis communications at the university level, including integration with political science and media studies.
  - *Pedagogical Strategies* | Discuss innovative teaching techniques and tools that enhance learning about crisis management.
- *Journalistic Perspectives on Crisis Communication* | Toward building a deeper understanding of how journalists experience crisis communication from brands and spokespersons, and how the approach could be changed to enable stronger buy-in from journalists and editors.
- *Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives* | Encourage contributions from scholars in Media Studies by exploring how media analysis, content production, and audience engagement strategies intersect with crisis communications.
- *Media-Specific Case Studies* | Include case studies on how media outlets have handled various crises and the role of media in shaping public perception and response.

ABSTRACT GUIDELINES

- Title: 5 to 12 words
- Abstract: 200-250 words
- Content: Include major elements such as background, scope, research focus, research method(s), key argument(s), and significance of the study. If already known, include key findings and implications. Avoid quotations in the abstract.
- Keywords: 4 to 5
- References: Short list of 5 key works to be referenced in the full paper
- Short bio: 150 words
- Language: American English or British English
- Font: Arial, size 11, 1.5 line spacing

PAPER GUIDELINES (for accepted abstracts only!)

- Title: 5 to 12 words
- Length: 5,000 to 6,000 words (excluding abstract and references)
- References: 20 to 40 (80% from 2019 to 2025)
- Short bio: 150 words (separate on final page)
- Font: Arial, size 11, 1.5 line spacing
- Paragraphs: One empty line between paragraphs; no indentation of paragraphs
- Pagination: Page numbers in the lower right corner
- Style: Chicago Manual of Style. Follow this guide for in-text citations and the list of references:

  https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-1.html

  https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/tools_citationguide/citation-guide-2.html
- Figures: A maximum of 3 graphic images (figures) of excellent quality
- Tables: A maximum of 3 tables of excellent quality
- Language: American English or British English
- File: MS Word file (no PDFs)
- Samples: See published SEAMSJ issues here: https://seamsa.org/seamsjournal/

IMPORTANT DATES

- Dec. 15, 2024:   Expression of interest / Abstract submission deadline
- Jan. 1, 2025:   Notification of accepted abstracts
- March 1, 2025:   Full paper submission deadline
- April 1, 2025:   Notification of double-blind peer review results
- May 1, 2025:   Revised full paper submission deadline *(revised to August 2025)*
- July 1, 2025:   Target publication date *(revised to October 2025)*

SUBMISSION AND INQUIRIES

Submit abstracts and direct all inquiries to SEAMSJ editor-in-chief, Dr. Alexander J. Klemm at eic.seamsj@gmail.com. Put "[SEAMSJ 7.1]" in the email subject line.