

Ralph Tench, Juan Meng, and Ángeles Moreno (Eds.), **Strategic Communication in a Global Crisis: National and International Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic**, London, UK: Routledge, 2022, 390 pp., \$33.36 (eBook), \$108.23 (hardcover).

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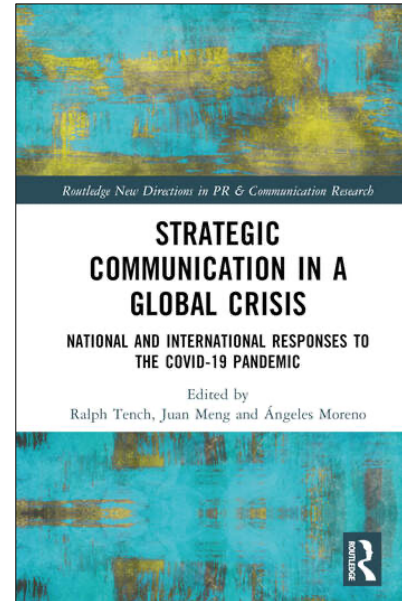
In Ralph Tench, Juan Meng, and Ángeles Moreno's (Eds.), **Strategic Communication in a Global Crisis: National and International Responses to the COVID-19 Pandemic**, the effectiveness of governmental communication and leadership in crisis management is discussed. The pandemic has had multiple effects on all human lives, especially in the health, economic, social, and political sectors. The dynamics of the government in delivering public health messages aimed at controlling the spread of the virus have been met with the problems of disinformation and misinformation. Communication and leadership are the primary keys to overcoming the crisis by building "public trust" amid uncertain situations and chaos.

The COVID-19 pandemic has transformed communication's critical value and urgency because the crisis phenomenon has spread globally and disrupted human life. All people no longer live using media but live in media. Communication technology is one of the main pillars of how all elements are connected in work and domestic affairs. Digital communication conveys the flow of accurate information and "hoax" news becomes saturated. The speed of disseminating information about the coronavirus has been challenging for the government, media practitioners, and society, regarding building public trust amid the pandemic.

Part 1 describes the background of this book's problems, concerns, and systematics. The social problems prompted transnational communication researchers who joined the European Public Relations Education and Research Association (EUPRERA) network to comprehensively examine how strategic communication was carried out by stakeholders of countries in various parts of the world to overcome social

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turbulence due to the pandemic, as well as public responses to health issues and trust in the government, which was later termed as COVID-19 communication (COM-COVID-19).

Overall, the editors compile this book scientifically and systematically, based on the research findings of the EUPRERA global research network about how communication management during the pandemic (COM-COVID-19) is applied by governments, publicists, and practitioners in several countries in Europe, Africa, Latin America, North America, South America, and Asia. The analysis of the issues studied focuses on successes and failures of the dynamics of public perception and behavior toward government strategic communications related to public health messages against misinformation and disinformation, such as the spread of “fake news” and conspiracy theories. The success of a well-coordinated communication strategy, even in a public health emergency, will help authorities to be able to identify dangers, weaknesses, and risks to increase community resilience and capabilities against the spread of the virus.

Part 2 of this book describes the results of observations of how practitioners in Europe, North America, and Latin America adapted their professional communication practice and strategies to manage the changes caused by the pandemic. In chapter 2, Chiara Valentini, Øyvind Ihlen, and Ralph Tench explain that “trust” must be the primary key to control the chaos of information in society when they lose the ability to assess and make objective decisions. Trust is framed in individuals (micro), organizations (meso), government, institutions, and society (macro). As the main communicators who have the power, resources, and influence to monopolize information, the government and institutions must be able to show transparency to ease public concerns.

Juan Meng, Bryan H. Reber, and Tong Xie (chapter 3) examine how strategic communication applied by professionals or practitioners in North America provided transparency and accurate demographics to rapidly respond to the flow of information. The changes in organizational communication patterns are challenging, and top corporate leaders play an important role in problem-solving and building trust at the meso or macro levels. Based on research on organizations and corporations in 20 Latin American countries, Alejandro Álvarez-Nobell, Juan-Carlos Molleda, Ángeles Moreno, and Ana María Suárez-Monsalve (chapter 4) found that organizations’ management and communication systems have changed significantly since the pandemic. Organizational leaders are required to better prepare strategies and coordination systems in crisis, especially toward members and consumers/clients. Digital communication is the main strategy in the process of socialization and decision-making, although cyber threats are a possibility.

Part 3 provides a diverse study of COVID-19 communication, including media consumption, crisis communication, and strategic communication from a global perspective. Juan Meng, Ruoyu Sun, Tong Xie, and Zhao Wang (chapter 5) reveal that mobile messaging apps are the most frequently used communication channel in China. News websites, television, and newspapers/magazines have been the most trusted forms of media from which to seek information about the pandemic, but the government has unfortunately only focused on the mainstream media, instead of digital media, which is essential in targeting the youth/millennial segment.

In Italy, Elanor Colleoni, Mirko Olivieri, Stefania Romenti, and Grazia Murtarelli (chapter 6) explore corporate CSR’s strategic communication, which optimized the media digital and influencer to win the millennial

segment. These findings are in line with the research resumed by Sung In Choi, Yan Jin, and Mark Badham (chapter 14), which examines the preferences of young Americans. On the other side, Gisela Gonçalves, Valeriano Piñeiro-Naval, and Sónia de Sá (chapter 7) conclude that the mainstream media is the most credible and accessible for people in Portugal. They trust the authority organizations and government more than information shared on social media. In fact, Cristina Navarro, Ángeles Moreno, and Cristina Fuentes-Lara (chapter 8) argue that the millennials in Spain are exposed to misinformation and disinformation because of their frequent digital communication usage.

Natia Kaladze, Leli Bibilashvili, and Mari Bandzeladze (chapter 15) discuss that the Georgia government was less persuasive in crisis communication aimed at preventing COVID-19 because it failed to manage communication channels and target audiences. Crisis communication management related to the management of health messages and communication media significantly impacts public trust in the government. The research resumed by Özlem Alikılıç, Ebru Gökaliler, and İnanç Alikılıç (chapter 17) explained that the Turkish government failed to win public trust because they are perceived as hiding the truth of the pandemic and confusing the public. The same situation happened in Africa when the government could not optimize public engagement through digital communication. Chinedu Jude Nwasum, Ezinne Chioma Abaneme, and Aloysius Chukwuebuka Ifeanyichukwu (chapter 18) reveal that government communication strategies are less concerned with building public engagement in social media. This is in contrast to the fact that most individuals prefer to access information about COVID-19 on popular platforms like Whatsapp, Facebook, and Twitter.

Interesting findings from research in the Northern European region demonstrated that the credibility of communicators, paradigm, and the political situation of the government are the main variables that determined public trust. In the UK, Ralph Tench and Gemma Bridge (chapter 9) explain that people have low trust in online information shared by civil servants and politicians. They perceived broadcast media as more accurate than information on websites and social media. Chiara Valentini and Mark Badham (chapter 10) compare the two contrasting COVID-19 management approaches adopted by the Finnish and Swedish governments that successfully obtained the public's trust because of their involvement with intermediary parties. The key intermediaries of the Finnish government strategy are the Finnish Institute for Health and Welfare (THL), the association of health professionals, Mika Salminen (THL expert), and the media. On the other side, the Swedish government applied the intermediary strategy through Anders Tegnell, as the Public Health Agency's expert), the association of health professionals, Socialstyrelsen, and the media. Øyvind Ihlen, Bengt Johansson, and Mark Blach-Ørsten (chapter 11) also found that Nordic countries (Denmark, Norway, and Sweden) successfully gained the public's trust because of the stability of political circumstances, lack of corruption cases, and the solidarity of the people.

The political situation in South America differs because people are distrustful of the government. In Argentina, Alejandro Álvarez-Nobell (chapter 12) concluded that people trust professionals and personalities in the health and COVID-19 committees more than the media, non-health influencers, and governments. The main factor is caused by the paradigm in the left-wing populist government. In Brazil, Andréia Silveira Athaydes, Karen Cristina Kraemer Abreu, and Marcus Vinicius de Jesus (chapter 13) found that asynchronous communication between the federal and state governments worsened public trust in governments that denied and reduced the crisis.

This book presents an accurate account of the study of strategic communication amid a global crisis. Students, researchers, and communication practitioners will gain some insight into specific concentration fields, such as international public relations, communication management, and strategic communication. Communication transparency, communicator credibility, message effectiveness, media landscapes, and sociopolitical variables are interrelated regionally and globally to shape public perceptions, attitudes, and preferences toward stakeholders and actual conditions.

The main topic of the book is strategic communication in a global crisis, but the research subtopics are connected to more relevant determinant variables like media platforms, media consumption behavior, information sources, trust behavior, message processing, and the conversion of public knowledge application. This book can also be a scientific and applicable reference for governments, activists, public health institutions, and other stakeholders to develop effective strategic communication amid public safety crises.