



## **Crisis Communication Strategies for Restoring Brand Image and Brand Trust Among Generation Z for Pinkflash Products**

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### **Abstract**

*The rapid growth of the cosmetics industry has intensified competition among brands while increasing their vulnerability to reputational crises driven by the rapid dissemination of information through social media. As one of the leading affordable cosmetic brands, Pinkflash faced public concern following the circulation of allegations regarding harmful ingredients and adverse product effects, creating challenges in maintaining brand image and brand trust, particularly among Generation Z consumers who actively engage with digital platforms. This study aims to examine the differences in Generation Z consumers' brand image and brand trust before and after exposure to Pinkflash's crisis communication strategy and to evaluate the effectiveness of the rebuild strategy consisting of apology, corrective action, and compensation. A quantitative approach was employed using a one-group pretest–posttest experimental design. Data were collected from 100 Generation Z respondents aged 15–30 years residing in the Greater Jakarta area who had previously used Pinkflash products and met the predetermined purposive sampling criteria. The research instrument utilized a seven-point Likert scale, and the data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 27. Instrument validity and reliability, manipulation checks, and normality tests were conducted before hypothesis testing using the paired sample t-test. The results revealed statistically significant differences in both brand image and brand trust before and after the treatment, with significance values of  $p < 0.001$  for both variables. The higher posttest mean scores indicate that the rebuild crisis communication strategy effectively restored consumers' perceptions and strengthened trust toward the Pinkflash brand among Generation Z.*

**Keywords:** Brand Image, Brand Trust, Cosmetics Industry, Crisis Communication, Generation Z.



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## **INTRODUCTION**

The Indonesian cosmetics industry has experienced sustained expansion alongside the global transformation of the beauty market, where digital platforms, social commerce, and consumer-generated content increasingly shape purchasing behavior and long-term brand relationships. Consumer expectations are no longer limited to product performance but have shifted toward transparency, authenticity, and corporate accountability, making brand image and brand trust strategic intangible assets that determine competitive advantage in highly saturated markets (Wiestner & Spiller, 2025). This transformation has been particularly evident among Generation Z, whose intensive engagement with social media accelerates the dissemination of both positive and negative brand-related information while simultaneously amplifying collective evaluations of corporate responses during crises (Cheng, 2022). Within this context, cosmetic brands are required to manage reputational risks continuously because digital conversations can rapidly redefine public perceptions regardless of the objective quality of the products themselves. Positive brand image has consistently been recognized as an important determinant of consumer preference and purchasing behavior because it reflects accumulated perceptions regarding the company, its products, and its users (Haryanto & Harsono, 2022). Likewise, brand trust functions as the psychological foundation that enables consumers to maintain confidence in a brand despite uncertainty, thereby strengthening long-term relationships and consumer loyalty (Portal et al., 2019). These developments indicate that crisis communication has become an integral component of strategic brand management rather than merely a reactive public relations function.

Despite the increasing importance of crisis communication in digital markets, the cosmetic industry remains highly vulnerable to reputational threats arising from allegations concerning product

safety, misleading claims, or adverse consumer experiences that rapidly circulate through online communities. Pinkflash became the subject of widespread public attention after social media users disseminated information regarding alleged harmful ingredients and potential side effects, creating uncertainty among consumers regardless of whether the information had undergone comprehensive scientific verification. Such situations illustrate how digital crises frequently evolve through public interpretation rather than through official organizational narratives alone, causing reputational damage that may exceed the original operational issue (Pramata, 2025). Regulatory agencies have simultaneously intensified public monitoring of cosmetic safety, reinforcing consumer awareness regarding hazardous ingredients and encouraging more critical evaluations of beauty products available in the market (BPOM, 2025). Existing studies also demonstrate that organizations confronting beauty-product controversies increasingly rely on transparent communication, stakeholder engagement, and corrective responses to reduce uncertainty and restore legitimacy (Husniyah et al., 2025). The growing dependence of consumers on online reviews, influencer discussions, and peer-generated content further increases the complexity of restoring brand perceptions once negative information becomes viral (Ozuem et al., 2024). Under these circumstances, companies cannot rely solely on product quality because public confidence increasingly depends on the credibility and effectiveness of organizational communication during crises.

The development of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) has substantially enriched scholarly understanding of how organizations should adapt communication strategies according to stakeholders' attribution of crisis responsibility, making the theory one of the dominant frameworks in crisis communication research (Cheng et al., 2022). Within this framework, the rebuild strategy—which emphasizes apology, corrective action, and compensation—is considered particularly appropriate when organizations seek to restore damaged relationships and regain stakeholder confidence after reputational threats (van Rensburg et al., 2017). Empirical evidence further suggests that transparent crisis responses positively influence organizational evaluations because stakeholders perceive openness and accountability as signals of ethical corporate behavior (Holland et al., 2021). Other studies also indicate that communication recovery strategies become more persuasive when supported by visible organizational actions rather than symbolic statements alone, especially in digital environments characterized by continuous public scrutiny (Tito & Noer, 2025). Although these findings consistently emphasize the importance of communication strategies, previous investigations have predominantly evaluated organizational reputation, stakeholder attitudes, or crisis response effectiveness without comprehensively examining simultaneous changes in brand image and brand trust. The literature therefore provides valuable theoretical insights but remains fragmented in explaining how crisis response mechanisms translate into broader consumer-based brand outcomes within highly competitive cosmetic markets. This fragmentation becomes increasingly relevant because consumers often reconstruct their perceptions of brands through multiple cognitive and emotional processes that extend beyond immediate evaluations of crisis messages.

Current empirical evidence also reveals several conceptual and methodological limitations that restrict the generalizability of existing knowledge concerning crisis communication in consumer markets. Numerous studies investigate either brand image or brand trust independently despite the theoretical interdependence between these two constructs in shaping consumer evaluations following organizational crises (Rodiyah et al., 2025). Research on brand trust has likewise emphasized its influence on purchase intention and consumer loyalty while paying comparatively limited attention to the communication mechanisms responsible for rebuilding trust after reputational disruption (Khairunnisa & Suryawardani, 2025). Existing studies involving crisis communication frequently adopt cross-sectional survey designs that capture consumer perceptions at a single point in time, making it difficult to identify measurable perceptual changes resulting directly from communication interventions (Larasati & Perkasa, 2026). The majority of empirical investigations also concentrate on corporate reputation in general organizational contexts, leaving crisis recovery strategies within the rapidly evolving Indonesian cosmetic industry relatively underexplored. Limited attention has also been devoted to Generation Z despite the fact that this demographic represents one of the most digitally connected consumer segments and is particularly sensitive to viral information distributed through social media ecosystems. These unresolved issues indicate the necessity of employing research designs capable of observing perceptual changes before and after structured crisis communication exposure while focusing specifically on consumer-based branding outcomes.

The unresolved gaps identified in previous studies possess substantial theoretical and practical implications because ineffective crisis communication may generate persistent reputational damage that extends beyond temporary declines in sales and eventually weakens consumer loyalty. Generation Z represents a particularly critical population because its members actively participate in digital conversations, rapidly evaluate corporate credibility, and frequently influence broader public opinion through online interactions. Understanding how this demographic interprets organizational recovery efforts is essential for refining crisis communication theory within consumer-centered digital environments while simultaneously providing evidence-based guidance for practitioners. The present study positions itself within this scholarly landscape by integrating the SCCT rebuild strategy with the dual perspectives of brand image and brand trust to explain post-crisis consumer perception in the Indonesian cosmetic industry. Unlike previous studies that primarily emphasize organizational reputation or communication effectiveness, this research focuses explicitly on the simultaneous restoration of two interconnected branding constructs following exposure to structured crisis communication. The selection of Pinkflash as the research context offers an opportunity to investigate an actual digital crisis that has attracted extensive public attention, thereby strengthening the contextual relevance of the empirical investigation. This positioning enables the study to bridge crisis communication theory with contemporary branding literature in an emerging beauty market characterized by intensive social media engagement.

This study aims to examine the differences in Generation Z consumers' brand image and brand trust before and after exposure to Pinkflash's crisis communication strategy employing the rebuild approach through a one-group pretest-posttest experimental design. The research is expected to enrich the theoretical development of crisis communication by providing empirical evidence regarding the interconnected mechanisms through which apology, corrective action, and compensation influence consumer-based brand perceptions in digital cosmetic markets. Methodologically, the study contributes by applying an experimental approach capable of capturing perceptual change over time rather than relying solely on cross-sectional consumer evaluations. The findings are also expected to extend the application of SCCT within the context of consumer branding by integrating crisis response strategies with multidimensional brand outcomes. From a managerial perspective, the results may provide practical guidance for cosmetic companies in designing more effective crisis communication strategies aimed at restoring consumer confidence following reputational threats. Ultimately, this research is expected to strengthen the integration of crisis communication, branding, and consumer behavior literature while offering a more comprehensive understanding of crisis recovery among digitally connected consumers.

## RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed an empirical quantitative research design using a pre-experimental one-group pretest–posttest design to examine the effectiveness of Pinkflash's rebuild crisis communication strategy in restoring brand image and brand trust among Generation Z consumers. Experimental research enables researchers to evaluate changes in dependent variables by comparing participants' responses before and after receiving a controlled treatment (Sugiyono, 2023). The study population consisted of Indonesian Generation Z women aged 15–30 years who had used Pinkflash cosmetic products within the previous 12 months, were aware of the alleged product side effects or harmful ingredient issues through social media, and agreed to complete both the pretest and posttest questionnaires. A non-probability purposive sampling technique was employed to ensure that respondents met the predetermined inclusion criteria relevant to the research objectives (Sugiyono, 2023). The minimum sample size was determined using the Lemeshow formula for an unknown population:

$$n = \frac{Z^2 P(1 - P)}{d^2}$$

where  $n$  denotes the minimum sample size,  $Z$  is the standard normal value at the 95% confidence level (1.96),  $P$  is the estimated population proportion (0.50), and  $d$  represents the margin of error (0.10). Based on these parameters, the calculation produced a minimum sample size of 96.04, which was rounded to 100 respondents. Primary data were collected through a structured online questionnaire administered via Google Forms before and after respondents were exposed to the crisis communication stimulus. The independent variable was operationalized as Pinkflash's rebuild crisis communication

strategy, comprising apology, corrective action, and compensation derived from the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), whereas the dependent variables included brand image, measured through corporate image, product image, and user image, and brand trust, measured through brand reliability and brand intentionality (van Rensburg et al., 2017).

All measurement items were assessed using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), with multiple indicators adopted to capture the multidimensional characteristics of each construct. Prior to hypothesis testing, the questionnaire was evaluated through Pearson Product–Moment validity testing and Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis, where a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient greater than 0.60 indicated acceptable internal consistency (Sugiyono, 2023). Data were analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 25, beginning with descriptive statistics and manipulation checking to ensure that respondents correctly understood the crisis communication treatment. The normality assumption was assessed using the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test complemented by the Normal P–P Plot, with a significance value greater than 0.05 indicating normally distributed data (Sugiyono, 2023). The primary hypotheses were tested using the paired-samples *t*-test, which compares the mean differences between pretest and posttest scores and is expressed as:

$$t = \frac{\bar{d}}{s_d/\sqrt{n}}$$

where  $\bar{d}$  denotes the mean difference between paired observations,  $s_d$  represents the standard deviation of the paired differences, and  $n$  is the number of paired observations. Statistical significance was evaluated at the 5% significance level ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ), where  $p < 0.05$  indicated a significant improvement in brand image and brand trust following exposure to Pinkflash's rebuild crisis communication strategy. When the normality assumption was violated, the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was employed as the non-parametric alternative to ensure the robustness of the statistical inference (Dhianti Putri et al., 2023).

## Research Hypotheses

Based on the experimental design employed in this study, the hypotheses are formulated as follows:

**H1:** Generation Z consumers will report significantly higher brand image after exposure to Pinkflash's rebuild crisis communication strategy than before exposure.

**H2:** Generation Z consumers will report significantly higher brand trust after exposure to Pinkflash's rebuild crisis communication strategy than before exposure.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Respondent Profile

The respondents in this study consisted of Generation Z women in Indonesia who met the predetermined inclusion criteria, namely having used Pinkflash cosmetic products within the previous 12 months, being aware of the product-related crisis concerning alleged side effects or harmful ingredients through social media, and completing both the pretest and posttest questionnaires. These criteria were established to ensure that all participants possessed sufficient experience with the brand and adequate knowledge of the crisis issue, allowing them to evaluate the effectiveness of the rebuild crisis communication strategy from the perspective of actual consumers rather than hypothetical observers. Since the research adopted a one-group pretest–posttest experimental design, the same respondents participated in both stages of data collection to enable direct comparisons of their perceptions before and after exposure to the crisis communication treatment. This approach reduced inter-individual variability and strengthened the internal validity of the experiment by attributing perceptual changes to the treatment administered during the study.

The selection of Generation Z as the target population reflects the increasing importance of this demographic in the contemporary cosmetic industry, where purchasing decisions are strongly influenced by digital interactions, online reviews, and social media discussions. As digital natives, Generation Z consumers frequently obtain product-related information through social networking platforms and actively engage in sharing opinions regarding product quality, brand reputation, and corporate behavior during crises. Their intensive exposure to user-generated content also makes them

particularly sensitive to crisis-related information that may influence both brand image and brand trust. Consequently, this consumer segment provides an appropriate empirical context for examining how crisis communication strategies influence post-crisis brand evaluations within highly connected digital environments.

The experimental procedure involved two sequential stages of measurement. During the pretest, respondents completed a structured questionnaire designed to capture their initial perceptions of Pinkflash's brand image and brand trust before receiving any experimental treatment. Participants were subsequently exposed to a standardized rebuild crisis communication stimulus emphasizing organizational apology, corrective action, and compensation as recommended by the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). Following the treatment, respondents completed the same questionnaire during the posttest, allowing the study to identify changes in consumer perceptions after exposure to the crisis communication strategy. Using identical respondents and measurement instruments across both stages improved the comparability of the observed outcomes and minimized potential measurement bias.

The characteristics of the selected respondents and the experimental procedure were designed to provide an appropriate basis for evaluating the effectiveness of Pinkflash's rebuild crisis communication strategy in restoring consumer perceptions following a reputational crisis. Restricting participation to consumers who were familiar with both the product and the crisis ensured that respondents evaluated the communication stimulus within a realistic consumption context rather than relying on assumptions. This design also enabled the study to capture perceptual changes occurring within the same group of participants, thereby providing stronger evidence regarding the effectiveness of the experimental treatment. The following section presents the evaluation of the measurement instrument and the experimental assumptions before proceeding to the hypothesis testing stage.

### Instrument Evaluation and Experimental Manipulation

Before testing the proposed hypotheses, the research instrument was evaluated to ensure that it possessed adequate psychometric properties for measuring the intended constructs. Instrument evaluation is a fundamental stage in experimental research because the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument directly influence the accuracy of the conclusions drawn from the statistical analysis. In addition to assessing the quality of the questionnaire, a manipulation check was conducted to verify whether respondents correctly understood the experimental treatment administered during the study. These preliminary analyses were intended to minimize measurement error and strengthen the internal validity of the experimental design. Consequently, only instruments that demonstrated acceptable validity and reliability, together with a successful experimental manipulation, were used for hypothesis testing. The results of these preliminary assessments are presented in the following tables.

The validity of the measurement instrument was assessed using the Pearson Product–Moment correlation by comparing the correlation coefficient of each item with the critical value at the 5% significance level. As presented in Table 1, all questionnaire items measuring brand image and brand trust produced correlation coefficients exceeding the critical value of 0.361, indicating that every indicator met the required validity criterion. The correlation coefficients for the brand image construct ranged from 0.790 to 0.825, while those for brand trust ranged from 0.796 to 0.896, demonstrating strong relationships between each item and its respective construct. These findings indicate that all questionnaire items were capable of measuring the theoretical dimensions they were intended to represent. Therefore, none of the measurement items required revision or elimination prior to the primary data analysis. The validity results confirm that the instrument adequately captured respondents' perceptions of brand image and brand trust within the context of the Pinkflash crisis communication experiment.

**Table 1. Validity Test Results**

| Construct   | Item | Pearson<br>Correlation (r) | Critical<br>Value (r) | Decision |
|-------------|------|----------------------------|-----------------------|----------|
| Brand Image | BI1  | 0.802                      | 0.361                 | Valid    |
|             | BI2  | 0.803                      | 0.361                 | Valid    |
|             | BI3  | 0.808                      | 0.361                 | Valid    |

|             |     |       |       |       |
|-------------|-----|-------|-------|-------|
| Brand Trust | BI4 | 0.794 | 0.361 | Valid |
|             | BI5 | 0.790 | 0.361 | Valid |
|             | BI6 | 0.797 | 0.361 | Valid |
|             | BI7 | 0.825 | 0.361 | Valid |
|             | BI8 | 0.803 | 0.361 | Valid |
|             | BI9 | 0.819 | 0.361 | Valid |
|             | BT1 | 0.871 | 0.361 | Valid |
|             | BT2 | 0.896 | 0.361 | Valid |
|             | BT3 | 0.877 | 0.361 | Valid |
|             | BT4 | 0.796 | 0.361 | Valid |
|             | BT5 | 0.863 | 0.361 | Valid |
|             | BT6 | 0.845 | 0.361 | Valid |

Source: Processed research data (2026)

Following the validity assessment, the reliability of the questionnaire was examined using Cronbach's Alpha to evaluate the internal consistency of the measurement instrument. Reliability analysis determines whether the questionnaire items consistently measure the same latent construct and produce stable responses across participants. As reported in Table 2, the brand image construct achieved a Cronbach's Alpha value of 0.931, whereas brand trust obtained a value of 0.928. Both coefficients substantially exceeded the recommended threshold of 0.60, indicating excellent internal consistency among the questionnaire items. These findings suggest that respondents interpreted and answered the measurement items consistently throughout the survey. Consequently, the research instrument was considered sufficiently reliable for subsequent inferential statistical analysis.

**Table 2. Reliability Test Results**

| Construct   | Cronbach's Alpha | Threshold | Interpretation |
|-------------|------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Brand Image | 0.931            | >0.60     | Reliable       |
| Brand Trust | 0.928            | >0.60     | Reliable       |

Source: Processed research data (2026)

A manipulation check was subsequently performed to determine whether respondents correctly recognized and understood the rebuild crisis communication strategy presented during the experimental treatment. The manipulation check evaluated respondents' perceptions of the press release containing the organizational apology, corrective action, and compensation delivered by Pinkflash following the simulated crisis scenario. As summarized in Table 3, all three manipulation-check items produced statistically significant results, with p-values below 0.001, indicating that respondents successfully distinguished and comprehended the crisis communication message. Likewise, the negative Z values and significant Mann–Whitney U statistics confirmed that the treatment generated a measurable perceptual response among the participants. These findings provide empirical evidence that the experimental manipulation functioned as intended and that respondents were adequately exposed to the communication stimulus before completing the posttest questionnaire. Accordingly, the effectiveness of the experimental treatment can be evaluated with greater confidence because the manipulation was successfully implemented across the respondent group.

**Table 3. Manipulation Check Results**

| Item   | Mann–Whitney U | Wilcoxon W | Z      | p-value | Interpretation                    |
|--------|----------------|------------|--------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| Item 1 | 0.000          | 105.000    | -6.299 | <0.001  | Treatment successfully recognized |
| Item 2 | 0.000          | 91.000     | -6.042 | <0.001  | Treatment successfully recognized |
| Item 3 | 0.000          | 10.000     | -3.573 | <0.001  | Treatment successfully recognized |

Source: Processed research data (2026)

Overall, the instrument evaluation demonstrates that the questionnaire possessed satisfactory validity and reliability, while the manipulation check confirmed that the experimental treatment was successfully delivered and perceived by the respondents. The combination of these findings strengthens the methodological quality of the study by reducing the likelihood that subsequent statistical results are affected by measurement error or inadequate treatment implementation. Because all measurement items satisfied the established psychometric criteria and respondents demonstrated a clear understanding of the crisis communication stimulus, the dataset was considered suitable for inferential statistical analysis. The satisfactory performance of the measurement instrument also supports the credibility of the observed differences between the pretest and posttest measurements. These preliminary findings therefore provide a robust methodological foundation for testing the proposed research hypotheses. The following section presents the results of the assumption testing and hypothesis testing to evaluate the effectiveness of Pinkflash's rebuild crisis communication strategy in restoring brand image and brand trust among Generation Z consumers.

### Hypothesis Testing

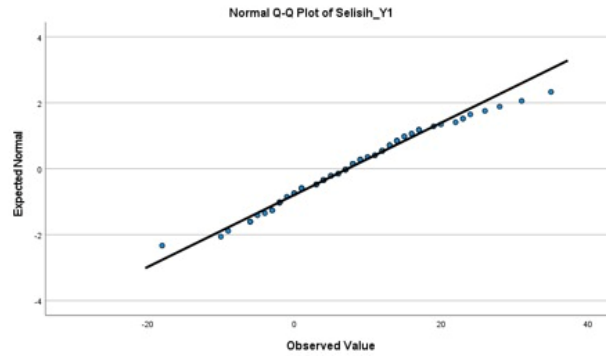
Before testing the proposed hypotheses, the normality assumption was examined to determine whether the difference scores between the pretest and posttest measurements followed a normal distribution. The normality assessment is essential because the selection of an appropriate inferential statistical test depends on the distributional characteristics of the data. Since this study employed a one-group pretest–posttest experimental design, the analysis focused on the difference scores between the two measurement occasions for each respondent. Both the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests were applied to evaluate the normality of the difference scores for brand image and brand trust. Difference scores were analyzed because they directly represent the changes in respondents' perceptions after exposure to the crisis communication treatment. Statistical evidence obtained from the normality tests determined whether a parametric or non-parametric hypothesis-testing procedure should be employed. The results of the normality assessment are presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Normality Test Results**

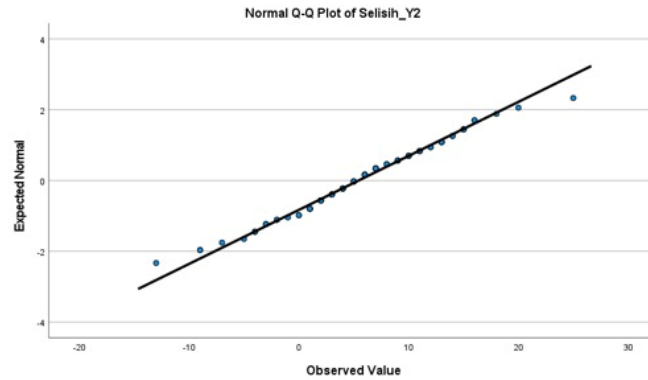
| Variable                       | Kolmogorov–<br>Smirnov<br>Statistic | df  | Sig.  | Shapiro–<br>Wilk<br>Statistic | df  | Sig.  | Decision |
|--------------------------------|-------------------------------------|-----|-------|-------------------------------|-----|-------|----------|
| Difference in Brand Image (Y1) | 0.061                               | 100 | 0.200 | 0.985                         | 100 | 0.300 | Normal   |
| Difference in Brand Trust (Y2) | 0.079                               | 100 | 0.126 | 0.991                         | 100 | 0.758 | Normal   |

Source: Processed research data (2026)

The statistical results indicate that both dependent variables satisfied the normality assumption required for parametric statistical analysis. As shown in Table 4, the significance values obtained from both the Kolmogorov–Smirnov and Shapiro–Wilk tests exceeded the threshold value of 0.05 for the two variables examined. The brand image difference scores produced Shapiro–Wilk and Kolmogorov–Smirnov significance values of 0.300 and 0.200, respectively, whereas brand trust yielded corresponding significance values of 0.758 and 0.126. These findings indicate that the distributions of the difference scores do not significantly deviate from normality. The statistical evidence therefore supports the use of a parametric analytical procedure for testing the proposed hypotheses. To complement the statistical assessment, the normality assumption was also evaluated visually using Normal P–P Plots. The graphical results are presented in Figures 1 and 2.



**Figure 1. Normal P–P Plot of Brand Image Difference Scores (Y1)**



**Figure 2. Normal P–P Plot of Brand Trust Difference Scores (Y2)**

The visual inspection of the Normal P–P Plots supports the conclusions obtained from the statistical normality tests. In both figures, the majority of observations are concentrated around the diagonal reference line without forming systematic deviations indicative of non-normality. Although a limited number of observations deviate slightly from the diagonal line, these departures remain within acceptable limits for parametric statistical analysis. The consistency between the graphical and statistical evaluations strengthens confidence in the distributional characteristics of the dataset. Because the normality assumption was satisfied for both dependent variables, the paired sample *t*-test was selected to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. This statistical procedure is appropriate because it compares repeated measurements collected from the same respondents before and after the experimental treatment. The results of the paired sample *t*-test are presented in Table 5.

**Table 5. Paired Sample *t*-Test Results**

| Variable         | Mean Difference | Std. Deviation | Std. Error | 95% CI Lower | 95% CI Upper | t      | df | Sig. (2-tailed) | Decision    |
|------------------|-----------------|----------------|------------|--------------|--------------|--------|----|-----------------|-------------|
| Brand Image (Y1) | -7.270          | 9.146          | 0.915      | -9.085       | -5.455       | -7.949 | 99 | <0.001          | Significant |
| Brand Trust (Y2) | -5.440          | 6.554          | 0.655      | -6.740       | -4.140       | -8.300 | 99 | <0.001          | Significant |

Source: Processed research data (2026)

The paired sample *t*-test demonstrates that the rebuild crisis communication strategy significantly influenced respondents' evaluations of both dependent variables. As presented in Table 5, the significance values for brand image and brand trust were both below 0.001, indicating statistically significant differences between the pretest and posttest measurements. The negative mean differences indicate that the posttest scores were higher than the corresponding pretest scores because the differences were calculated by subtracting the posttest values from the pretest values. These findings indicate that respondents perceived meaningful improvements in their evaluations after receiving the

crisis communication treatment. Consequently, both null hypotheses were rejected in favor of the proposed alternative hypotheses. The inferential analysis therefore provides empirical evidence supporting the effectiveness of the rebuild crisis communication strategy. Descriptive comparisons of the pretest and posttest scores are presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Paired Sample Statistics**

| Variable           | Measurement | Mean   | N   | Std. Deviation | Std. Error Mean |
|--------------------|-------------|--------|-----|----------------|-----------------|
| <b>Brand Image</b> | Pretest     | 44.180 | 100 | 7.912          | 0.791           |
|                    | Posttest    | 51.450 | 100 | 4.984          | 0.498           |
| <b>Brand Trust</b> | Pretest     | 28.800 | 100 | 5.510          | 0.551           |
|                    | Posttest    | 34.240 | 100 | 3.750          | 0.375           |

Source: Processed research data (2026)

The descriptive statistics further demonstrate that respondents evaluated the Pinkflash brand more positively after receiving the crisis communication treatment. As shown in Table 6, the mean score for brand image increased from 44.180 during the pretest to 51.450 during the posttest. Likewise, the mean score for brand trust increased from 28.800 before treatment to 34.240 after respondents were exposed to the crisis communication message. These increases are consistent with the statistically significant differences identified through the paired sample t-test. The convergence between the descriptive and inferential findings indicates that the rebuild strategy effectively restored respondents' perceptions of both the brand and the company. Collectively, these findings provide robust empirical support for the effectiveness of Pinkflash's crisis communication strategy among Generation Z consumers. The following section discusses these empirical findings in relation to the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and previous studies on crisis communication, brand image, and brand trust.

The empirical findings demonstrate that the rebuild crisis communication strategy implemented by Pinkflash significantly improved both brand image and brand trust among Generation Z consumers. The paired sample t-test revealed statistically significant differences between the pretest and posttest scores for both dependent variables, indicating that respondents evaluated the brand more favorably after receiving the crisis communication treatment. The descriptive statistics also showed consistent increases in the posttest means, suggesting that the communication strategy successfully influenced respondents' perceptions following exposure to the crisis response. These findings indicate that organizational communication emphasizing apology, corrective action, and compensation can mitigate the adverse effects of negative information circulating through digital media. Rather than merely defending the organization against criticism, the rebuild strategy appears to facilitate consumers' reassessment of the company's responsibility and commitment toward resolving the reported issue. The convergence between descriptive and inferential statistical evidence strengthens the credibility of the experimental findings while demonstrating that effective crisis communication serves as an important mechanism for restoring consumer perceptions after a reputational crisis.

**Table 7. Analytical Summary of the Research Findings**

| Analytical Aspect         | Empirical Evidence     | Interpretation                                                                                            |
|---------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Initial Perception        | Pretest mean = 44.180  | Consumers demonstrated relatively lower evaluations after exposure to crisis-related information.         |
| Post-Treatment Perception | Posttest mean = 51.450 | Respondents evaluated the brand more positively after receiving the rebuild crisis communication message. |
| Mean Improvement          | +7.270 points          | The communication strategy produced a meaningful improvement in brand image.                              |

|                       |                                                            |                                                                                                |
|-----------------------|------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Statistical Evidence  | $t = -7.949; p < 0.001$                                    | The difference between pretest and posttest scores was statistically significant.              |
| Practical Implication | Positive organizational response restored brand perception | Apology, corrective action, and compensation strengthened consumers' evaluations of the brand. |

The improvement in brand image indicates that respondents reassessed their perceptions after receiving organizational communication explaining the company's response to the alleged product issue. Before the treatment, respondents evaluated Pinkflash primarily through information concerning the reported side effects and allegations of harmful ingredients disseminated across social media platforms. Following exposure to the rebuild strategy, respondents demonstrated significantly more favorable evaluations, indicating that transparent communication reduced uncertainty surrounding the crisis. This finding suggests that consumers assess not only the occurrence of a crisis but also the quality and credibility of the organization's response when forming brand evaluations. The inclusion of apology, corrective action, and compensation appears to reinforce perceptions of accountability, thereby encouraging respondents to reconsider previously established negative impressions. Such evidence demonstrates that crisis communication functions as an important mechanism for restoring favorable cognitive associations toward a brand after reputational disruption. The observed increase in brand image therefore reflects the effectiveness of strategic communication in supporting organizational reputation recovery.

The findings also provide empirical support for the assumptions of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which proposes that organizational response strategies should correspond to stakeholders' perceptions of crisis responsibility. The rebuild strategy adopted in this study appears to have aligned with respondents' expectations because it acknowledged the issue while simultaneously communicating concrete recovery efforts. Such responses reduce uncertainty by providing consumers with credible information regarding organizational responsibility instead of allowing negative narratives to dominate public discourse. The experimental evidence further demonstrates that transparent crisis communication remains effective within digital environments characterized by rapid information diffusion and intensive consumer interaction. Compared with observational survey designs, the pretest–posttest experimental approach employed in this study provides stronger evidence regarding the causal influence of crisis communication on consumer perceptions. These findings therefore extend previous crisis communication research by demonstrating measurable improvements in brand image within the Indonesian cosmetics industry. The results also reinforce the strategic importance of integrating crisis communication into long-term brand management practices.

**Table 8. Analytical Interpretation of Brand Trust Findings**

| Analytical Aspect     | Empirical Evidence                           | Interpretation                                                                                                                                                                            |
|-----------------------|----------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Initial Trust         | Pretest mean = 28.800                        | Consumer confidence was relatively lower following the circulation of crisis information. Respondents reported higher levels of trust after receiving the crisis communication treatment. |
| Post-Treatment Trust  | Posttest mean = 34.240                       |                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| Mean Improvement      | +5.440 points                                | The rebuild strategy strengthened consumer confidence in the brand.                                                                                                                       |
| Statistical Evidence  | $t = -8.300; p < 0.001$                      | The improvement in brand trust was statistically significant.                                                                                                                             |
| Practical Implication | Organizational responsibility restored trust | Transparent crisis communication increased confidence in the reliability of the brand.                                                                                                    |

The results obtained for brand trust demonstrate a pattern similar to that observed for brand image, indicating that respondents became significantly more confident in Pinkflash following the crisis communication treatment. The increase in posttest scores suggests that respondents interpreted the

company's communication as evidence of responsibility and commitment toward addressing consumer concerns. Unlike brand image, which primarily reflects consumers' cognitive evaluations, brand trust represents confidence in the organization's reliability and future behavior under uncertain conditions. The significant improvement observed after the experimental treatment therefore indicates that effective crisis communication influences not only how consumers perceive the brand but also the extent to which they believe the organization can fulfill its promises. These findings suggest that organizational accountability becomes particularly important during crises because consumers evaluate sincerity through both communicated messages and visible corrective actions. Consequently, crisis communication should combine transparent explanations with concrete recovery initiatives capable of reducing perceived consumer risk. The experimental evidence confirms that the rebuild strategy effectively strengthened consumers' confidence in Pinkflash after exposure to the crisis scenario.

Collectively, the discussion demonstrates that the rebuild crisis communication strategy effectively restored both brand image and brand trust among Generation Z consumers following a simulated reputational crisis. The significant improvements observed across both dependent variables indicate that respondents responded positively to organizational communication emphasizing apology, corrective action, and compensation. These findings contribute to crisis communication research by providing experimental evidence that extends existing knowledge beyond cross-sectional studies focusing primarily on organizational reputation. From a managerial perspective, the results suggest that cosmetic companies should respond rapidly and transparently to crisis-related information while demonstrating tangible actions that address consumer concerns. Such communication strategies are particularly important for Generation Z because purchasing decisions within this demographic are strongly influenced by digital interactions, social media discussions, and rapidly disseminated user-generated content. The study therefore highlights the strategic role of rebuild crisis communication as an instrument for preserving long-term consumer relationships and strengthening brand resilience in increasingly competitive digital markets. Overall, the findings provide empirical support for the effectiveness of SCCT-based communication strategies in restoring favorable consumer perceptions within the contemporary cosmetics industry.

## CONCLUSION

This study demonstrates that the implementation of a rebuild crisis communication strategy significantly influences both brand image and brand trust among Generation Z consumers of Pinkflash products. The experimental findings confirmed statistically significant differences between the pretest and posttest scores, indicating that respondents evaluated the brand more positively after receiving crisis communication emphasizing apology, corrective action, and compensation. The improvement in brand image suggests that transparent and responsible organizational responses are capable of restoring consumers' cognitive evaluations of the brand following a reputational crisis. Similarly, the increase in brand trust indicates that consumers became more confident in the company's reliability and commitment after being exposed to communication that acknowledged the crisis and outlined concrete recovery efforts.

These findings reinforce the proposition of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory that organizational responses should be aligned with stakeholder expectations to minimize reputational damage and facilitate relationship recovery. The results further demonstrate that crisis communication extends beyond reputation management by influencing consumers' perceptions and confidence toward a brand within highly interactive digital environments. Overall, the study confirms that an effective rebuild strategy represents an important mechanism for mitigating the negative consequences of crisis-related information among Generation Z consumers. The findings also provide practical implications for organizations operating in the cosmetics industry, particularly those targeting digitally connected consumer segments that are highly responsive to information disseminated through social media platforms. Companies should adopt crisis communication strategies that emphasize transparency, accountability, and visible corrective actions to strengthen consumer confidence during periods of reputational uncertainty. Timely responses supported by credible evidence and consistent communication are likely to reduce negative consumer perceptions while facilitating the recovery of both brand image and brand trust. From a theoretical perspective, this study contributes to the crisis communication literature by providing experimental evidence on the effectiveness of the rebuild strategy in simultaneously restoring two important dimensions of consumer perception. The use of a

one-group pretest–posttest experimental design also provides stronger evidence of perceptual change than conventional cross-sectional approaches commonly employed in crisis communication research. Future studies are encouraged to employ more rigorous experimental designs incorporating control groups, broader demographic characteristics, and additional behavioral outcomes such as purchase intention, electronic word-of-mouth, customer loyalty, and corporate reputation. Such investigations would provide a more comprehensive understanding of how crisis communication strategies shape consumer behavior across different market contexts and crisis situations.

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