

International Journal of
Strategic Communication



CALL FOR ABSTRACTS & PAPERS

Special Issue – Volume 16 (2)

Strategic Communication and the Global Pandemic

Guest Editors:

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Deadline for Abstracts: March 1, 2021

RATIONALE

There is no doubt the onset of COVID-19 has significantly changed the way we live. The global pandemic is generating ongoing and possibly long-lasting change on many aspects of communication, the workforce, the work environment, and multiple sectors of society. While numerous studies related to change leadership have consistently found that effective and timely communication and leadership are crucial to the successful management and acceptance of any dramatic change (Kool & Van Dierendonck, 2012), past studies of risk communication have largely built on experiences of environmental and natural disasters (Eisenman et al. 2007; Glik, 2007). Therefore, this Special Issue will contribute to the body of knowledge in strategic communication by focusing attention on the impact of COVID-19 and the global pandemic on strategic communication and change management.

The long-lasting impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the challenges and opportunities (Malecki et al., 2020) it presents in a post-COVID strategic communication social, political, and economic landscape need scholarly attention and investigation. This includes the impact and implications of information overload, trust, transparency, and dis/misinformation in the public arena during health crises (Rossman et al., 2018; Hills, 2019). It also includes the successful implementation of organizational responsiveness, managerial flexibility, and change leadership, as well as the applications of a wide variety of leadership competencies, styles, and initiatives in leading successful change transitions (Magsaysay & Hechanova, 2017). Thus, this Special Issue will be an extended contribution to work that is taking place across the world in strategic communication about the challenges and opportunities the COVID-19 pandemic brings for the discipline. A decade of research in strategic communication has provided ample evidence that strategic communication encompasses all communication that is substantial for the survival and sustained success of all kinds of organizations, as well as social movements and known individuals in the public sphere (Zerfass et al., 2018). By focusing on the topic of COVID-19, this Special Issue makes a unique and timely contribution to investigate the role of strategic communication in change management for all kinds of entities during the global pandemic from an international perspective.

Overall, the purpose of this Special Issue call is to invite original research from around the world that fits the topic and focus of the call. We are especially interested in manuscripts that explore the challenges and opportunities for strategic communication research and practice during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic.

We invite original submissions that focus on, but are not limited to, the following areas:

- (1) Theoretical and practical implications of strategic communication during and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (2) Current challenges and opportunities associated with strategic communication in leading radical and disruptive change associated with the COVID-19 pandemic;
- (3) A diverse picture of the applications of strategic communication, and their relative strengths and weaknesses, during the pandemic from an international perspective;
- (4) Diverse voices, approaches, channels, tactics, and strategies to deal more effectively with future pandemics or global issues;
- (5) Global insights and innovative approaches that could enrich our cultural understanding of the communications and advance scholarship contributions in this regard;
- (6) Comparative insights on the impact of communications and preparedness before, during, and after pandemics and/or other acute risk issues or societal traumas;
- (7) The critical role of strategic communication on business, economic and societal outcomes during the pandemic;
- (8) Practical capability and confidence in the role of strategic communication in the effective management of pandemics and/or other acute risk issues or societal traumas;
- (9) Organizational responsiveness, managerial flexibility, and change leadership during the pandemic, including internal and external perspectives, as well as structure and strategy research;
- (10) Measurement of effective strategies for communicating scientific uncertainty during a pandemic;
- (11) The role of strategic communication in influencing the public's information-seeking behavior and building trust;
- (12) Effective strategic communication approaches and the role of technology in empowering audience(s) to respond to dis/misinformation about COVID-19.

Contributions that provide insights with robust theoretical and practical implications and recommendations for strategic communication in the global pandemic will be given the highest consideration. We are especially interested in manuscripts that explore BOTH the challenges and opportunities for strategic communication at the intersection of global pandemics, international communication, and cross-cultural research.

The selection of papers will reflect the scope of the *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, which aims to build an interdisciplinary body of knowledge in strategic communication, defined as “all communication that is substantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity. Specifically, strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication by an entity to engage in conversations of strategic significance to its goals. Entity includes all kind of organizations (e.g., corporations, governments, or non-profits), as well as social movements and known individuals in the public sphere. Communication can play a distinctive role for the formulation, revision, presentation, execution, implementation, and operationalization of strategies” (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 487).

Submitted papers should clearly be linked to existing scholarship in strategic communication and reflect the understanding mentioned above, but can be based on theoretical and methodological approaches from diverse disciplines. Research questions and topics addressed should be valuable for a global readership. While international, comparative, and cross-cultural studies are especially welcome, research with a regional or national focus is suitable if insights or results build understanding of strategic communication in other parts of the world.

SUBMISSION AND SELECTION PROCESS

1. Structured abstract submission for initial review

We invite submissions of structured abstracts to both editors for initial review. The structured abstracts should outline the purpose of the research, explain how the research fits the special issue call, list research questions and/or hypotheses, provide a summary of research methods and key findings, and address how the research contributes to knowledge in strategic communication.

The abstract should be single-spaced, using 12-pt Times New Roman font with 1-inch margins on U.S. letter-size (8.5 x 11 in) paper. The structured abstract should be no longer than 800 words in total.

Please also submit a separate title page to list all author names and affiliations, as well as a short bio (2-3 sentences; max 75 words) of the author(s).

The structured abstract must include the following key components:

1. Title of the research
2. Purpose of research: How does the research fit the special issue call?
3. Theoretical approach and framework
4. Research questions/hypotheses
5. Methods
6. Key findings
7. Practical or social implications
8. Originality and innovation: How does the research contribute to the body of knowledge in strategic communication? (Please relate to the concept of strategic communication outlined above)

Structured abstracts and title pages must be submitted by March 1, 2021, to BOTH guest editors by email:

- Juan Meng: jmeng@uga.edu
- Ralph Tench: R.Tench@leedsbeckett.ac.uk

2. Full submission for blind reviews

The authors of the abstracts most suited to the topic of the Special Issue will be asked to submit full papers of no longer than 8,000 words in length, plus tables, figures, appendices and references, by July 1, 2021.

Full paper submissions should follow the Instructions for Authors on the IJSC website. Authors must use APA style for citations, references, tables and figures caption. All identifying information must be deleted before full paper submissions.

Full papers will be reviewed (non-blinded) by the Special Issue editors and blind reviewed by two suitable external reviewers.

Depending on the overall breadth and quality of the selected submissions, the Special Issue may be subsequently published by Routledge as an edited book; this has been done with past special issues of *IJSC* and gained additional outreach for all authors.

TIMELINE

- **Deadline for abstract submission:** **March 1, 2021**
- Requests for full papers provided: April 1, 2021
- **Deadline for full article submissions:** **July 1, 2021**
- Reviews of full papers provided: October 1, 2021
- Deadline for revised submissions: December 1, 2021
- Additional revisions (if necessary) subsequently
- **Final versions due:** **February 13, 2022**
- Papers and editorial transferred to production: March 1, 2022
- Proofs sent to editors and authors: subsequently
- **Special Issue published online:** **March 31, 2022**
- Special Issue published in print: April 2022

ABOUT THE GUEST EDITORS

Juan Meng, Ph.D., is Associate Professor of Public Relations in the Grady College of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of Georgia, USA. Her research specialization includes leadership in public relations, talent management and leadership development, corporate reputation management, and employee engagement in strategic communication. Meng has published more than 50 refereed journal articles, scholarly book chapters and research reports, and two books: *Public Relations Leaders as Sensemakers: A Global Study of Leadership in Public Relations and Communication Management* and *PR Women with Influence: Breaking through the Ethical and Leadership Challenges*. Meng serves on the board of advisors of The Plank Center for Leadership in Public Relations and has led many signature research projects, including the largest global study of PR leadership, *Millennial Communication Professionals in the Workplace*, the biennial *Report Card on PR Leaders*, and the *North American Communication Monitor*. She is an elected member of the Arthur W. Page Society.

Ralph Tench, Dr., is Full Professor and Director of Research at Leeds Business School, Leeds Beckett University, and Past President of the European Public Relations Research and Education Association, Brussels. He has written and edited 28 books and published over 50 academic journal papers. His books include the market leading textbook for the subject internationally, *Exploring Public Relations*, in its 15th year and fifth edition, and recently *Communication Excellence – How to Develop, Manage and Lead Exceptional Communications*, with colleagues from the longitudinal *European Communication Monitor* project running since 2007. Tench's research interests and activities are in the broad field of organizational communication with specific focus on professional and strategic communication and in the social and cultural impact communication has on large societal issues such as health, social and public policy and discrimination.

ABOUT THE JOURNAL

The *International Journal of Strategic Communication* (IJSC) is one of the top journals published by Routledge (Taylor & Francis) with a record 120,000 downloads of articles in 2020. Its readership is truly international with article downloads spread over Asia (20%), North America (20%), Europe (39%), Africa (9%), and Australasia (11%). The journal is part of a multi-national effort to integrate various communication disciplines into a coherent body of knowledge and facilitate the development of strategic communication as a domain of study. IJSC seeks to define the field of strategic communication, address the application of theory to this emerging field, provide a forum for multidisciplinary approaches and diverse research traditions, and espouse a truly international perspective that gives voice to cross-cultural research and scholars in all regions of the world. To view an online sample, visit www.tandfonline.com/HSTC. The journal is edited by Dr. Ansgar Zerfass, Institute of Communication and Media Studies, Leipzig University, Germany, and Department of Communication and Culture, BI Norwegian Business School, Oslo, Norway, and Kelly Page Werder, Ph.D., Zimmerman School of Advertising and Mass Communications, University of South Florida, Tampa, FL, USA.

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