



REVEALING NETIZENS' RESPONSES TO THE WITHDRAWAL OF DANGEROUS PRODUCTS: A CASE STUDY OF PINKFLASH COSMETICS

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ABSTRACT

The revocation of the distribution permits for two Pinkflash products by the Food and Drug Monitoring Agency (BPOM) not only triggered a reputational crisis on social media but also revealed how the digital public assesses brand responsibility in regulatory crises related to product safety. This study aims to analyze netizen responses to Pinkflash's clarification and interpret the brand's crisis communication patterns through the perspective of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). Academically, this study offers novelty by utilizing netizen comments as the primary data for understanding public acceptance of brand response strategies in the context of a cosmetics crisis triggered by regulatory intervention. The study used a descriptive qualitative approach with a qualitative content analysis of Pinkflash's official clarification post and netizen comments on social media. The results show that netizen responses are divided into support, criticism, distrust, and concern over product safety. Clarification and apology are considered important initial steps, but are not sufficient to restore trust. These findings confirm that the effectiveness of digital crisis communication is determined not only by the transparency of the message but also by the consistency of post-crisis corrective actions.

Keywords: crisis communication, netizen responses, transparency, brand reputation, social media

1. INTRODUCTION

The revocation of a product's distribution permit by the Food and Drug Monitoring Agency (BPOM) not only presents legal and product safety issues but can also escalate into a serious reputational crisis for a brand. In the cosmetics industry, such issues are highly sensitive because they directly relate to consumers' bodies, health, and sense of safety. When information about a product deemed dangerous circulates in the digital space, the public is no longer merely a recipient of messages but also an actor collectively producing, disseminating, and interpreting information. In this context, a regulatory crisis transforms into a communication crisis, demanding a swift, precise, and convincing response from the affected organization or brand (Ulum Hidayah Suryani et al., 2025).

The development of social media has further accelerated the escalation of the crisis, as public opinion is formed in real time through comments, reposts, hashtags, and conversations between users. This situation makes a brand's reputation highly vulnerable to public scrutiny, which is open and widespread. Warcono Adi et al. (2025) explain that crises on social media have a high level of pervasiveness and can influence public perception of a brand in a short time. On the other hand, a brand's failure to read the dynamics of digital conversations and respond strategically can prolong negative sentiment and disrupt the long-term sustainability of its reputation (Rizkhy et al., 2025). Therefore, crisis communication in the digital era is no longer simply understood as providing clarification, but rather as a process of negotiating meaning between the brand and the public.

In such situations, public relations plays a crucial role in managing the relationship between the organization and the public amidst the pressures of a crisis. Public relations is not only tasked with conveying information but also must be able to map public perceptions, manage expectations, and maintain the organization's legitimacy through well-planned communication. Syahrudin et al. (2023) emphasize that public relations is required to be able to read the situation, understand public needs, and anticipate potential crises from an early stage so that the organization can determine proportionate response steps. Therefore, the success of crisis communication is determined not only by the speed of response, but also by the brand's ability to demonstrate responsibility, empathy, and a commitment to improvement that is acceptable to the public.

To understand these dynamics, this study uses Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) developed by Coombs (2014). SCCT emphasizes that the effectiveness of an organization's response to a crisis is greatly influenced by how the public perceives the organization's level of responsibility for the crisis. The greater the public's attribution of responsibility to an organization, the greater the demand for a response that demonstrates acknowledgement, apology, corrective action, and the restoration of trust. In the context of cosmetic product recalls by the Food and Drug Authority (BPOM), this theory is relevant because the public tends to assess not only the content of the clarification message, but also the extent to which the brand is perceived as honest, responsible, and serious in addressing the impact of the crisis. Ugahari and Apriliani (2025) demonstrate that response strategies within the SCCT framework need to be tailored to the nature of the crisis and public perception to minimize reputational damage.

The Pinkflash case is important to study because it demonstrates how a regulatory crisis in the cosmetics industry evolved into an arena for public evaluation on social media. When the BPOM revoked the distribution permit for a particular product, public attention focused not only on the problematic product but also on the brand's overall integrity. Pinkflash's clarification via social media became a crucial point in the crisis communication process, as the message was directly tested by netizens through comments, criticism, support, and expressions of disbelief. In this situation, social media serves a dual function: as a channel for conveying official brand messages and as a public space where reputation perceptions are formed, debated, and disseminated. Mintari et al. (2025) emphasized that in product safety crises, consumer trust is strongly influenced by the consistency between the crisis message delivered and the organization's actual actions after the crisis.

Several previous studies have discussed crisis communication, brand reputation, and consumer trust on social media. Mintari et al. (2025), for example, highlighted the relationship between crisis communication and consumer trust, while Syahrudin et al. (2023) emphasized the role of public relations in managing corporate crises. Research by Warcono Adi et al. (2025) also focused on reputational risk in the social media era. However, these studies generally position the public as the recipient or responder to crises in general, without specifically examining how netizen comments, as a form of digital response, shape the meaning of brand clarifications in product regulatory crises. In other words, there is still room for further research to understand the relationship between brand response strategies, attribution of responsibility from a SCCT perspective, and the logic of public judgment that emerges through interactions on social media.

Based on this gap, the novelty of this research lies in its effort to examine netizen responses not merely as superficial reactions of positive or negative nature, but as indicators of the formation of public perceptions of brand transparency, responsibility, and credibility in regulatory crises. This study also expands the application of SCCT by utilizing netizen comments as crucial data to determine whether the brand's clarification and apology strategies are perceived as effective or simply foster new distrust. Thus, this study examines not only what Pinkflash communicates but also how those messages are interpreted, tested, and negotiated by the public in the digital space.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

This study uses a descriptive qualitative approach with qualitative content analysis methods to understand how Pinkflash's crisis communication is constructed through social media and how netizens interpret and respond to the brand's clarification in a regulatory crisis situation. A qualitative approach was chosen because this study does not attempt to statistically measure the frequency of responses, but rather to interpret the meaning, tone of responses, the logic of public judgment, and the relationship between brand messages and netizen perceptions formed in the digital space. This approach is relevant to examining crisis communication as a process of social meaning production that occurs openly on social media (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

The object of this study is the crisis communication messages conveyed by Pinkflash through its official social media accounts, specifically posts containing clarifications, apologies, and commitments to follow-up regarding the revocation of the product's distribution permit by the Indonesian Food and Drug Authority (BPOM). Based on the material presented in the manuscript, the platform analyzed focused on the official Instagram account @pinkflash.beauty, because on this platform the brand conveys crisis messages directly and simultaneously receives public responses through the comments section. The research subjects were netizen comments on the posts during the crisis period, from the initial clarification's publication until the post-crisis commitment post appeared in the third quarter of 2025 (July–September 2025). This focus was chosen because Instagram serves as an interactive space that allows the public to directly assess the content of messages, the tone of communication, and the credibility of the brand's response.

The research data sources consisted of primary textual data and contextual secondary data. The primary textual data consisted of official Pinkflash posts related to the crisis and netizen comments on those posts. The secondary contextual data included official information from the Food and Drug Authority (BPOM) regarding the revocation of the product's distribution permit, screenshot documentation of the posts, and scientific literature relevant to digital crisis communication and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). By combining post text, public comments, and supporting documents, this research sought to interpret the crisis not only from an organizational perspective, but also from the perspective of public acceptance and evaluation of the brand's response strategy (Coombs, 2014).

Data collection techniques included non-participant observation and digital documentation. Non-participant observation was conducted by observing Pinkflash posts and netizen responses without engaging in interactions within the platform. Researchers reviewed all posts directly related to the distribution permit revocation case and documented the post content, publication time, message elements, and netizen comments relevant to the crisis context. Digital documentation was conducted through manual note-taking and screenshots to maintain the integrity of the analyzed text data. This technique is appropriate for digital media research because it allows researchers to preserve the original form of messages and public responses as they appeared during the crisis (Bowen, 2009).

The data analysis procedure followed the steps of qualitative content analysis. The first stage was data reduction, which selected posts and comments that align with the research focus. The second stage was open coding, which assigned initial codes to elements of the brand message such as clarification, apology, acknowledgement of the problem, explanation of causes, and commitment to corrective action, as well as to netizen comments such as support, criticism, distrust, concern, and demands for transparency. The third stage is thematic categorization, which involves grouping the initial codes into broad themes that represent dominant patterns in public responses. The fourth stage is interpretation, which involves connecting the thematic findings with the SCCT framework to understand how netizens attribute responsibility to the brand and how they assess the effectiveness of Pinkflash's response. The final stage is reflective drawing of conclusions by comparing empirical findings and theoretical arguments (Krippendorff, 2018; Miles et al., 2014).

3. RESULT AND ANALYSIS

Chronology of the Revocation of the Pinkflash Product Distribution Permit

Research has shown that the Food and Drug Monitoring Agency (BPOM)'s revocation of the Pinkflash brand's distribution permit is part of an ongoing oversight process. In 2025, BPOM conducted oversight of cosmetic products circulating in the Indonesian market through sampling and laboratory testing. Based on these tests, BPOM discovered that two dangerous Pinkflash product variants contained dyes listed as hazardous substances according to BPOM standards. These substances can cause serious health impacts if used continuously and are therefore prohibited in cosmetic products distributed in Indonesia. BPOM included both products on its list of 23 hazardous cosmetic products that must be addressed. During the third quarter of 2025 (July-

September), BPOM officially revoked the distribution permits for these two products. The following is a list of the revoked products:


PRODUK 9 PINKFLASH 3 Pan Eyeshadow PF-E23 BR02		FOTO PRODUK	
1. INFORMASI PRODUK Nama Produk : PINKFLASH 3 Pan Eyeshadow PF-E23 BR02 Merek : PINKFLASH Nomor Izin Edar : NA11231200088 Bentuk Sediaan : Serbuk Kompak Kemasan : Case, Dus Ukuran : 3 g Status produk : Produk Impor Pemilik Izin Edar : PT FCL Internasional Indonesia, Kota Jakarta Barat, Indonesia Produsen : Yiwu Fame Cosmetics Co., Ltd., Kota Yiwu Negara Produsen : China Kandungan Bahan Berbahaya/ Dilarang : Pewarna Acid Orange 7 (CI 15510) Risiko terhadap Kesehatan : Pewarna Acid Orange 7 menyebabkan dermatitis dan iritasi pada mata Ref. Zhang, et al. 2014. Journal of Molecular Liquids. 197: 353-367			
2. TINDAK LANJUT YANG TELAH DILAKUKAN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nomor izin edar produk telah dicabut Perintah penarikan Perintah pemusnahan 			

Figure 1. Pinkflash 3 Pan Eyeshadow PF-E23 BR02


PRODUK 10 PINKFLASH 3 Pan Eyeshadow PF-E23 BR04		FOTO PRODUK	
1. INFORMASI PRODUK Nama Produk : PINKFLASH 3 Pan Eyeshadow PF-E23 BR04 Merek : PINKFLASH Nomor Izin Edar : NA11231200150 Bentuk Sediaan : Serbuk Kompak Kemasan : Case, Dus Ukuran : 3 g Status produk : Produk Impor Pemilik Izin Edar : PT FCL Internasional Indonesia, Kota Jakarta Barat, Indonesia Produsen : Yiwu Fame Cosmetics Co., Ltd., Kota Yiwu Negara Produsen : China Kandungan Bahan Berbahaya/ Dilarang : Pewarna Merah K10 Risiko terhadap Kesehatan : Pewarna Merah K10 bersifat karsinogenik atau menyebabkan kanker dan dapat mengganggu fungsi hati Ref. Cakuntar N, Mustafa S, Mustafa T. 2017. Turkish Journal of Chemistry. 41(5): 986 - 994			
2. TINDAK LANJUT YANG TELAH DILAKUKAN <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Nomor izin edar produk telah dicabut Perintah penarikan Perintah pemusnahan 			

Figure 2. Pinkflash 3 Pan Eyeshadow PF-23 BR04.

The chronology of the revocation of the distribution permit also played a role in shaping public perception of the Pinkflash brand. (Mintari et al., 2025) stated that in crises related to product safety, public perception often forms more quickly than the company's official response, so delayed crisis communication has the potential to reinforce negative sentiment.

In the context of crisis communication, the product recall experienced by the Pinkflash brand by the BPOM is understood as a process that progresses through pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis stages. Understanding these stages is important to understand how brand communication strategies evolve as public attention increases on social media. (Syahrudin et al., 2023) explain that crises do not occur suddenly, but rather begin with a pre-crisis phase marked by the emergence of potential problems that could impact the company's or brand's reputation if not properly anticipated.

Pre-Crisis

During the pre-crisis phase, issues related to the quality and safety of Pinkflash products began to become a topic of discussion on social media, with concerns about the incompatibility of Pinkflash products among users. Issues related to the quality and safety of Pinkflash products have not only emerged as individual complaints but have also begun to escalate into public discussions on social media. This situation indicates an early warning signal indicating a potential reputational crisis if not managed strategically. Although public attention has not yet fully focused on the brand, repeated negative

conversations regarding user incompatibility with Pinkflash products can create perceptions and risks that can gradually affect consumer trust. (Sari et al., 2025) also emphasized that negative issues on social media in the early stages of a crisis tend to escalate and spread if the company or brand does not promptly monitor and respond appropriately to communications.

The role of public relations is crucial in understanding the dynamics of public opinion and predicting the direction of the issue's development. Public relations is required to continuously monitor issues and analyze sentiment to identify potential crises early on. (Syahrudin et al., 2023) emphasized that an organization's ability to recognize the early signs of a crisis is crucial for the effectiveness of subsequent communication strategies. (Warcono Adi et al., 2025) also stated that failure to manage the pre-crisis phase can accelerate the issue's escalation into a more complex and difficult-to-control crisis.

Furthermore, social media also plays a key role in shaping public perceptions of the quality and safety of Pinkflash brand products. When a brand fails to provide adequate clarification or education during this pre-crisis phase, the narrative that develops in the digital space tends to be dominated by negative consumer experiences. (Angraini & Rahma, 2025) show that the absence of organizational communication in the early stages of an issue can reinforce negative brand framing. Therefore, a proactive, transparent, and empathy-based communication strategy is crucial for public relations to mitigate potential crises and safeguard a brand's reputation before they escalate into a crisis.

Crisis

This crisis phase was marked by the issuance of the official BPOM decision regarding the revocation of the Pinkflash product's distribution permit, directly increasing public attention on social media. The crisis escalated rapidly through the active participation of social media users, through comments, reposts, and the use of hashtags.

(Rizkhy et al., 2025) stated that crises in the digital era can broaden the reach of issues quickly. In response to this situation, Pinkflash issued a clarification through its official social media channels as a form of crisis communication aimed at alleviating public concerns and safeguarding the brand's reputation. Netizens' responses to the Pinkflash brand clarification were also influenced by the narrative developing on social media, so that public perception was formed collectively, not solely based on the brand's official message. (Marbu Linko, 2025) also stated that a brand's failure to read the dynamics of digital conversations has the potential to exacerbate a reputation crisis.

In addition to the rapid spread of the issue, the crisis phase was also marked by increased public demand for transparency and accountability from the Pinkflash brand. In this context, Pinkflash's clarification through social media served as an effort to control the crisis narrative in the digital space. However, the effectiveness of a clarification message is determined not only by a brand's presence on social media, but also by its alignment with public expectations. (Rizkhy et al., 2025) also emphasized that during a digital crisis, the public tends to judge a company or brand's response based on the clarity of information, empathy, and consistency of the message. Therefore, an incomprehensive response has the potential to trigger further negative sentiment.

Public perception of the Pinkflash brand's clarification is formed through social interactions among social media users, not just from official Pinkflash messages. The narratives that develop in comments, reposts, and discussions play a significant role in

shaping the collective meaning of the crisis. (Marbu Linko, 2025) stated that a brand's failure to read and respond adaptively to the dynamics of digital conversations can exacerbate a reputational crisis. Therefore, at this stage of the crisis, the role of public relations is not limited to delivering clarifications but also includes managing ongoing digital dialogue to balance the narrative and minimize the ongoing crisis. The following is the clarification posted by the Pinkflash brand on social media:

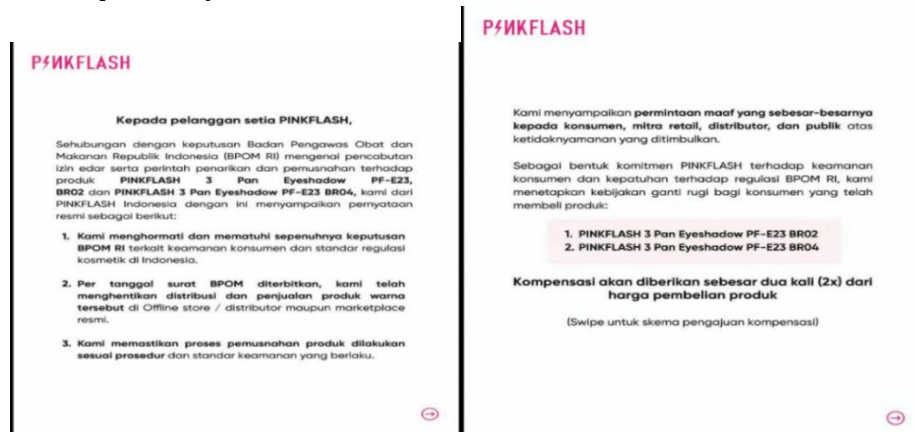


Figure 3. Pinkflash's clarification and apology on social media

Post-Crisis

Pinkflash's post-crisis phase demonstrates efforts to restore its reputation through commitments to improvements focused on security and regulatory compliance. (Intan Assa; Nursapia Harahap, 2021) show that consistent brand messaging and visuals in the digital space contribute to building long-term loyalty.

In the case of Pinkflash, the commitments made after the product recall were a key factor, assessed by the public as an indicator of the brand's commitment to correcting its mistakes.

In the post-crisis phase, public attention shifts from the crisis itself to how the brand behaves after the issue subsides. For Pinkflash, this phase presents an opportunity to rebuild public trust through more open and consistent communication. The public tends to assess whether clarifications are followed by concrete actions, such as improvements to product quality and commitments to consumer safety. Post-crisis communication that demonstrates responsibility and transparency is a crucial factor in the brand's reputation recovery process (Syahrudin et al., 2023).

Pinkflash emphasized concrete steps such as strengthening its quality control system, enhancing internal audit mechanisms with factory partners, optimizing the raw material evaluation process, and aligning all products with BPOM RI safety standards.

(Zafira Wijaya et al., 2025) stated that in the Pinkflash case, post-crisis communication emphasizing long-term actions and commitments played a significant role in alleviating public concerns, although the process of restoring consumer trust remains gradual and requires consistency between the message conveyed and the brand's actual actions.

Netizen Responses to Pinkflash's Clarification

The results of this study indicate that the clarification delivered by the Pinkflash brand through its official social media channels elicited a variety of netizen responses. These

responses were not simply positive or negative, but rather ranged from support, criticism, distrust, and concerns about product safety. This diversity of responses indicates that the public did not interpret the clarification message in its entirety, but rather based on each individual's experience, level of trust, and perception of the brand. This finding aligns with (Mintari et al., 2025), which asserts that the effectiveness of crisis communication is significantly influenced by consumer trust established before a crisis occurs.

Based on an analysis of public comments on social media regarding Pinkflash's clarification, a majority of the public expressed acceptance and support for the apology and explanation of the reasons for the revocation of the product's distribution permit. One netizen expressed support for the clarification taken by the Pinkflash brand through a comment, stating, "The important thing is that the brand didn't disappear; instead, it immediately issued an open statement and provided a solution." This response generally viewed transparency and acknowledgment of mistakes as a form of moral responsibility for the brand to consumers. (Putra & Puspitasari, 2024) also emphasized that netizens' responses to brand clarifications in crisis situations are heavily influenced by perceptions of the openness and honesty of the message.

Clarifications delivered openly through social media create a space for dialogue between brands and netizens. However, this dialogue also creates the opportunity for criticism and distrust if the message does not align with public expectations. (Ugahari & Apriliani, 2025) emphasized that in the context of crisis communication, the message must be tailored to the brand's level of responsibility for the crisis. Therefore, informative clarifications need to be balanced with empathy and concrete commitment so that the public receives the message not only cognitively but also emotionally.

Netizen responses were not entirely positive; some expressed concern and doubted the clarification. This doubt stemmed from the inconsistency between the brand's statements and the actual actions taken after the crisis. One netizen commented, "Pinkflash was automatically blacklisted because they've been repeatedly banned. Now let's just buy local products, make sure the factory is in Indonesia." This comment indicated a lack of trust and a decision to stop using the product. In the context of product safety, the public tends to demand concrete evidence in the form of production systems, quality control, and assurances that such incidents will not recur. (Syahirah, 2025) also emphasized that although clarifications and apologies are perceived as a form of corporate responsibility, some consumers still experience a decline in trust due to doubts about transparency and consistent product quality.

Follow-up actions announced by the Pinkflash brand, such as product recalls, strengthened quality control, evaluation of production partners, and increased compliance with BPOM regulations, have begun to receive a more positive response from some netizens. Netizens view these steps as a demonstration of the Pinkflash brand's seriousness in responding to the crisis. However, netizens remain cautious, as trust is not granted instantly, but rather through a process of observing the consistency of a brand's future actions.

The Role of Message Transparency in Building Public Trust Post-Clarification

Transparency in messaging is a crucial factor in building and restoring netizen trust post-crisis. Open, informative clarifications delivered through official social media can be perceived as a form of brand responsibility to netizens. (Kumalasari et al., 2024) also

emphasize that public relations has a duty to maintain public trust. One of the best tactics is to communicate transparently through the official social media channels of an institution or company. In the context of a regulatory crisis, message transparency serves not only to convey information but also as an indicator of the brand's seriousness in addressing the issues.

Transparency in digital communication also plays a role in increasing netizen involvement in the crisis communication process. (Kumalasari et al., 2024) show that transparency in digital communication significantly increases public engagement, although public trust itself plays a role in this involvement as a mediator in effective crisis communication. The clarification provided by the Pinkflash brand opened a dialogue between the brand and netizens, but it was not enough to completely dispel some consumer doubts, as netizens' engagement was still accompanied by a critical and cautious attitude.

From a crisis communication perspective, openness in messaging also includes an organization's courage to admit mistakes and honestly explain the root of the problem. (Ugahari & Apriliani, 2025) also explain that in the context of crisis communication management, transparency and openness play a crucial role. A transparent organization not only provides positive information but also acknowledges any mistakes. Therefore, clarifications delivered in general terms and lacking clear explanations have the potential to raise doubts among netizens, especially when the issues directly relate to consumer safety and security.

Based on the results of this study, netizen responses to the Pinkflash brand clarification indicate that message transparency is considered a positive initial step, but not enough to instantly rebuild netizen trust. Netizens demand consistency between the clarification message and concrete post-crisis actions as proof of the Pinkflash brand's commitment. Therefore, message transparency in crisis communication on social media must be accompanied by empathy, accountability, and sustainable corrective actions to gradually build public trust.

4. CONCLUSION

Based on the research findings, it can be concluded that the crisis surrounding the withdrawal of the Pinkflash product distribution permit by the Indonesian Food and Drug Authority (BPOM) demonstrates that the effectiveness of crisis communication on social media is not only determined by the speed of clarification delivery, but primarily by the brand's ability to build public perceptions of responsibility, transparency, and consistency of action. This study confirms that netizens' responses to crisis messages are multi-layered, ranging from support and appreciation for openness to criticism, distrust, and concerns rooted in product safety issues. Theoretically, this study strengthens the relevance of Situational Crisis Communication Theory in the context of digital regulatory crises by demonstrating that public acceptance of brand clarifications is highly dependent on the congruence between the message, the level of responsibility attribution, and evidence of post-crisis corrective action. Practically, these findings imply that public relations practitioners need to design crisis communications that are not only informative, but also empathetic, specific, and oriented towards restoring trust through concrete

actions that can be verified by the public. This research is still limited to the analysis of clarification posts and netizen responses to one brand case on social media, so further research is recommended to expand the platform, compare several regulatory crisis cases, and combine digital content analysis with interviews or sentiment analysis to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamics of crisis communication and brand reputation formation in the digital era.

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