

Teaching Method in Situational Crisis Communication Theory: A Literature Review

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Abstract—Crisis management strategies could be found in various curriculums, not only in schools of business, but also schools of communication. Young students, such as freshmen and sophomores of undergraduate schools, may not care about learning crisis management strategies. Moreover, crisis management strategies are not a topic art students are familiar with. The current paper discusses a way to adapt entertainment media into a crisis management lesson, and the importance of learning crisis management strategies in the school of animation. Students could learn crisis management strategies by watching movies with content about a crisis and responding to crisis responding. The students should then participate in follow up discussions related to the strategies that were used to address the crisis, as well as their success in solving the crisis.

Keywords—Situational crisis communication theory, crisis response strategies, media effect, unintentional effect.

I. INTRODUCTION

Crisis management strategies have been developed and contributed to by various scholars, such as Coombs [1], Venette [2], Lerbinger [3], Ulmer, Sellnow, and Seeger [4]. Many companies have used these strategies to guide the organization through a crisis. The examples of these organizations are a food production company [5], financial institute, school [6], and also a media organization [7]. These organizations often take the incorrect action to handle the crisis. Although in most cases, the organization was capable of leading itself out of the crisis. However, they might use unsuitable method in the beginning of crisis management, and use the right method, later. If the organization understood crisis management strategies well, they should have a better management. The result of an appropriate method for crisis management will create a better outcome for their stakeholders.

People can learn crisis management from various sources. Most entrepreneurs or top-level managers of large organizations may have studied crisis management at graduate schools. However, there are many small and medium-sized enterprises (SME) headed by entrepreneurs who might not have gone to college to learn crisis management. As a result, if they do not learn crisis management from other sources such as the library, some educational websites, etc.; they may not have any other opportunities to learn crisis management.

It was known that people are influenced by media, and one of most popular forms is the movie or film, and box office

revenues of highly popular movies often exceeds more than 100 million dollars [8]. Audiences around the world have certainly been influenced by these movies. Scholars should find strategies to educate the movie makers to appropriately portray crisis management strategies. Following this stage, scholars should begin the crisis management lesson in the classroom. This lesson should be used in the education of those who will grow up to work in film industry, such as animation students, film students, and television and broadcasting students. This paper discusses the idea of media-based learning and media influences. The findings help to support the aspect of teaching crisis management in media-related classrooms. The instructors should understand the importance of a suitable teaching strategy for crisis management lessons in media art and communication art students.

II. MEDIA EFFECT

People learn from media and they are influenced by media both intentionally and unintentionally. For both cases, they could learn the physical behaviors and the emotional traits from media. The outcome of the influence of media may be positive or negative depending on what the media presents. This paper provides examples of both how people intentionally and unintentionally learn from the media.

One of the reasons that businesses or organizations choose to use product endorsers in their advertising, is that fans of product endorser would buy the merchandise related to their favorite idol [9]. This effect does not occur only with the actual celebrity, but the fictional cartoon characters could work in the same way. Superheroes' fans are also influenced by the quotes and actions of their favorite superheroes [10]. In some non-commercial campaigns, superheroes are also used to persuade and empower people [11]. Some imitation could benefit fans or media audiences both directly and indirectly. Guitar Hero game players want to be real guitarists [12], similar to rock or heavy metal music fans who practice guitar skills because they want to be rock stars [13]. Rock fans do not only gain the skills on musical instruments, but they also listen to rock music to escape from stress in workplace and school [14]. In the public sphere, they may wear black t-shirts as a way to express their identity and make them feel more confident [15].

The fans' practices that were shown previously are one-way communication from entertainment media to fans. There is another type of fan or media follower, who reproduces the media after the original media, and they are called, "fan creators" [16]. Fan artists are a kind of fan creators, and they

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redraw fictional characters or real people from the entertainment media. Some of them are fan authors, who rewrite the original media to be their own story. This practice could heighten skills in drawing and plot development [17]-[21]. These fan creators also gain some extra skills unintentionally, which are self-marketing skills, social skills, and knowledge in Eastern or Asian culture [22]. Some practices of fan creators can be described by rhetorical visual communication [23]. That is how fans are influenced by other fans' work. For instance, a fan drew the pairing of *Elsa* (Disney's *Frozen* film) and *Jack Frost* (DreamWorks Animation), which has an effect on other fans to create similar artwork. Visual rhetoric in fan creation is also produced for other purposes, such as in fan activist research. Fans of the cartoon, the *Last Airbender*, created artwork to persuade others to protest the casting in the *Last Airbender* film (2010), which mostly used white actors replacing Asia fictional characters [24].

Media can also negatively influence fans or audiences. Media violence is a topic that has been explored in various areas. Although most studies about fan creators provide a positive point of view in joining a fan community, some fan arts and fan fictions contain much violence created by fans themselves, not by the original media [25], [26]. This phenomenon shows how fans fill the violence scene in fan art or fan fiction which is written based on non-violent media. It is opposite from the general finding of media violence studies that fans are influenced by violence in the media. Some other negative fan behaviors are the use of inappropriate and obscene language in online battles between groups of fans [27], which might cause a spillover of unsuitable or unwanted characteristics into real life, such as using impolite or inappropriate language with friends, family and colleagues.

Media violence was also explored in other areas. There are examples of intentional copy-cat behaviors such as: crimes that mimic violent scenes in movies [28], and the copy-cat behavior of a high school student who burned down the library after watching news about burning building during political protest [6]. Other intentional behaviors of fans or media audiences relates to how young children try to learn from cartoons or animated films [29], which could be described by the Social Learning Theory [30], [31].

Some media influence could be caused unintentionally. Most studies in this area focus on the psychological traits of media audiences after media exposure. Children often develop aggressive behaviors while playing video games. This aggressiveness is the results of both the violence [32] and competitiveness of the video games [33]. Aggressiveness among young children could be also emanated from cartoons that contain only violence but no humor [34]. Even in adults, aggressiveness can also develop among serious sports fans [35], and social network users [36]. Other negative psychological trait that can be found as an effect of media is narcissism among Facebook users [37] and *Deviantart* users [38]. A related psychological phenomenon is disembodiment [39], where a social network user fantasies about how other users would view him or her after viewing one's profile.

Internet addiction is another unintentional effect found in both young children and teenagers [40]. Based on these previous studies, it has shown that larger groups of people are unintentionally influenced by media. This unintentional effect has been found in the imagination process of people watching movies. People unintentionally identify with the main characters in the movie. Media would have a larger impact on their audience if the level of identification was higher [41]-[43]. The impact could refer to both physical behaviors and psychological traits. Some business organizations combine this unintentional effect and identification theory to engage their customers and heighten their profit. It was found in *Line Stickers of Line Application*, where the organization designed the stickers for social network users to use them to replace the emotions while texting on mobile devices. This process shows how customers unintentionally identify with the brand or product [58].

Based on the unintentional effect, media viewers or audiences could learn some inappropriate things from movies, especially the block-buster movies that could impact a wide range of audiences. This paper recommends media organizations be aware of presenting incorrect crisis responses. This includes violence and masculinity, where male characters often use violence to solve problems [44]. If audiences absorb the incorrect crisis response or other type of problem solving strategies, they could cause damage or upset to their real life, their business, and also to stakeholders. This shows that it is important to present suitable crisis responses in movies. If an incorrect crisis response is shown, a negative outcome should be shown, too. However, many researchers have no power to suggest to media organizations what they should do. Similarly, a large number of studies have explored violence in the media, whereas media organizations or even rating systems still allow violence to be shown to young audiences [45]-[47]. The current study suggests that the university lecturers or instructors could begin to teach their students in media-related majors to understand this risk. This is because these students would eventually go on to be media producers in the future.

III. CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES

Coombs [1] has divided crisis into three phases, which are pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis. All of these phases could be adapted to use in the classroom of students in media-related majors. However, the current paper is limited to the post-crisis phase and focuses on crisis response strategies of situational crisis communication theory (SCCT). Crisis response strategies are often found in research studies in this field. They are something unavoidable for organizations that face a crisis. If they are not able to respond to the crisis well enough, their reputation could be damaged more than in the crisis phase itself [48].

Most studies in this field used textual analysis and thematic analysis to consider the text from newspapers, television, and other media. The cases used in these studies are actual crisis that have occurred in large organizations. Examples include the suicide case in Foxconn [49], [57], the response of the

Chinese government to the outbreak of the SARS disease [50], the media agenda to protect the reputation of a basketball player in Taiwan [7], and the response and the argument of the United States in exporting beef with Mad Cow's disease to Taiwan [5]. Crisis response strategies of situational crisis communication theory were found in all these papers. However, there was a lack of education-related studies in this area. This paper sets out to suggest a teaching method for crisis response strategies to educate students in media-related major. This would not only benefit the students themselves, but also benefit society and the audiences of future media, since these students would be a part of media industry after they graduate.

IV. LEARNING METHOD FOR CRISIS RESPONSE

The researcher of this paper suggests that instructors in media-related programs teach crisis response strategies using thematic analysis and content analysis. Instructors should firstly give a lecture about crisis management and intensively focus on SCCT crisis response strategies. The students should then remember these strategies while they watch selected movies. The instructor can select the movies by himself or ask the students to vote for their favorite movies that they would want to watch in the classroom. The instructor would provide a worksheet for the students to fill in while they are watching the movies. This worksheet should include panels where students write down the crisis response strategies they identified in the movie, the name of the victim, the name of the individual/entity who employed the strategies, and also a space to write a brief notes on their interpretations. The instructor should be present with the students while they watch the movies. This is to assist students who may have questions about what to put in the worksheet.

This teaching method can be considered as the characteristics of good teachers, written by Rosenshine and Furst 1973 [51], [52]. Good teachers provide students with opportunities to learn, while guiding students to find answers at the same time. By using this teaching method, students will try to identify crisis response strategies in the movies themselves. They would learn about when to use a particular strategy to respond to a particular crisis at a particular time. However, movies often present an unsuitable crisis response. The instructor should encourage students to discuss the positive and negative outcomes of each strategy they identified.

We suggest media organizations produce appropriate media, and suggest that parents should teach their children how to be active viewers. These views are similar to previous study in the area of media effect [53]-[56]. The researcher also suggests that schools, and those responsible for developing curriculum, focus more on the moral aspects of producing media. The research found that a number of instructors teach their students only how to use media to heighten the profit of organizations without thinking about society and the young people who consume the media.

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