

PT Kereta Api Indonesia's Crisis Communication Strategy on Instagram During the Flood Disaster in Operational Area 4 Semarang

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ABSTRACT

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The rapid development of digital communication has transformed how organizations manage crisis communication, particularly through social media platforms. During crisis situations, organizations are required to provide fast, transparent, and responsive communication to maintain public trust and organizational reputation. This study aims to analyze the crisis communication strategy implemented by PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) through its official Instagram account, @kai121_, during the flood disaster in Operational Area 4 Semarang in January 2026. This research employed a descriptive qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm. The data were collected through documentation studies of Instagram content uploaded during the crisis period and analyzed using qualitative content analysis based on Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). The findings reveal that PT KAI implemented several crisis communication strategies, including excuse, justification, apology, compensation, and reminder strategies. The most dominant strategy identified was excuse, where PT KAI consistently explained that operational disruption was caused by external environmental factors such as flooding, heavy rainfall, and damaged railway infrastructure. The organization also emphasized passenger safety, provided operational updates, delivered apology messages, offered ticket refunds, and communicated recovery progress throughout the crisis period. In addition, Instagram played an important role as a visual and interactive communication platform that enabled PT KAI to maintain transparency and public engagement during the disaster. The study concludes that social media-based crisis communication has become an essential communication tool for public service organizations in maintaining public trust and supporting organizational recovery during crisis situations. The findings contribute to the development of digital crisis communication studies and provide practical insights for public relations practitioners in managing crisis communication through social media platforms.

INTRODUCTION

The rapid advancement of communication technology has significantly transformed how organizations disseminate information and interact with their publics. The emergence of digitalization, particularly through social media platforms, has

enabled faster, more interactive, and audience-oriented communication processes (Kumalasari et al., 2024; Kuswati et al., 2025). In this evolving landscape, public organizations are required to adapt their communication strategies to remain relevant, responsive, and trustworthy. Social media has shifted

the role of the public from passive information recipients to active participants who can respond, critique, and shape public opinion in real time (Nasution & Hidayat, 2025). Consequently, the ability of organizations to manage communication effectively in digital spaces has become increasingly critical, especially in maintaining stable relationships with stakeholders.

Among various social media platforms, Instagram has emerged as a highly influential channel for public communication due to its visual-based content and interactive features. Unlike text-based platforms, Instagram facilitates concise and engaging information delivery through images, videos, and interactive tools such as comments and direct messages (Uddin et al., 2024). These characteristics allow organizations to foster emotional connections with their audiences and continuously shape their institutional image. In the context of crisis situations, Instagram serves not only as an information dissemination tool but also as a strategic communication medium to address public uncertainty and provide timely clarification (Goeritman, 2021). Ineffective or delayed communication, however, may lead to negative public perceptions and escalate into reputational crises.

As a major public transportation provider in Indonesia, PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) plays a crucial role in ensuring reliable and efficient mobility for society. Given its high level of public interaction, the organization faces significant pressure to maintain transparency and service quality, particularly during operational disruptions (Dwi Wulandari & Suriana, 2022). External factors such as extreme weather and natural disasters frequently disrupt railway operations, creating complex communication challenges. In such situations, the public demands accurate, timely, and empathetic information to avoid confusion and panic (Febriandy & Wahyutama, 2024). Therefore, crisis communication becomes a vital component in preserving public trust and organizational reputation.

Previous studies have highlighted that ineffective crisis communication characterized by delayed responses, lack of transparency, and limited empathy can negatively affect public perception and institutional credibility (Selaković, 2025). Conversely, well-structured communication strategies, particularly on social media platforms like Instagram, can strengthen organizational image through message consistency, visual identity, and active audience

engagement (Alviano & Amalia, 2024). However, most previous studies primarily discuss crisis communication from a general perspective or focus on private organizations, while only limited studies examine how Indonesian public service organizations implement crisis communication strategies through Instagram during actual crisis events. In addition, previous research has mainly emphasized communication outcomes, with less attention given to the communication process, message characteristics, and public interaction that occur throughout a crisis. This indicates a research gap in understanding the application of crisis communication strategies within specific contextual cases involving digital public engagement.

To address this gap, this study examines the crisis communication strategy of PT Kereta Api Indonesia through its official Instagram account (@kai121_) during the flood incident in Operational Area 4 Semarang in January 2026. This case provides a relevant context to analyze how an organization responds to operational disruptions while managing public perception in a digital environment. Unlike previous studies that generally evaluate crisis communication effectiveness, this study specifically investigates how PT KAI constructs and delivers crisis messages through Instagram during an ongoing operational disruption, while also considering the interaction between organizational communication and public responses. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the integration of visual-based social media communication and crisis response within a public service organization, emphasizing both message delivery and public interaction dynamics through an empirical case study of a real-time transportation crisis in Indonesia. Accordingly, this study addresses the following research question: How does PT Kereta Api Indonesia implement its crisis communication strategy through Instagram during the flood incident in Operational Area 4 Semarang? The findings are expected to contribute theoretically to the development of crisis communication studies in digital contexts and practically to guide public relations practitioners in designing more responsive, transparent, and empathetic communication strategies on social media.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Crisis and Crisis Communication

A crisis is an unexpected event that threatens an organization, public safety, operational continuity, and institutional reputation, so it requires a fast and coordinated response (Yulianti & Boer, 2020). In communication studies, crisis situations increase the public's need for clear information, making the role of public relations essential as a source of credible and calming messages (Pinandhita & Saputro, 2023). A crisis is not always a major disaster; reputation-related issues discussed on social media can also develop into a crisis when they are not handled properly (Zaiza, 2020). Therefore, crisis communication is important because it helps organizations reduce uncertainty, protect reputation, and maintain public trust.

Crisis Type and Crisis Stages

Crisis can occur suddenly and may come from internal or external sources (Wardiman & Amanah, 2022). Internal crises usually come from management, human resources, or technology, while external crises often result from natural disasters, government regulations, or other outside factors. In public relations, crisis is also commonly divided into physical or disaster crises, technical or operational crises, reputational or ethical crises, and socio-political crises (Pratiwi & Haninda, 2021). Crisis management is easier to understand when it is seen through three stages: pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis (Pratama & Amalia, 2024). These stages show that organizations need prevention, response, and recovery strategies to manage crisis effectively.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

This study applies Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) developed by W. Timothy Coombs as the main analytical framework. SCCT explains that public reactions toward a crisis are influenced by the level of responsibility attributed to the organization (Coombs, 2007). The theory emphasizes that organizations must first provide instructing and adjusting information to protect stakeholders physically and psychologically before focusing on reputation recovery. SCCT categorizes crises into three main clusters: victim cluster, accidental cluster, and preventable cluster. Natural disasters are generally included in the victim cluster because the organization is also considered a victim of the event (Coombs, 2007).

SCCT also explains several crisis response strategies that organizations can use to protect reputation and maintain public trust. The first strategy is deny, which is used when the organization attempts to reject responsibility for the crisis. This strategy includes attacking the accuser, denial, and scapegoating, where responsibility is shifted to another party. The second strategy is diminish, which

aims to reduce the perceived severity of the crisis or organizational responsibility through excuse and justification responses. In this strategy, organizations explain that the situation occurred due to factors outside their control or that the damage caused is not as serious as perceived by the public.

The third strategy is rebuild, which focuses on restoring public trust by showing responsibility and concern toward stakeholders. This strategy commonly includes apology and compensation. Through apology, organizations express regret and accountability, while compensation is intended to reduce stakeholder dissatisfaction by offering direct assistance or recovery efforts. The fourth strategy is bolster, which is used to strengthen positive public perception by reminding audiences of the organization's previous good reputation, praising stakeholders, or positioning the organization as a victim of the crisis. Bolster strategies generally include reminder, ingratiation, and victimage (Prasetyo & Chasana, 2022).

In this study, SCCT serves as the main analytical framework for examining how PT KAI Daop 4 Semarang communicated during the flood crisis through its official Instagram account. Based on the SCCT framework, this study analyzes the crisis response strategies reflected in Instagram posts, including captions, visuals, and public information updates, to identify how the organization responded to the flood crisis. The analysis focuses on the implementation of SCCT response strategies in maintaining public trust and reducing uncertainty among stakeholders during the crisis.

Natural Disasters as a Crisis Context

Natural disasters are external crisis events because their causes are outside organizational control (Pangestu, 2023; Abdurrazzaq, 2024). They can disrupt operations, damage infrastructure, and affect public services. In SCCT terms, natural disasters are usually placed in the victim cluster because the organization is also affected by the event, even though it is not the main cause (Coombs, 2007). This context is important for PT KAI because flood events can interrupt railway operations and create public concern. In such situations, communication becomes as important as operational recovery.

Instagram as a Crisis Communication Platform

Instagram is one of the most effective platforms for crisis communication because it combines visual content, short messages, and interactive features (Noventa et al., 2023; Uddin et al., 2024). Its main features include feed posts, stories, reels, hashtags, live streaming, and direct messages (Uddin et al., 2024). Instagram is widely used by organizations

because it allows information to be delivered quickly and in a more emotional and understandable way than text-only platforms (Mele et al., 2023; Abdurrazzaq, 2024). However, Instagram also has risks, such as misinformation, comment pressure, and algorithm-based visibility problems. Because of that, organizations need to respond quickly, transparently, and empathetically when a crisis occurs (Abdurrazzaq, 2024).

Social Media Content in Crisis Communication

Social media content includes any message created and distributed through digital platforms for information, education, promotion, clarification, or response (Abdurrazzaq, 2024). In organizational communication, content is strategic because it is designed according to communication goals, target audiences, and message framing. Social media content also shapes how audiences interpret an event (Oktavian, 2025). In crisis communication, this means that every visual, caption, and update on Instagram should be considered carefully because content can influence public understanding and public trust.

Conceptual Framework

Based on Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), this study examines the relationship between the crisis context, crisis response strategies, and Instagram content published by PT KAI Daop 4 Semarang during the flood crisis. The flood is positioned as a natural disaster within the victim cluster, where the organization is also affected by the event (Coombs, 2007). Guided by SCCT, this study analyzes how PT KAI Daop 4 Semarang communicates crisis information through its Instagram content by identifying the response strategies reflected in posts, captions, and visual messages. The analysis focuses on how these communication strategies support public information, reduce uncertainty, and help maintain public trust during the crisis.

METHOD

Research Design

This study employed a descriptive qualitative approach with an interpretive paradigm. A qualitative approach was selected because the study aims to understand and interpret the crisis communication strategy conducted by PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) through Instagram content during the operational disruption caused by flooding in Operational Area 4 Semarang. Qualitative research

emphasizes interpretation, meaning, and contextual understanding of social phenomena (Cresswell, 2014). Therefore, this approach is appropriate for analyzing both textual and visual communication messages published through social media.

The interpretive paradigm was applied because this research focuses on how organizational meaning was constructed and communicated during a crisis situation. The study specifically examines how PT KAI designed and distributed visual and narrative messages on Instagram as part of its crisis communication response to the public.

Research Object and Subject

The object of this research is the crisis communication strategy of PT Kereta Api Indonesia during the flood disaster in Operational Area 4 Semarang through Instagram content analysis. Meanwhile, the subject of this study is PT KAI's official Instagram account, @kai121_.

The Instagram account was selected because it functions as one of PT KAI's primary public communication channels. Instagram also enables organizations to distribute information quickly to a broad audience through the integration of visual and textual communication. These characteristics make Instagram relevant for examining organizational communication during crisis situations.

Population and Sample

The population of this study consisted of all Instagram posts uploaded by PT KAI during the flood crisis period from 15 to 20 January 2026. This period was determined based on the emergence of operational disruption caused by flooding in Operational Area 4 Semarang, including train delays, route adjustments, and infrastructure conditions.

During this period, PT KAI uploaded 35 Instagram contents. However, only 24 posts were selected as the research sample because they directly contained information related to the flood crisis, operational disruption, crisis handling efforts, travel updates, public instructions, and messages aimed at maintaining public trust. The remaining 11 posts were excluded because they contained promotional, commemorative, or other informational content that was not directly related to the flood crisis or PT KAI's crisis communication efforts.

Data Collection Method

This study used documentation study as the data collection method. Documentation study refers to collecting and analyzing documents such as photographs, videos, written records, and digital archives relevant to the research topic. The primary data in this study consisted of Instagram contents uploaded through PT KAI's official account (@kai121_) related to the flood crisis in Operational Area 4 Semarang.

The collected data included visual content, captions, informational graphics, and other communication materials published during the crisis period. These materials were used to identify crisis communication patterns and organizational response strategies.

Data Analysis Method

This study applied qualitative content analysis proposed by Parker, Saundage, and Lee to analyze Instagram content related to PT KAI's crisis communication. Qualitative content analysis enables researchers to identify communication patterns, message narratives, themes, and meanings contained within digital communication content.

The analysis process was conducted through several stages. First, the researcher determined the research objectives and selected Instagram posts as the unit of analysis. Second, relevant posts related to the flood crisis were selected based on their connection to operational disruption and crisis response. Third, each selected post was examined by identifying its visual elements, captions, and key messages before being categorized according to the crisis response strategies within Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), including deny, diminish, rebuild, and bolster strategies (Coombs, 2007). Fourth, the researcher compared the communication characteristics across the selected posts to identify recurring themes and dominant response patterns. Fifth, the researcher interpreted how PT KAI framed crisis information, constructed communication narratives, and interacted with the public through Instagram. Finally, conclusions were drawn to identify the dominant crisis communication strategies used by PT KAI during the flood crisis in Operational Area 4 Semarang.

RESULT

Overview of the Research Object

PT Kereta Api Indonesia is a state-owned railway company in Indonesia that provides passenger and freight transportation services. This research focuses

on the crisis communication carried out by PT KAI through its official Instagram account, @kai121_, during the flood incident in Operational Area 4 Semarang in January 2026. The flood caused operational disruption, including train delays, route adjustments, and train cancellations, which affected public mobility and customer convenience.

Instagram became one of the main communication channels used by PT KAI during the crisis because the platform enabled the organization to distribute information quickly and directly to the public. During the crisis period from 15–20 January 2026, PT KAI uploaded 27 Instagram posts related to the flood situation, operational updates, customer information, and recovery efforts. These posts became the primary data analyzed in this study.

Results of Crisis Communication Analysis

The results show that PT KAI used several crisis communication strategies during the flood crisis in Operational Area 4 Semarang. The identified strategies included excuse, justification, apology, compensation, and reminder. Meanwhile, no findings related to attack the accuser, denial, scapegoat, ingratiation, and victimage strategies were identified in the analyzed content.

Table 1. SCCT Strategies Found in PT KAI Instagram Content

Strategy	Main Findings
Excuse	PT KAI explained that operational disruption was caused by external factors such as flooding, heavy rainfall, and overflowing water
Justification	Operational adjustments and train cancellations were communicated as safety-oriented actions
Apology	PT KAI consistently expressed apologies to passengers affected by delays and cancellations
Compensation	Refunds, service recovery, and easier ticket cancellation access were provided

Reminder	PT KAI highlighted operational recovery and normalization progress
Other Strategies	No evidence of denial, scapegoat, attack the accuser, ingratiation, and victimage strategies

The most dominant finding in the analyzed content was the use of excuse strategy. PT KAI repeatedly explained that the operational disruption occurred because of external environmental conditions, such as extreme weather, flooding, and damaged railway infrastructure. Information was delivered through captions, operational updates, and visual documentation showing flooded railway tracks and recovery activities in affected areas.

In addition, PT KAI also emphasized passenger safety in many uploaded contents. Operational engineering, temporary route closures, and train cancellations were explained as preventive actions to ensure safe railway operations. Most posts delivered detailed operational information, affected routes, and updates regarding field conditions. The use of informative captions and real-time updates reflected PT KAI's effort to maintain communication with passengers during the crisis period.

Another frequently identified communication form was apology messages. PT KAI consistently apologized for delays, cancellations, and inconvenience experienced by passengers. The apology statements were usually combined with operational explanations and updates regarding recovery progress. Several captions also expressed appreciation for customer patience and understanding during the disruption period.

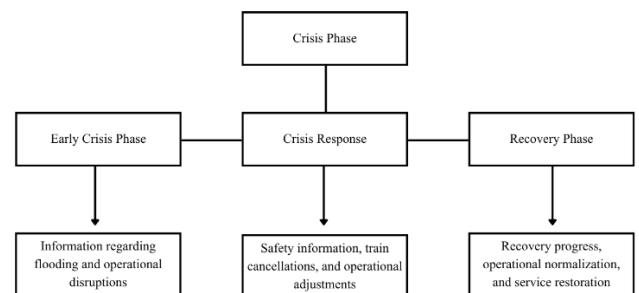
Table 2. Compensation Forms Provided by PT KAI During the Crisis

Compensation Form	Description
Ticket Refund	Full refund for canceled train trips
Service Recovery	Alternative operational arrangements and customer assistance
Information Services	Updates through Instagram, Call Center

	121, and official channels
Digital Refund Access	Ticket cancellation through the Access by KAI application

The findings also show that PT KAI actively communicated recovery efforts after the flood conditions gradually improved. Several Instagram posts informed the public about railway normalization, route reopening, infrastructure monitoring, and increasing operational performance. Visual content during this phase generally showed trains operating normally, railway recovery activities, and field officers conducting operational supervision.

Figure 1. Crisis Communication Pattern During the Flood Crisis



Overall, the findings indicate that PT KAI prioritized informative and responsive communication during the flood crisis. The organization continuously updated operational conditions, explained recovery efforts, and provided customer-oriented information through Instagram during the entire crisis period.

DISCUSSION

Crisis Communication During the Flood Disaster

The findings of this study demonstrate that PT Kereta Api Indonesia implemented several crisis communication strategies through its official Instagram account during the flood disaster in Operational Area 4 Semarang. The communication strategies identified in this research include excuse, justification, apology, compensation, and reminder strategies. These strategies were distributed across different stages of the crisis and were consistently used to maintain information transparency, reduce public uncertainty, and preserve organizational reputation during operational disruption. The results further indicate that Instagram functioned not only as

platform for disseminating operational information but also as an important medium for maintaining relationships between the organization and the public during a crisis situation.

The flood disaster experienced by PT KAI represents an external crisis caused by environmental factors beyond organizational control. As explained in the literature review, crises may originate from external conditions such as natural disasters, weather conditions, or environmental disruptions that affect organizational operations (Wardiman & Amanah, 2022). In this study, PT KAI consistently communicated that the operational disruption was caused by heavy rainfall, overflowing water, flooding around railway infrastructure, and damaged railway facilities. Through captions, informational graphics, photographs, and operational updates, PT KAI attempted to explain to the public that the disruption was not caused by organizational negligence but by extraordinary environmental conditions.

The findings reveal that the most dominant strategy identified in PT KAI's Instagram content was the excuse strategy. This strategy appeared repeatedly in posts explaining train delays, route engineering, operational adjustments, and railway monitoring activities. The organization continuously emphasized that the flood conditions were external factors that disrupted railway services. According to the literature review, excuse strategy is used to reduce organizational responsibility by explaining that a crisis occurred because of uncontrollable external factors. In the context of this study, PT KAI attempted to minimize negative public perception by presenting factual explanations regarding the causes of the operational disruption.

The use of excuse strategy was also strengthened visually through the uploaded content. Several Instagram posts displayed flooded railway tracks, damaged operational areas, field officers conducting inspections, and technical recovery activities. The visual representation of the flood situation reinforced the narrative communicated in captions and operational updates. This finding supports the argument proposed by Mele et al. (2023) and Uddin et al. (2024), which explains that visual communication on Instagram plays a significant role in helping audiences understand organizational situations more clearly and emotionally. Compared with text-only communication, visual content can provide stronger

evidence and improve audience understanding regarding crisis conditions.

Justification Strategy and Safety Oriented Communication

Another important finding in this study is the consistent use of justification strategy throughout the crisis period. PT KAI repeatedly explained that operational adjustments, train cancellations, and route engineering were implemented to ensure passenger safety. The organization framed these operational decisions as preventive measures aimed at reducing greater risks. In many uploaded posts, PT KAI emphasized that safety remained the highest operational priority during the flood disaster.

This communication pattern reflects the important role of crisis communication in reducing public uncertainty and maintaining organizational credibility during emergency situations. As explained by Yulianti & Boer (2020), crisis communication is essential because it enables organizations to provide clear and coordinated information when public concern increases. In the case of PT KAI, detailed operational explanations became an important communication tool to reassure passengers that operational decisions were made carefully and responsibly.

The findings also demonstrate that PT KAI provided operational information continuously throughout the crisis period. The organization informed the public about affected routes, temporary railway closures, train cancellation schedules, alternative operational patterns, and infrastructure monitoring activities. This continuous information flow indicates that PT KAI prioritized real-time communication during the crisis. According to Abdurrazzaq, (2024), organizations must respond quickly and transparently during crisis situations because delays in communication may increase uncertainty and public dissatisfaction. In this study, PT KAI's use of Instagram enabled rapid communication delivery and allowed the organization to provide updates regularly.

The results further show that PT KAI attempted to maintain professionalism through its communication style. Most uploaded content used formal language, operational terminology, and structured information delivery. The organization also included specific locations, timelines, and technical descriptions in many captions. This communication style created the

impression that PT KAI maintained operational control despite the ongoing disruption. In crisis communication, credibility is strongly influenced by the consistency and clarity of information delivered to stakeholders. The communication strategy identified in this study reflects PT KAI's effort to maintain organizational trustworthiness through detailed and transparent communication.

Apology and Emotional Communication

Another significant finding identified in this study is the consistent use of apology strategy during the flood crisis. PT KAI repeatedly expressed apologies to passengers affected by train delays, cancellations, and operational disruption. Apology messages appeared in multiple posts throughout the crisis period and were generally positioned alongside operational updates and explanations regarding recovery efforts. The repetition of apology statements demonstrates that PT KAI attempted to maintain emotional communication with the public during the crisis.

According to Pinandhita & Saputro (2023), public relations communication during crisis situations should not only focus on delivering factual information but should also provide emotional reassurance and empathy toward affected stakeholders. In this study, PT KAI's apology messages were frequently accompanied by appreciation for passenger patience and understanding. This communication pattern indicates that the organization attempted to create a more human-centered communication approach rather than relying solely on technical explanations.

The findings also reveal that PT KAI combined apology messages with operational transparency. The organization did not merely apologize but also explained the causes of disruption, current field conditions, and ongoing recovery efforts. This combination strengthened the sincerity of the apology because it was supported by visible recovery actions. In crisis communication practice, apology messages are generally more effective when organizations demonstrate responsibility and provide evidence of recovery efforts. PT KAI's communication pattern reflects an attempt to balance empathy with accountability.

In addition, the organization used customer-oriented language throughout several Instagram captions. PT KAI frequently addressed audiences

using the term "Sahabat KAI," which created a more personal and relational communication tone. This communication approach reduced the distance between the organization and the public and contributed to a friendlier communication atmosphere during the crisis. The use of relational language on social media is important because social media platforms emphasize interaction and engagement between organizations and audiences.

Compensation Strategy and Service Recovery

The findings further indicate that PT KAI actively implemented compensation strategy during the flood crisis. Compensation appeared in the form of ticket refunds, service recovery, customer assistance, and simplified ticket cancellation access through the Access by KAI application. The organization repeatedly informed passengers that canceled trips were eligible for full refunds and explained the refund procedures in detail through Instagram posts.

This finding reflects the importance of responsive communication during crisis situations. According to Abdurrazzaq (2024), crisis communication on social media should not only provide explanations but should also offer practical solutions that directly address public concerns. PT KAI's compensation strategy demonstrates that the organization attempted to reduce passenger dissatisfaction by providing tangible recovery measures. The existence of refund policies and customer service support also indicates that the organization acknowledged the impact experienced by passengers.

The use of Instagram significantly supported PT KAI's compensation communication strategy. The organization used visual graphics, refund instructions, screenshots of application features, and customer guidance posts to explain refund procedures clearly. The visual presentation simplified public understanding regarding the compensation process and reduced confusion among passengers affected by train cancellations.

Several uploaded contents also displayed colorful visual elements, customer illustrations, smartphone graphics, and simplified step-by-step refund guidance. This visual style created a more approachable communication format and reduced the formal and stressful atmosphere commonly associated with crisis situations. According to Uddin et al. (2024), Instagram's visual features enable organizations to

communicate complex information in a simpler and more understandable way. PT KAI effectively utilized this characteristic by transforming technical refund information into visually accessible communication.

Reminder Strategy and Recovery Communication

Another important finding identified in this study is the implementation of reminder strategy during the recovery phase. PT KAI uploaded several posts highlighting railway normalization, infrastructure recovery, operational improvements, and increasing on-time performance. These posts generally appeared after flood conditions gradually improved and operational stability began returning.

The reminder strategy functioned as a communication effort to reinforce positive organizational perception after the crisis phase. PT KAI consistently informed the public that railway routes had reopened gradually, operational monitoring remained active, and railway performance was improving. Through these posts, the organization attempted to communicate that recovery efforts were progressing successfully.

The use of reminder strategy was strengthened through positive visual framing. Several uploaded posts showed trains operating normally, railway routes without flooding, field officers conducting inspections, and operational activities under clear weather conditions. The organization also used optimistic captions and positive audio elements such as “GOOD NEWS” in several uploaded reels. This communication pattern created a perception that the crisis situation was gradually under control and that PT KAI remained capable of restoring normal operations.

According to Oktavian (2025), social media content significantly influences how audiences interpret organizational situations and responses. In this study, reminder strategy helped PT KAI shape positive public interpretation regarding organizational recovery. The communication pattern demonstrates that PT KAI not only focused on explaining the crisis but also actively communicated recovery progress to rebuild public confidence.

The findings also reveal that PT KAI maintained communication consistency throughout the crisis period. The organization continuously uploaded operational updates, recovery activities, customer information, and monitoring reports from the

beginning of the flood incident until operational normalization. This communication consistency reflects organizational commitment to maintaining public engagement during emergency situations.

Table 3. Main Communication Patterns Found in PT KAI Instagram Content

Communication Pattern	Description
Realtime Updates	PT KAI continuously informed the public regarding operational conditions and railway monitoring
Visual Documentation	Uploaded content showed flooded railway tracks, field officers, and infrastructure recovery
Customer Oriented Information	Information regarding refunds, cancellations, and customer assistance was consistently provided
Safety Oriented Messaging	Operational decisions were framed as preventive actions to ensure passenger safety
Recovery Communication	Posts highlighted normalization progress and improving operational performance

These communication patterns indicate that PT KAI prioritized transparency, responsiveness, and operational clarity throughout the crisis period.

Consistency in communication is particularly important in crisis management because audiences continuously seek reliable information during uncertain situations. Inconsistent communication may create confusion and increase public distrust. In the case of PT KAI, the organization maintained a stable communication flow by regularly publishing operational information through Instagram. This approach helped audiences follow the development of the crisis situation in real time.

Instagram as a Crisis Communication Platform

Another important aspect identified in this study is the strategic role of Instagram as a crisis

communication platform. According to Noventa et al. (2023) and Uddin et al. (2024), Instagram is one of the most effective social media platforms for crisis communication because it integrates visual communication, short text messages, interactive features, and real-time engagement. The findings of this study strongly support this argument.

PT KAI utilized Instagram not only to distribute information but also to shape organizational narratives during the crisis. The organization carefully selected visuals, captions, typography, and message framing to communicate operational conditions and recovery efforts. Informational graphics, field photographs, operational data, and customer guidance posts were integrated to create comprehensive crisis communication.

Instagram's visual-oriented nature also enabled PT KAI to communicate emotional and operational messages simultaneously. For example, images showing field officers working in flooded areas communicated organizational dedication and responsibility, while images of trains operating normally during the recovery phase communicated optimism and operational improvement. This visual communication strengthened audience understanding beyond textual explanations alone.

The findings further demonstrate that PT KAI emphasized transparency throughout the crisis period. The organization openly communicated train delays, route adjustments, technical disruptions, and infrastructure conditions. Transparency is an important element of effective crisis communication because audiences expect accurate and honest information during emergencies. According to the literature review, organizations that communicate transparently are generally better able to maintain public trust during crisis situations.

The detailed communication delivered by PT KAI also reflects the increasing importance of digital public relations in modern organizational communication. Social media platforms have transformed public relations practice from one-way information delivery into interactive communication processes. In crisis situations, organizations are expected to provide rapid responses, real-time updates, and accessible information through digital platforms.

The communication strategy identified in this study reflects these changing communication expectations. PT KAI used Instagram actively because the platform allowed fast information distribution and direct public access to operational updates. The organization's communication approach demonstrates that digital platforms now play an essential role in maintaining organizational public relationships during emergencies.

Communication Strategies That Were Not Identified

Despite the extensive use of multiple crisis communication strategies, this study also found several strategies that were not identified in PT KAI's Instagram content. No evidence of denial, scapegoat, or attack the accuser strategies was found throughout the analyzed posts. PT KAI never attempted to reject the existence of the crisis, deny operational disruption, or blame external stakeholders directly for the situation.

This finding suggests that PT KAI preferred informative and empathetic communication approaches rather than defensive communication strategies. The organization focused more on explaining operational conditions, recovery efforts, and customer assistance rather than engaging in confrontational or defensive narratives. This communication choice likely contributed to maintaining organizational credibility during the crisis.

The absence of scapegoat strategy is particularly important because it indicates that PT KAI avoided transferring blame to other institutions or parties despite the severe impact of the flood. Instead, the organization concentrated on operational handling and public communication. This approach reflects a more solution-oriented communication style.

Similarly, no evidence of ingratiation or victimage strategies was identified in the analyzed content. PT KAI did not excessively praise stakeholders or position itself as the primary victim of the crisis. Instead, the organization maintained a relatively balanced communication style focused on operational updates and recovery progress. This finding indicates that PT KAI prioritized practical communication rather than symbolic image-building communication during the flood crisis.

CONCLUSION

This study examined the crisis communication strategy implemented by PT Kereta Api Indonesia (PT KAI) through its official Instagram account, @kai121_, during the flood disaster in Operational Area 4 Semarang. The findings show that PT KAI actively utilized Instagram as a crisis communication platform to distribute operational information, communicate recovery efforts, and maintain interaction with the public throughout the crisis period. The organization consistently provided real-time updates regarding train delays, route adjustments, operational disruption, and infrastructure conditions caused by the flood disaster.

The results indicate that PT KAI applied several crisis communication strategies, including excuse, justification, apology, compensation, and reminder strategies. The most dominant strategy identified was excuse, where PT KAI repeatedly explained that the operational disruption was caused by external environmental conditions such as flooding, heavy rainfall, and damaged railway infrastructure. In addition, PT KAI emphasized passenger safety through justification strategy by explaining that operational adjustments and train cancellations were preventive actions aimed at minimizing greater risks. The organization also consistently expressed apology messages to maintain emotional communication with passengers affected by the crisis.

Furthermore, PT KAI implemented compensation strategy through ticket refunds, customer assistance, and simplified cancellation access through digital platforms. During the recovery phase, PT KAI used reminder strategy by communicating operational normalization, railway recovery progress, and improving operational performance. The findings also demonstrate that Instagram played an important role in supporting transparent, responsive, and visual-based crisis communication during emergency situations.

This study concludes that social media has become an important communication tool for public service organizations during crisis situations. Through Instagram, PT KAI was able to maintain communication continuity, reduce public uncertainty, and support organizational reputation recovery during the flood disaster. The integration of visual communication, operational transparency, and real-time updates enabled the organization to communicate more effectively with the public during operational disruption.

Despite these findings, this study has several limitations. First, the research only focused on Instagram content uploaded by PT KAI during a specific crisis period, so the findings may not fully represent the organization's broader crisis communication practices across other platforms or crisis situations. Second, this study only analyzed organizational content and did not examine audience responses such as comments, engagement patterns, or public sentiment toward the uploaded posts. Third, the study focused on one case study involving a natural disaster in Operational Area 4 Semarang, which limits broader generalization to other organizational contexts or crisis types.

Therefore, future research is recommended to explore crisis communication across multiple social media platforms such as X, TikTok, or Facebook to compare communication patterns and audience engagement during crisis situations. Future studies may also analyze public responses, audience

perception, and stakeholder interaction to better understand the effectiveness of organizational crisis communication strategies. In addition, comparative studies involving different transportation organizations or different crisis types may provide broader insights into digital crisis communication practices in public service institutions.

Author contribution

Author: Conceptualisation and Research Design, Data Collection, Methodology, Supervision, Writing Entire Paper, Conceptualisation, Data Collection and Analysis, Editing and Layouting. All Authors have read the final version of the paper.

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