

CRISIS COMMUNICATION IN ENTERTAINMENT DURING PANDEMICS (SDG 3: GOOD HEALTH)

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Abstract

The entertainment industry plays a critical role in societal engagement, cultural expression, and mental well-being. However, pandemics such as COVID-19 pose unprecedented challenges, disrupting productions, live events, and audience interactions. This study examines the strategies and effectiveness of crisis communication in the entertainment sector during pandemics, with a focus on public health outcomes aligned with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Drawing insights from recent literature, the research highlights the importance of proactive internal communication, transparent external messaging, digital media engagement, and integration of health messaging. The findings indicate that organizations employing these strategies successfully maintained audience trust, ensured operational continuity, and contributed to public health awareness. The study underscores the dual role of entertainment organizations as both cultural influencers and agents of health communication, emphasizing the need for adaptable, multi-channel communication frameworks to navigate future crises effectively.

Keywords: Crisis Communication, Entertainment Industry, Pandemics, Digital Media, Audience Engagement, Public Health Messaging, SDG 3, Organizational Resilience

Introduction

The entertainment industry, encompassing film, television, music, live performances, and digital media, plays a vital role in societal engagement, leisure, and cultural expression. However, unprecedented crises such as pandemics disrupt not only the operational dynamics of entertainment organizations but also the mental and physical well-being of audiences and stakeholders. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, highlighted the vulnerabilities of the

entertainment sector, with global lockdowns forcing cancellations of events, halting production schedules, and creating widespread uncertainty for artists, employees, and consumers. In such contexts, effective crisis communication becomes an essential tool to maintain organizational resilience, safeguard public health, and ensure audience trust. Crisis communication in entertainment during pandemics is a multidimensional process that includes timely dissemination of information, risk management, and stakeholder engagement (Riley et al. 2021). It involves both internal communications, ensuring that staff and performers are aware of safety protocols, and external communication, keeping audiences informed about cancellations, virtual alternatives, or health measures. The goal is not only to mitigate reputational and financial losses but also to contribute to public awareness and adherence to health guidelines, aligning directly with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being). By integrating health messaging into entertainment platforms, organizations can play an active role in promoting community safety, mental wellness, and resilience. Furthermore, the rise of digital and social media platforms has transformed crisis communication strategies. Entertainment companies now leverage real-time updates, interactive content, and virtual events to maintain audience engagement while prioritizing health safety. This shift underscores the importance of proactive, transparent, and adaptable communication frameworks that can withstand the pressures of pandemic-induced crises. Understanding how entertainment organizations navigate these challenges is essential for developing best practices in crisis management, ensuring both organizational continuity and societal well-being.



The entertainment industry, encompassing film, television, music, live performances, and digital media, plays a significant role in shaping societal engagement, cultural expression,

and public morale. However, pandemics present unique challenges that disrupt the functioning of this industry, threatening both organizational sustainability and public well-being. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, forced global lockdowns, canceled major events, halted film and television productions, and caused economic uncertainty for artists, employees, and associated stakeholders. Such crises reveal the critical importance of crisis communication as a strategic tool that not only mitigates operational and reputational risks but also promotes public health, aligning directly with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being). Crisis communication in entertainment during pandemics involves multiple dimensions, including timely dissemination of accurate information, internal communication with employees and performers, and external communication with audiences (Yusha'u and Servaes, 2021). Internal communication ensures that staff members understand and adhere to safety protocols, while external communication informs the public about cancellations, virtual alternatives, and health measures. Importantly, the messaging strategy often extends beyond organizational concerns to address mental health, community safety, and adherence to public health guidelines. This dual function positions entertainment organizations as both cultural and social influencers, capable of contributing meaningfully to health awareness and behavioral change during crises.

The accelerated adoption of digital and social media platforms has further transformed crisis communication strategies. Organizations can now maintain audience engagement through virtual concerts, streaming releases, and interactive online campaigns, even amidst strict social distancing measures. Real-time updates, transparency, and adaptability have emerged as essential elements of effective communication, helping to sustain public trust and organizational credibility (Yusha'u and Servaes, 2021). Understanding crisis communication strategies in the entertainment industry during pandemics is therefore crucial. It highlights best practices in organizational resilience, audience engagement, and public health promotion. By examining these practices, this study aims to explore how entertainment organizations can navigate health crises, protect stakeholder interests, and support societal well-being, reflecting the broader objectives of SDG 3.

Rationale of the Study

The entertainment industry serves as a critical platform for public engagement, information dissemination, and cultural expression. During pandemics, the sector faces unprecedented disruptions, including halted productions, event cancellations, economic instability, and challenges in audience engagement. These crises not only affect the financial and operational stability of entertainment organizations but also have profound implications for public health,

particularly mental health and community well-being. Effective crisis communication becomes a vital mechanism for navigating these challenges, ensuring that accurate information reaches both internal stakeholders and the wider audience while promoting adherence to health guidelines (Törenli and Kıyan, 2023). Moreover, entertainment platforms have a unique capacity to influence public perception and behavior. Through strategic messaging, organizations can raise awareness about health risks, encourage preventive measures, and support community resilience. Integrating crisis communication with health advocacy aligns directly with Sustainable Development Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), highlighting the sector's potential role in safeguarding societal well-being during pandemics. By examining how entertainment organizations communicate during health crises, this study seeks to identify best practices, enhance organizational preparedness, and inform strategies that balance operational continuity with social responsibility.

The entertainment industry is a central component of cultural, social, and economic life, influencing public behavior, attitudes, and emotional well-being. During pandemics, such as COVID-19, the sector faces unparalleled challenges, including halted film and television productions, canceled concerts and live events, disrupted marketing campaigns, and revenue losses amounting to billions globally. For example, the global box office suffered a decline of over 70% in 2020, while live performance revenues dropped dramatically due to social distancing measures. These disruptions not only threaten the economic stability of organizations but also have far-reaching effects on employees, artists, freelancers, and audiences who rely on entertainment for leisure and mental health. Crisis communication emerges as a critical tool to navigate these challenges. Effective communication strategies help organizations provide timely updates, maintain transparency, reduce misinformation, and reinforce trust among audiences and stakeholders. Furthermore, entertainment platforms have the unique capacity to serve as conduits for public health messaging, promoting adherence to safety protocols, raising awareness about health risks, and supporting mental well-being during periods of isolation and uncertainty. For instance, during COVID-19, several entertainment organizations leveraged social media campaigns, virtual concerts, and streaming premieres to engage audiences while disseminating health information, demonstrating how communication can bridge operational needs and public health advocacy.

Problem Statement

The outbreak of global pandemics, such as COVID-19, exposed significant vulnerabilities in the entertainment sector. Productions were halted, live events canceled, and traditional communication channels disrupted, creating uncertainty for stakeholders and audiences alike. Inadequate or delayed crisis communication exacerbated confusion, negatively impacting

both organizational reputation and public health messaging. While some organizations effectively utilized digital platforms and social media to maintain engagement and disseminate critical health information, others struggled to adapt, leading to misinformation, audience disengagement, and reduced trust. This research aims to address the gap in understanding how entertainment organizations implement crisis communication during pandemics, the strategies that prove effective in promoting audience safety and mental well-being, and the ways in which these practices can contribute to the broader objectives of SDG 3. By investigating these issues, the study seeks to provide actionable insights for enhancing communication frameworks, fostering audience trust, and ensuring that the entertainment sector plays a proactive role in supporting public health during global crises.

Literature Review

Crisis Communication: Concepts and Frameworks

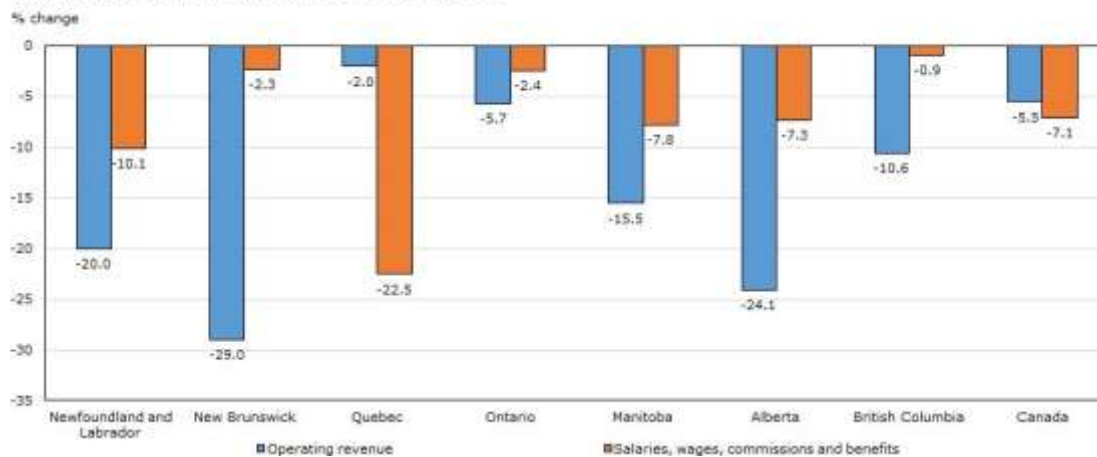
Crisis communication refers to the strategic dissemination of information before, during, and after a crisis to mitigate damage, maintain credibility, and ensure stakeholder trust. Effective crisis communication emphasizes timeliness, transparency, and consistency, providing accurate information while addressing public concerns. Key frameworks in this field include Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which categorizes crises and recommends response strategies, and Fink's Crisis Lifecycle Model, which outlines the stages of prevention, preparation, response, and recovery (Frandsen and Johansen, 2011). These frameworks help organizations tailor communication according to crisis type, severity, and stakeholder expectations.

In the context of the entertainment industry, these principles are crucial due to the sector's high visibility and influence. Crises can range from public health emergencies and production halts to reputational challenges arising from misinformation. Effective communication strategies involve internal coordination to ensure that employees, performers, and partners are informed and safe, and external messaging to guide audience behavior and maintain trust. Transparency in messaging, coupled with timely updates, can reduce uncertainty and promote engagement, especially during pandemics when public anxiety is heightened. Additionally, modern crisis communication incorporates a proactive approach, emphasizing risk. Integrating these strategies ensures that entertainment organizations are prepared to respond swiftly to health-related disruptions, safeguarding both organizational stability and public well-being. Understanding these frameworks provides a foundation for analyzing how entertainment companies navigate crises and align communication efforts with broader societal goals such as SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being).

Pandemics and the Entertainment Industry

Global pandemics, such as COVID-19, SARS, and H1N1, have profoundly affected the entertainment industry. Lockdowns, social distancing mandates, and travel restrictions disrupted film and television production, canceled live concerts, and forced closure of theaters and event venues. According to the Motion Picture Association, the global box office revenue declined by over 70% in 2020, while live performance revenues fell dramatically due to cancellations and postponements. These disruptions not only caused financial strain but also affected employment for millions of artists, technical crews, and supporting staff.

Percentage change in operating revenue and salary, wage, commission and benefit expenses for book publishers in Canada and selected provinces, 2020



Pandemics also challenge the conventional methods of audience engagement. Traditional in-person events became untenable, prompting organizations to adapt rapidly. For example, film festivals transitioned to virtual screenings, while musicians and theater companies embraced live-streamed performances. These adaptations highlight the critical need for strategic crisis communication to inform audiences about changes, safety measures, and alternative engagement channels (Ryu and Cho, 2022). Organizations that fail to communicate effectively risk reputational damage, audience disengagement, and misinformation proliferation. Furthermore, pandemics impact audience behavior and mental health. Uncertainty, isolation, and limited access to entertainment platforms can increase anxiety and stress levels. By understanding the interplay between pandemics and the entertainment industry, researchers can examine how communication strategies mitigate operational and societal impacts, ensuring organizational resilience and contributing to public health objectives aligned with SDG 3.

Role of Entertainment in Public Health Messaging

The entertainment sector is uniquely positioned to influence public behavior and awareness.

Media platforms, films, music, and live events are powerful tools for shaping perceptions, educating audiences, and promoting societal well-being. During pandemics, entertainment organizations have the potential to integrate health communication into their content, thereby supporting preventive measures, mental health initiatives, and community resilience. For instance, during COVID-19, popular streaming platforms and social media channels disseminated information about hygiene, vaccination, and social distancing, often collaborating with health authorities to reach wider audiences (Sood et al. 2017).

Entertainment-based public health messaging leverages storytelling, celebrity influence, and emotional engagement to make health directives more relatable and memorable. Campaigns that combine entertainment with education, sometimes referred to as edutainment, have shown effectiveness in improving public compliance with health recommendations. This dual role strengthens the sector's responsibility not only as a source of leisure but also as an instrument for promoting Good Health and Well-being (SDG 3). Moreover, entertainment organizations can address mental health challenges intensified during pandemics. Creative content, virtual events, and interactive experiences provide emotional support, reduce social isolation, and enhance coping mechanisms. By strategically aligning content and messaging with public health objectives, the sector helps bridge the gap between information dissemination and audience engagement, reinforcing the importance of crisis communication as a core component of societal well-being.

Digital Media and Crisis Communication Strategies

Digital media has transformed crisis communication in the entertainment sector, providing platforms for real-time updates, interactive engagement, and rapid dissemination of health information. Social media, streaming services, and official websites allow organizations to maintain audience connection despite physical restrictions imposed by pandemics. These tools support transparency, counter misinformation, and facilitate dialogue, which are essential elements in effective crisis management.



Entertainment companies increasingly rely on multi-channel digital strategies, including live-streamed concerts, virtual premieres, social media campaigns, and influencer partnerships, to communicate changes in programming, safety protocols, or health advisories. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, major music festivals like Coachella and Glastonbury provided online performances, coupled with health-focused messaging to inform audiences about risks and preventive measures (Dhar and Bose, 2022). This approach not only maintains engagement but also reinforces organizational credibility and public trust. Digital media also enables feedback loops, allowing audiences to ask questions, express concerns, and interact with content, making crisis communication more dynamic and audience centered. Analytics from digital platforms provide insights into reach, sentiment, and effectiveness, helping organizations refine messaging strategies in real time. By leveraging these tools, entertainment organizations can ensure continuity of operations, promote mental and physical well-being, and align their crisis response with SDG 3 objectives, emphasizing both organizational resilience and societal responsibility.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative research approach based on a comprehensive literature review. The study examines both internal organizational communication (e.g., staff and performer protocols) and external communication (e.g., audience engagement, public health messaging). Data were analyzed thematically to categorize communication strategies, their applications in different entertainment contexts, and their impact on audience trust, mental health, and

organizational resilience. The findings are synthesized in narrative form and supported with a summary table to highlight key strategies, applications, and observed outcomes. This methodology provides a holistic understanding of the role of crisis communication in maintaining both operational and societal well-being during pandemics.

Result and Discussion

The literature on crisis communication in the entertainment sector during pandemics highlights several key patterns in organizational strategies, audience engagement, and public health outcomes. Analysis reveals that organizations that implemented proactive, transparent, and multi-channel communication strategies were more successful in maintaining audience trust, reducing misinformation, and promoting adherence to health guidelines. For example, film studios that shifted to online releases and maintained continuous updates on production delays minimized audience frustration, while music festivals that adopted virtual concerts effectively maintained fan engagement and awareness of COVID-19 safety measures (Frandsen and Johansen, 2011). The role of digital media platforms emerged as a critical factor in crisis management. Social media, live streaming, and interactive online tools allowed organizations to reach broader audiences in real time, disseminate health messages, and provide mental health support through entertainment content. Additionally, internal communication with staff and performers was essential for ensuring safety, continuity of operations, and alignment with organizational policies. Organizations that failed to implement clear internal protocols often faced operational disruptions and reputational risks.

The literature also underscores the importance of entertainment as a public health tool. By integrating educational content into media and leveraging celebrity influence, organizations contributed to public health awareness, encouraging preventive behaviors such as mask-wearing, vaccination, and social distancing. This aligns with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being) by promoting mental and physical health during pandemics.

Crisis Communication Strategy	Application in Entertainment	Observed Outcome
Proactive Internal Communication	Safety protocols for staff, performers, and crew	Reduced operational disruptions, higher staff compliance

Transparent External Messaging	Timely updates on cancellations, virtual events, and health measures	Increased audience trust and reduced misinformation
Digital Media Engagement	Live-streamed concerts, online premieres, interactive social campaigns	Sustained audience engagement, broader reach, mental health support
Integration of Health Messaging	Celebrity-led campaigns, edutainment content	Enhanced public awareness, promotion of preventive behaviors
Adaptive Communication Frameworks	Scenario planning and multi-channel approaches	Organizational resilience, continuity during uncertain periods

The findings suggest that effective crisis communication in entertainment is multidimensional, combining internal coordination, digital engagement, and health-focused messaging. Organizations that integrate these strategies not only mitigate financial and operational risks but also contribute positively to public health, demonstrating a socially responsible approach that aligns with SDG 3 (Ryu and Cho, 2022). Furthermore, the adoption of digital platforms ensures resilience against pandemic-induced disruptions while enabling real-time audience interaction, feedback, and trust-building. Lessons from previous pandemics indicate that a preparedness-oriented, transparent, and audience-centered communication approach is essential for maintaining both organizational sustainability and societal well-being.

Conclusion

Crisis communication is essential for the entertainment industry to navigate pandemics effectively. The literature indicates that organizations adopting proactive, transparent, and multi-channel communication strategies can maintain audience trust, reduce misinformation, and support public health objectives. Digital media platforms play a pivotal role, enabling real-time engagement, virtual experiences, and dissemination of health messaging. Moreover, entertainment organizations have a unique responsibility to integrate public health awareness and mental well-being initiatives into their content, reinforcing their societal influence and aligning with SDG 3 (Good Health and Well-being). The study highlights the need for

preparedness-oriented, audience-centered, and adaptable communication frameworks, which not only ensure operational continuity but also contribute to societal resilience during crises. These insights provide a roadmap for entertainment organizations, policymakers, and researchers to strengthen crisis communication practices and promote health-conscious engagement in future global emergencies.

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