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Analysis on Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) Strategy and Severity Effect toward Crisis Responsibility and Company Reputation in Indonesian Transportation Industry

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Abstract:

Unexpected events that could lead to a crisis can happen anytime, including in the transportation industry. The reputation of the company then depends on how the public is able to accept the company's response to the crisis. Crisis response based on situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) will be able to restore the legitimacy and maintaining the company's reputation, even the company's financial capability. Crisis events used in the research stand as a public focus, are observed through content analysis technique. The content analysis finds that the right response strategy succeeded as the main factor for reducing the attribution toward crisis responsibility. Public perception survey later shows that despite high levels of severity, attribution toward crisis responsibility tends to be low if response strategy is right. Public perception survey further indicates that a lower attribution toward crisis responsibility affects a significant increase on organisational reputation. Even so, the organisational reputation found in the research is still quite low as it is heavily influenced by the level of severity which stands in high level quadrant.

Keywords: crisis, situational crisis communication theory, transportation, content analysis, responsibility, severity, organisational reputation

1. Introduction

Transportation has become a necessity and an integral part of the society. Service standards have become an important point that will determine whether customers will remain loyal and support transportation provider companies or not. Even so, unexpected events that could lead to a crisis can happen anytime. The reputation of the company then depends on how the public is able to accept the company's response to the crisis, which is whether the company is capable of meeting public expectations and norms or not (Coombs, 2006: 249). The right crisis response will be able to restore legitimacy and maintain the company's reputation, even the company's financial capability. A five-year study showed that 83% of companies affected by the crisis experienced a 20% -30% decrease in profits due to a loss of public confidence in the company's value and reputation (Aon, 2006).

In a crisis management, crisis communication becomes the most important thing because a crisis is basically an event in which stakeholders believe that the event is capable of threatening the company's performance and negatively impacting the company's sustainability as well as the general public (Coombs, 2011: 2). Crisis communication is needed as a bridge for the company, as a sender, to provide the right information to the public, as a receiver, so that the company's image and reputation are maintained (Johansen & Frandsen, 2007: 3).

Companies can have a crisis management plan, or even a crisis prevention pattern. But when the crisis occurs, it is believed that the most important thing to do in the beginning of crisis management is still the crisis response in the form of proper communication to the public (Drennan & McConnell, 2007: 159). What the organization say and do when a crisis starts to happen, or termed as crisis response, will have a significant effect on the success of crisis management (Benoit, 1997).

Especially with the rapid development of media today, the crisis can easily occur when the media seek information about the company and its activities, but the company actually masks it (Millar & Heath, 2004: 2). In an increasingly globalized world and educated society; openness, transparency, and speaking time conformity have become paramount. In a crisis, the company can no longer keep a secret from the public.

2. Research Objective and Limitation

This research aims to see whether the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) response strategy, as an internationally recognized ideal communication guide, can be applied by companies in Indonesia. Information on applying the standard response to crisis situations will be the initial basis for assessing the background of successful crisis management in Indonesia in terms of maintaining the company's reputation.

The core of this research will then examine whether right response strategy can positively influence public perceptions of the company's reputation, through decreasing attribution of crisis responsibility. The attribution of crisis responsibility is a public view of how big a company is the cause of a crisis. The more the public judge the company to be responsible for the cause of the crisis, the public's perception of the company will be even more negative. SCCT itself hypothesizes that the crisis response is a key factor in communication management during a crisis.

This research looks at the transportation industry in Indonesia which experienced a crisis throughout the year 2012. The transportation industry referred to in this research is the companies that provide public transportation services. This research also limited the general measure of public perception of the company over a crisis event through a given sample, not comparing the public perception for each sample event.

This crisis research is part of a public relations study (Coombs, 2007). This research is to confirm the thesis of situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) which aims to find out the influence of the suitability of the crisis response strategy as a determinant factor of the company's reputation increase.

3. Content Analysis for Pre-Research Data

This research uses media content analysis method and public perception survey, both of which are quantitative. Media content analysis aims to identify any company within the transportation industry in Indonesia that has experienced a crisis, including the response strategy chosen by the organization. The results of research on the response strategy will be descriptive data for subsequent construction proofing.

In addition, this analysis of media content will be the source of data to see the damage level caused by the crisis. In this damage level research, media content analysis will produce explanative data related to the results of public perception survey.

As described by Krippendorf (2004: 84) in Ama (2012), the quantitative content analysis method is a method used to measure certain aspects of the news quantitatively. In terms of methodology, quantitative content analysis consists of six components, they are units, samples, records, data analysis, discussion or narrative (answering research questions), and making conclusions from the phenomenon. The first four components are the stages in data generation. While the fifth and sixth component are the stages in concluding the contextual phenomenon.

Through content analysis, we can see two variables that influence the increase or decrease of attribution of crisis responsibilities, which consists of crisis response -to find out if the company's response to the crisis is the same as what Coombs (2007) hypothesizes in SCCT- and damage level -to determine the impact on the victim and the level of the damage produced.



Figure 1: Matrix of Damage Level Caused by Crisis (Coombs, 2010)

In order to find the two variables mentioned above, the dimension used in this study consist of news sources and news themes. The news sources referred to in this research are the news that coming from two well-known national printed media; Kompas and Media Indonesia. While the news theme referred to in this research is news about the crisis involving companies that provide transportation services.

The theme includes the name of the company providing public transportation services, the type of crisis -types of crisis that may occur according to the types of crisis shared by situational crisis communication theory or SCCT (Coombs, 2007)also the research of Bapepam (2002); the response of companies that provide transportation services against the crisis; impact on environmental damage, casualties, damage to the rupiah currency, and other impacts resulting from the crisis; also the depiction of the reality of the news; that is the positive / neutral / negative characteristic of the presentation of content themed about crisis incident involving transportation service provider companies.

Michelson and Griffin (2005) hypothesize that the best unit of analysis from content analysis method is article analysis. Each article in the form of news, analyzed for its entire content, message, and tone. News is reviewed and analyzed based on coding (1) a crisis occurs, (2) type of crisis, (3) crisis response taken by the company, (4) damage caused by the crisis. This is to ensure that information in selected articles has enough information to be captured and understood by the reader. The unit of analysis used in this study is all rubrication related to the crisis in the transportation industry that coming from two well-known national printed media; Kompas and Media Indonesia. Two media get into the slice between the most circulations (Lim, 2012) with the most readerships (Nielsen, 2009).

The news materials used in this study are limited to the period of crisis experienced by companies in the transportation industry throughout 2012. The keywords used consist of two groups, each of which article must contain at least one keyword from the first group and one keyword from the second group.

Group 1		Group 2	
(1)	Transportation	(A)	Accident
(2)	Bus	(B)	Debt
(3)	Train	(C)	Crisis
(4)	Plane	(D)	Consumer
(5)	Ship	(E)	Service

Table 1: Keywords for Content Analysis Method Sample

Sampling is done by using interval technique, taking news samples in the form of 1 (one) news per day, which appear every 6 (six) days starting on Sunday, 1 January 2012, for Kompas and Wednesday, 4 January 2012, for Media Indonesia. Each news taken is news that resides in the top search results from the media data center by entering all keywords simultaneously. Sampling with interval technique is considered valid because the proportion of news for a year, in accordance with existing keyword combinations, is distributed fairly evenly throughout the year.

For each media, the spread of articles raising news of the crisis tended evenly, with the exception in May and August on Kompas. Whereas between media, news distribution varies widely, which can then be used as a basis on how much and evenly crisis-related news were distributed.

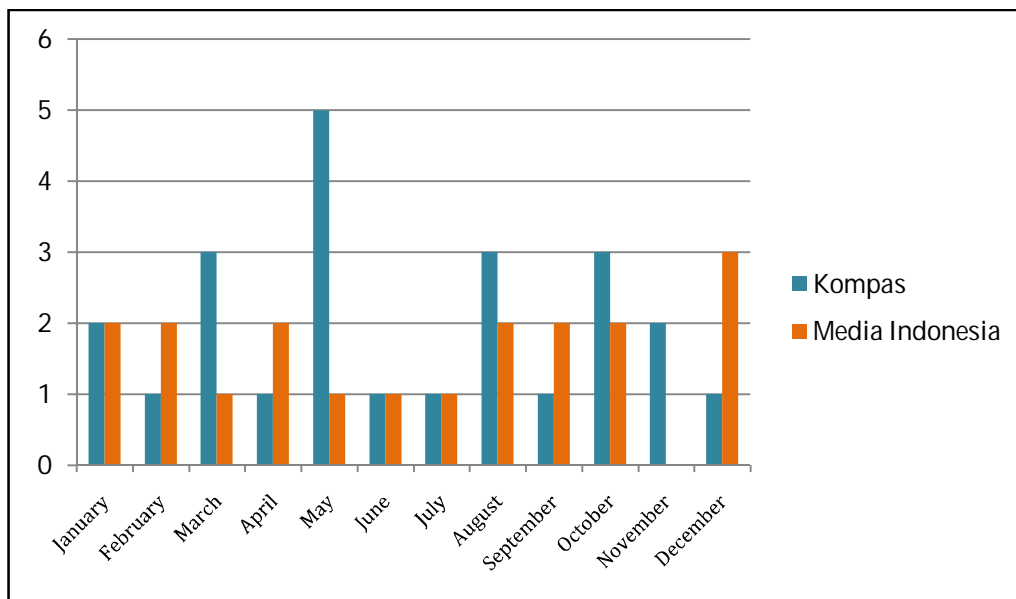


Figure 2: Comparison Chart of Article Distribution per Month

This research then uses three coders to conduct content analysis. The measurement of the coding results by three coders using the intercoder reliability method aims to find the level of reliability of the data obtained; so, the findings of media articles can be said near to certain objectivity (Bahri, 2010).

The formula used in calculating the level of trust between coders in this research using intercoder reliability from Holsti as quoted from Bulaeng (2004) in Kurniawan (2006) is as follows:

$$CR = \frac{2M}{(N1+ N2)} \times 100\%$$

- CR : Coefisien reliability
M : The same coding results from two coders
N : Number of objects categorized

According to Lasswell in Fluornoy (1989) still as quoted from Kurniawan (2006), it takes a minimum of 70% to indicate the similarity between the coding implementer. Thus, the coding process can be accepted as trustworthiness. Testing of data reliability then shows that media content analysis done in this research is reliable.

The percentage gained from Kompas' news content analysis, using the same base number of objects categorized per coder, is 96. This figure is obtained from 4 (four) units of analysis multiplied by 24 news that exist in Kompas. While the percentage obtained from Media Indonesia, using the number of objects, is 76, obtained from 4 (four) units of analysis multiplied by 19 news.

From the content analysis conducted in Kompas, three public transportation service providers that are mentioned related to a crisis are PT Kereta Api Indonesia (KAI), PT Sky Aviation, and Transjakarta Busway Management Unit.

At the end of 2012, one of KAI's KRL (electric train) was reported to have disturbance in the Jakarta-Bogor route caused by landslide in Cilebut area. This incident resulted in the breaking of the rail line; this crisis resulted in consumers becoming victims, but no one died, both from the company side, consumers, or citizens. This crisis incident is included in the moderate level of damage, in the quadrant 2 matrix of damage level.

The company responded to this incident by directly providing -using a renting mechanism- free transportation from and to Cilebut station, especially for passengers who at that time experienced the occurrence of landslide railway. PT KAI also stated that it is responsible and willing to compensate the loss of houses affected by avalanches in the area. From the handling of the incident, the instruction from PT KAI which is then supported by the Ministry of Transportation, sets out the steps with a certain timeframe to handle the landslide events.

PT KAI's response decisions of giving attention, responsibility and instruction match the response strategy hypothesized by situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) when dealing with natural disasters and non-human error accidents.

While the Sukhoi plane crash which is being tested by PT Sky Aviation is the most highlighted plane crash during 2012. This incident is categorized into a crisis with a high level of damage, or is in quadrant 1 matrix of damage level.

PT Sky Aviation, like other aircraft accidents, directly submits a full analysis of the accident to the National Transportation Accident Committee (NTSC) as the authority to investigate and state the cause of the accident. In addition, PT Sky Aviation immediately announced the justification of the accident, narrowing the possibility of accidents due to human error pilot and weather reasons, not due to technical error -technical errors will threaten the use of Sukhoi Superjet 100 by the company in the future. For victims and families, PT Sky Aviation immediately compensated and expressed full support for evacuation efforts by the SAR and TNI teams. The action of PT Sky Aviation which is widely covered by the media, coupled with the shifting of the issue into an evacuation effort, is the right response strategy for the incident, as hypothesized by situational crisis communication theory (SCCT).

The crisis experienced by the Transjakarta Busway Management Unit -people throwing stones at Transjakarta bus feeder (APT B) serving Bekasi area- responded by giving a reason (reduction) that the company has operated APT B in accordance with the rules and wishes of the people. Transjakarta Busway Management Unit also declared to the public that the stone throwing action was not done by Bekasi citizens, but by a group of public transport drivers who felt threatened from the economic side due to the opening of the APT B line-the actual throwing perpetrator was not revealed. Together with Jakarta and Bekasi Transportation Agency (*Dinas Perhubungan*), Transjakarta Busway Management Unit coordinated to ensure the safety of APT B in the following days, although on the first day it was canceled for reasons of investigation, through instructions to related parties. These instructions include security personnel, drivers at the terminal, and passengers.

The stone throwing actions by citizens against Transjakarta bus feeder (APT B) serving the Bekasi area on its first day of operation did not result in any deaths. Even so, in addition to companies, policy makers, partners, and potential customers are becoming the victims -including the emergence of trauma- of this crisis. This stone throwing action is included in the moderate level of damage, in the quadrant 2 matrix of damage level. The action that was taken by the Transjakarta Busway

Management Unit in response to this crisis incident has been in accordance with the action that was hypothesized in situational crisis communication theory (SCCT).

	The company became a victim and no one died	The company became a victim and some died	Consumers became victims and no one died	Consumers became victims and some died
KRL trip interruption	Yes	No	Yes	No
PT Sky Aviation plane crash	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Stone throwing action against APTB Transjakarta	Yes	No	Yes	No

Table 2: Damage Level

4. Public Survey for Confirmation

The public perception survey uses the principle of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) that will measure the effect of company's crisis responsibility attributions to the organization's reputation. The relationship between the crisis responses taken based on content analysis, with the organization's reputation can be illustrated as shown below.

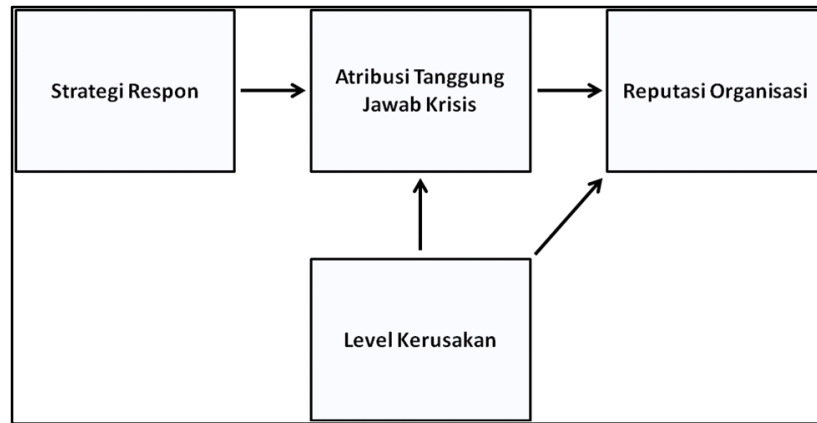


Figure 3: The proposition of response strategy's influence against organization's reputation

The above proposition can be explained as below (Coombs, 2007: 268 - 269). There is a strong negative correlation between the reputation of the organization and the attribution of crisis responsibility. The attribution of crisis responsibility exerts a powerful influence on the reputation of the organization. The higher the attribution of crisis responsibility, the greater the damage that can be generated against the reputation of the organization as a result of the crisis. The attribution of crisis responsibility is a public view of how big a company is the cause of a crisis

The extent of crisis damage has a significant effect on increasing attribution of crisis responsibilities and the deterioration of the organization's reputation. The greater the damage level caused by a crisis, the higher the attribution of crisis responsibilities. The greater the damage level, then the individual perception that the crisis has violated the prevailing norm is also greater. The extent of damage caused by crisis and violations of the norm will result directly to the deterioration of the organization's reputation. The organization will be less affected by the attribution of crisis responsibilities if it chooses the right response to a crisis.

This research uses descriptive statistics, which is a statistical method to analyze data by describing the data that have been collected without making generally accepted conclusions. Descriptive statistics are used only to describe sample data, without drawing conclusions that are generally accepted for the population.

The data of the questionnaire that has been obtained will be grouped in tabulation form by using SPSS 17 application as data entry. There were 14 questionnaires distributed to the respondents, consisting of 5 (five) questions indicated on the Attribution of Crisis Responsibility variable and 9 (nine) questions on the Organization's Reputation variable.

Steps have been developed to test the central concepts of organization's reputation and attribution of crisis responsibilities. The concept of organization's reputation is taken from the character size developed by McCroskey (1966) as quoted by Wright (2009). The size of the character includes the trust and conceptualization of past and present reputations. McCroskey's original model had ten items, but then reduced to five items while maintaining a reliability of 0.80 to 0.92.

While the proof of the attribution of crisis responsibility is measured using two types of scales, they are causal dimension scale II (CDSII) from McAuley, Duncan, and Russell (1992) and blame scale from Griffin, Babin, and Darden (1992). CDSII assesses the attribution of the control of an event, while the blame scale measures who is responsible for the

event. Coombs and Holladay (2002) summarize them in seven scale categories, which specifically measure the organization's reputation, with reliability of 0.89 to 0.91.

Beyond that, organization's reputation is a very often measured thing. Coombs (2007), in his experiments, found that there was a significant negative correlation between the attribution of crisis responsibilities and the organization's reputation. The average correlation is $r = -.415$. The correlations found are cross-type crises, including inequalities of organizational behavior, human error accidents, technical errors accidents, workplace violence, and product piracy (Coombs, 1998, 1999a; Coombs & Holladay, 2001, 2002; Coombs & Schmidt, 2000).

Media content analysis shows that companies, which were selected as samples, use the right response strategies for their crises, in accordance with Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). The public perception survey then shows that attribution of crisis responsibilities tends to be low, seen at a mean of 12.21 of the maximum value of 25. These findings show that the right response strategy can be a factor in the low attribution of crisis responsibilities; that it indicates that H1 is partially fulfilled.

Media content analysis shows that the crisis samples are at the level of damage quadrant 1 (the incident of Sky Aviation's plane crash) and 2 (the incident of KRL Jakarta-Bogor trip interruption and stone throwing action against APTB Transjakarta). As mentioned earlier, public perception survey then show that attribution of crisis responsibilities tends to be low, seen at a mean of 12.21. These findings show that the level of damage, even in quadrants with high levels of damage, does not affect the increased attribution of crisis responsibilities.

In addition to unproved H2, the high level of damage is not a factor in increasing attribution of crisis responsibilities; it makes H1 fulfilled, meaning that the right response strategy becomes the decisive factor of decreasing attribution of crisis responsibility.

The attribution of crisis responsibility provides 64.7% influence on changes to the organization's reputation. The test results also indicate that the decrease in attribution of crisis responsibilities affects the improvement of organization's reputation significantly and H0 is rejected. This makes H3 fulfilled; meaning that in a crisis event, the attribution of crisis responsibilities negatively affects the organization's reputation.

As previously described, media content analysis shows that the crisis samples are at the level of damage quadrant 1 (the incident of Sky Aviation's plane crash) and 2 (the incident of KRL Jakarta-Bogor trip interruption and stone throwing action against APTB Transjakarta). The public perception survey then shows that the organization's reputation is not very good. It can be seen at a mean value of 26.44 from a maximum value of 45. These findings indicate that the damage level on quadrants with high levels of damage, affecting the deterioration of the organization's reputation. This makes H4 fulfilled, meaning that increased damage level is a factor that lowers the organization's reputation.

5. Conclusion and Further Research

This research then found that the right response strategy successfully reduced the attribution of crisis responsibilities and could be a major factor in decreasing attribution of crisis responsibilities.

Although the damage caused by the crisis in the sample is at a high level, which are in quadrants 1 (the incident of Sky Aviation's plane crash) and 2 (the incident of KRL Jakarta-Bogor trip interruption and stone throwing action against APTB Transjakarta); public perception survey then shows that attribution of crisis responsibilities tends to be low. These findings also indicate that the damage level, albeit in a high quadrant, confirms the hypothesis that the right response strategy becomes a decisive factor in decreasing attribution of crisis responsibilities.

The public perception survey then shows that the decrease in the attribution of crisis responsibilities affects the improvement of organization's reputation significantly. Even so, the organization's reputation is still classed in a bad level. This is strongly influenced by the damage level previously mentioned, located in quadrants with high damage levels.

Referring to the above conclusions, the results of this research could be used by corporate management and communications practitioners when they are facing a crisis. Companies need to prioritize the use of right crisis response strategies according to situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) to reduce the attribution of crisis responsibilities in order to maintain or improve the reputation of the organization. For example, in the event of a crisis due to natural disasters, clear instructions from the company to victims, victims' families, stakeholders, and communities, and responsible attitudes through various forms of compensation and substitution of services, can improve the company's reputation.

Further research may include the final variables in the theory –supportive behaviour trends- that are not examined in this thesis. Further research can also separate samples of public perception survey into respondents who know the crisis and experience crisis for more detail observing the attribution of crisis responsibilities. In this thesis, the only respondent's prerequisite is those who know the crisis.

In addition, further qualitative research is also needed to gain a deeper understanding of what the public really wants from the company when the crisis occurs. Researches on public will deepens understanding of why a particular response strategy works on a particular crisis event. This qualitative research will also enrich the discussion of crisis management that is more oriented towards public satisfaction, especially the users of public transportation services.

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