



Public relations strategy in rebuilding Airline Company reputation following aircraft crash

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ABSTRACT

The issue discussed in this study is rebuilding Lion Air's reputation tarnished by aircraft accidents. This study aims to identify public relations strategies pursued by case study of Lion Air, Indonesia, to rebuild its reputation following air accidents it has been involved. The research method employed in this study is the qualitative method using single case studies on Lion Air Company. Data is collected through observation, interviews, and a review of news articles in the media. The output of the research takes the form of corporate strategies that are aimed at rebuilding the company's reputation using stakeholder approaches, including (1) alignment of internal perceptions within the organization; (2) "communication holding"; (3) centralization of information issuance; (4) appointment of partners as "communicators"; (5) use of humanitarian approaches. The conclusion drawn from the research is that public relations strategies through a stakeholder approach would provide a basis for Lion Air's management to exercise control over information that brings positive value. The result also shapes stakeholders' perceptions to align with the company's expectation in restoring its reputation.



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INTRODUCTION

The airline industry increased from the mid-1990s to the beginning of the new millennium—the best period for the airline industry in the history of commercial aviation. The biggest growth boom was achieved due to an increase in GDP worldwide driven by a new economic wave. Then, globalization has driven a more significant demand for traveling. Airlines are experiencing healthy growth of around 4-6 percent per year. However, this encouraging situation did not continue in the following years. In early 2000, there was a slowdown in the world economy, and the growth phase ended.

Moreover, the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, and the SARS virus in 2003 further worsened the commercial aviation industry. In 2004, the aviation industry was probably facing its most challenging period (Chattopadhyay, 2015). The aviation industry is also experiencing its worst situation since the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

Reputation in the aviation industry is a determining factor for business survival, including the airline industry. Many experiences of companies in the industry have imparted lessons (Liehr-Gobbers & Storck, 2011). A company's reputation is closely linked to the perception built by the company's founders. The author will be discussing how Lion Air dealt with the crisis besetting its reputation following the incident in October 2018. One of the newest aircraft produced by Boeing, a 737 Max-8 with registration number PK-LQP crashed on 29 October 2018 into the waters of Tanjung Karawang, West Java, while flying from Jakarta to Pangkal Pinang. Due to the accident, Lion Air suddenly had to face an unfortunate situation within a short period.

The present study that employs case studies can reference how Lion Air dealt with a critical situation that greatly affected its reputation as a company. The first aspect of the crisis-affected its internal organization, services, and passengers (consumers), which then expanded to other aspects of the aviation industry ecosystem. Stakeholder participation of Lion Air must be managed and maintained by the management, particularly the corporate public relations division. Experience shows that it can

only take as short as eight months following an accident for an airline company (Adam Air) to be forced to cease operations.

Building a reputation is not easy for companies in this era of information. Any person can access information on a company from various media. One contributor to the phenomenon is the rapid proliferation of social media, speeding up the spread of information. A business's positive reputation can be achieved if its public relations department manages communication activities well (Edwards et al., 2014). This image-building endeavour is in line with the opinion of Ruslan that daily public relations activities facilitate two-way communication between the company and an organization. Capacity building with the public aimed at creating mutual understanding and support towards a common goal, policy, goods, or service production, and so forth, to foster the growth of the company and its positive image.

According to Newsom et al. (2012), a public relations department must carry out planned measures to influence public opinion outside the company through practical communication activities. The desired opinion is the organization's or company's positive reputation or corporate image. Further, there is an interconnectivity between a company's identity, name, image, and reputation. Corporate identity is "the values and principles employees and managers associate with the company. Corporate identity, whether disseminated, is an image of how the employees work, how products are manufactured, how stakeholders are served, and others. Corporate identity is derived from the company's experience since its inception, representing its accumulated achievements and shortcomings (Ginesti et al., 2018).

In managing and maintaining the company's corporate image, the Corporate Public Relations Department of Lion Air used an approach deemed unorthodox among companies operating in Indonesia, particularly in the aviation industry. The public relations department adopted a stakeholder approach, which is still a new phenomenon in the aviation industry. The approach calls for the company to refrain from being reactionary to the opinions of the public but instead continue to focus on providing high-quality service as a privately owned company with a good reputation in the eyes of the government, service users, and partners. Positive perception continued to be built without seeking subjective or arbitrary justification. In this context, the communication and public relations strategy of Lion Air attempted to shape positive perception through a stakeholder approach.

The period of crisis experienced as a disaster for the corporate is heavy and severe. Therefore, effective communication is needed to reach all elements of stakeholders (Anderson-Meli & Koshy, 2020; Avraham, 2013). This need is required because ineffective communication during crises can tarnish the organization's reputation both in the eyes of the public and members of the organization (Canny, 2016; Zaremba, 2014).

Various similar studies have shown advantages in handling crises that occur in plane crashes. However, this research paper fills in the gaps in how the public relations strategy is integrated into the case of Lion Air and several airlines in Indonesia. The uniqueness of this research paper lies in several special efforts planned in an integrated and strategic manner by corporations to improve public perception and understanding of the disasters that occur and give confidence to airlines.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research approach used is the qualitative method that emphasizes the richness of the author's data. The qualitative research approach reveals specifically and in-depth the issues discussed (Lichtman, 2013) and, in this case, how a commercial airline company comes out of a crisis when an accident occurs. The single case study method is used to discuss problems experienced by the Lion Air company (Ridder, 2014) to maintain and build the company's reputation. The more detailed the data collected based on interviews, documents, and observations, the better qualitative research. This descriptive research focuses on interviews, observations, and document gathering to be compiled and synthesized to become accurate data.

Qualitative research describes a series of activities that aim to acquire data in its original form without modification, emphasizing meaning. Here the author uses a qualitative descriptive method as the research intends to explore. The data reflected the strategies adopted by Lion Air's management as the object of the research to determine what strategies were used in facing the crisis during the aircraft crash and its aftermath to rebuild the company's reputation. The case study at Lion Air becomes more focused because it covers a social system unit that includes people, groups, individuals, customer

communities, and their families. Objects and research subjects are also in the context of natural cases (Edwards et al., 2014).

Meanwhile, the research method involves case studies that attempt to compile and sort data into manageable units to identify patterns that can be studied and examined closely by the author to decide what can be used as the output (Moleong, 2012). The case study method of research can be seen as a method or strategy to uncover cases. To gain in-depth knowledge, case data can be derived not only from the cases being scrutinized but also from any person who has knowledge or is very familiar with the case. Data or information can come from many sources but should be limited to those about the case at hand. Interviews were conducted with three resource persons to gain material for analysis and subsequent comparison with handling similar cases in Indonesia and using secondary data in the form of news links in news media.

According to Stake (2006), a case study as a research method plays an essential part in research and uncovers the specificities and unique characteristics of a case being studied, which represent the main reason the research was initiated. Stake added that, as such, case studies need to extract information and undertake an in-depth analysis of all aspects relating to the case, whether in terms of nature, activities, history, environmental and physical condition, functions, and others.

It is expected that the present qualitative research using the case study method will expose the strategies of Lion Air's management as the object of the research in determining the strategies to adopt to rebuild reputation during and after an aircraft crash.

RESULTS ANF DISCUSSION

Handling News in Crisis Period

News related to corporations has a positive or negative impact on developing a sustainable image. Mass media, in this case, especially online social media, have made it possible to diffuse negative information quickly to larger audiences (Liu & Shankar, 2015). Specifically, this research will answer the question of how the management of Lion Air employed a communication strategy to regain its reputation in the eyes of the public following the crash of one of its aircraft.

Negative news especially appears when an accident occurs, that affects stakeholders in the aviation industry. In this regard, the author provides a discussion using a stakeholder approach. The stakeholder approach has been adopted and developed in many scientific fields relating to management (Freeman, 2015). The airline industry and various other business lines pay more attention to the role of social media in handling publications to the public. Social media backs up the role of institutional media to facilitate interaction with the public and build a positive image for the company. Holladay also emphasizes the importance of handling news in crisis communication strategies but the context of chemical accidents.

Public relations is a field that deals with concepts relating to stakeholders. In public relations, the stakeholder concept refers to what is often termed the "public." The concepts of "stakeholder" and "public" carry the same understanding. People or the public are also referred to as "stakeholders" as they are directly affected by decisions taken by an organization (Bloch, 2014).

The result from field observation conducted by the author shows that crisis management through a stakeholder approach would make it easier for the management to make decisions during the crisis by considering every available information. A communication crisis occurring in an organization is a part of a management crisis. Communication crisis calls for an interdisciplinary review, including managerial science, organizational study, public relations, psychology, communication, media science, and many others (Coleman, 2020).

Discussion on reputation is a communication effort based upon a positive understanding of the uncertainties of the future caused by a present-day event. Reputation is essentially built upon the activities of people working towards a positive goal for the organization. A crisis within an organization may be caused by the organization's inability to maintain its reputation. In short, reputation is an antithesis of a crisis experienced or faced by a company.

Reputation represents the assessment or impression people have of what they see or view from the perspective of their knowledge and experience. According to the Indonesian dictionary, image is defined as (1) a noun denoting a picture, form, depiction; (2) a description shared by many persons of a company, organization, foundation, or product; (3) a mental impression created by a word, phrase, or sentence. Kasali defines an image as an impression that emerges from an understanding of reality

(Manurung & Mandalia, 2015). The concept of identity and the corporate image is related to the attributes in the public mind and is understood as reputation. This term is constantly debated among academics with different backgrounds, usually overlapping from various associated disciplines (Camara, 2011). The understanding is created out of information. Meanwhile, an image is a specific image, description that fits the actual reality or presence, various policies, personnel, products, or services of an organization or company (Camara, 2011).

From the opinions outlined above, the image can be defined as an impression that is produced from an understanding of the available information that is in line with the facts. Every company possess an image based on the judgment of the customers, potential customers, banks, company employees, competitors, distributors, suppliers, trade associations, and customer movements in the trade that has their view of the company (Badri, 2009).

The accident involving Lion Air's aircraft registration number PK-LQP on 29 October 2018 above Tanjung Karawang waters, West Java, serving a Jakarta-Pangkal Pinang route, is an incident that is worth reviewing from a communications science perspective. The event undoubtedly made a significant impact on the operations of the company. The relevant discussion on corporate communication in this context would be how the airline's management mitigated the situation using communication strategies to regain the company's public reputation following the disaster. The management conducted a "stakeholder mapping" to help them identify to whom specific information is shared. The stakeholder mapping exercise is meant to gain a complete picture of an event and where the respective holder is positioned or linked respectively to such event.

From the interviews conducted in the field, Lion Air's management saw the disaster as something that they hoped had never happened (an unexpected situation) and an unpredictable situation. As the first step, the management initiated a public relations approach for the traveling public to receive complete (not partial) information from a credible source.

According to Coombs & Holladay (2011), who found the typology of crisis, it is explained that a crisis depends upon the stakeholder's perception. Such stakeholder perception was then made as a reference by the Lion Air in determining the most appropriate public relations strategy. The company's management recognized that if the information were to be conveyed incompletely and partially, the company would not be unlikely to experience a management crisis.

Lessons were drawn from a similar case in the national aviation industry involving the company P.T. Adam Sky Connection Airlines (Adam Air). Adam Air flight 54, DHI- 574, which was served using Boeing 737-400 registration number PK-KKW, flew between Jakarta-Manado via Surabaya. During the ill-fated flight, it carried 96 passengers and six crew members before it disappeared over Majene sea, West Sulawesi, eventually causing the company to file for bankruptcy.

The strategic measures referenced earlier would allow the company to maintain its reputation through a crisis management communication strategy. The communication strategy employed by Lion Air's public relations division in managing the crisis warrant further study. From the company's organizational perspective, in the operation of its business, the policies of Lion Air's management in formulating strategic steps during the crisis is a part of its public relations strategy to maintain the company's image in the eyes of Indonesian consumers.

If Lion Air chose the wrong steps to respond to the incident, it would likely have disrupted its work system or even jeopardized its entire business (driving it to bankruptcy). The author believes that the crisis would be an exciting study in communication, particularly the company's effort to maintain its corporate image. There should be a well-ingrained realization that the consequence of a crisis and a weak capacity to anticipate such a crisis necessitates anticipatory measures to be built as a framework that can be referred to as crisis management. The management's policies in dealing with an event constitute decisions that the organization must make quickly to prevent the incident from creating adverse conditions.

Such an event is a pivotal point or momentum that can lead to downfall or greatness. Such direction would be determined by the established foundation, stance, and actions taken in response to the crisis. A crisis is a turning point that can make a situation better or worse. Even a crisis moment can be seen as an opportunity to communicate strategic change for the corporation by building and maintaining the sustainability of its reputation, utilizing issue management and crisis management as a significant effort on top of a positive corporate culture (Austin et al., 2017).

A comprehensive understanding by the management of the consequences arising from a crisis and lack of capacity to anticipate crises give rise to a need for anticipatory measures to be built into a framework referred to as crisis management. Three general elements define a crisis: (1) the presence of a threat to the organization, (2) the element of surprise, and (3) decisions that must be made within a brief period. This situation is unlike risk management, which involves assessing potential threats and identifying the best avenue to avoid such threats. On the other hand, crisis management deals with threats that have occurred. In a more general meaning, crisis management is a set of technical capacities needed to identify, assess, understand, and overcome a difficult situation from the point of occurrence to the time it can be restored.

Crisis management in the context of communications can be defined as the art and science of formulating, implementing, and evaluating cross-function decisions that would allow a company facing a crisis to find its way out of such crisis. This policy means that the strategic management attempts to integrate all the potentials of the organization (including financial, marketing, production, organizational, human resources, and crisis) within one system implemented through a "communication strategy design in times of crisis."

Corporate crisis management begins with steps to gain as much information as possible on alternative resolutions. It solved the problem gradually based on priority and considering probabilities, even on any certainty of occurrence. Thus, decisions about the planned steps can be made based on information that is as complete and accurate as possible.

A corporate communication strategy is generally oriented toward crisis management to minimize the impact of the crisis on regular business operations and establish a good relationship with the media to obtain information on the crisis. These corporate strategic actions also inform relevant persons about actions taken by the company in response to the crisis. This endeavour allows the management to maintain its reputation in the eyes of the public. Looking at the case of Adam Air, the author believes that the management was overly fixated on information circulating among the public, ultimately causing the company to lose control of the information. Rather than maintaining its reputation, the airline's management could not even convey to the public that many other factors could have caused the accident. given Adam Air's experience, the author believes that Lion Air's management employed a unique approach to dealing with public pressure. Delays in scheduled flights, incidents of lost baggage, and the most recent aircraft accident show that the airline's management needs to understand the Indonesian public's communication characteristics further.

The crash of Lion Air's Boeing 737 Max-8 registration number PK-LQP undoubtedly represents (1) a threat to the company. Such a threat can adversely affect the company's stability, as it must pay for compensation, insurance, investment costs, and other expenses, not to mention its human resource cost. It is not inconceivable that Lion Air faced the possibility of ceasing operations due to it having to pay for other liabilities, compounded by the fact that it has become a regular occurrence for its passengers to have their flights delayed.

As to the (2) element of foreseeability, the management must take adequate measures to avoid being trapped in the crisis. Minimizing or localizing the crisis is another effective method of response, in addition to providing correct information to help the public understand the message being given. Regarding (3) making decisions within a short time, any delay in responding to a situation would compound the negative impact of an incident. Therefore, communication planning in crisis management must be oriented towards regaining the reputation of the company to allow it to conduct its business.

The daily onslaught of information on the public had to be balanced by Lion Air's management through a "responsive P.R. design." In this context, the airline's crisis management strategy was to provide stakeholders with accurate and updated information in the timeliest manner possible. As put forward by Schuetz, the management must undertake its function as the supplier of information that acts quickly and systematically, and measurably, and the company must simultaneously continue with its operational activities (Schuetz, 1990).

To provide accurate information as a vital part of a public relations strategy, Lion Air's management prepared a communication plan to deal with crises. Some of the strategic measures designed by the airline's management to mitigate the crisis to allow the company to continue operations and maintain its reputation were: 1) ensure internal communication to align the company's internal perception of the accident; 2) conduct "communication holding" to sort out issues; 3) centralize issuance

of information relating to the accident; 4) appoint a partner as a "communicator"; 5) adopt a humanitarian approach to the stakeholders.

Through the stakeholder-oriented approach, the management could see, hear, and take appropriate actions to protect its reputation. Information about the accident must be conveyed in whole, relevant, and based on the interest of the stakeholders. Positive public opinion must be built without being defensive about evading responsibility.

Internal Perception within the Company

The first discussion is on the importance of a unified perception within the internals of an organization during crisis management. The internal organization perception within Lion Air was a priority issue the company's management addressed. The psychological impact experienced by everyone (including the directors) caused by accident would naturally have a bearing on the work performance of the staff. The communication culture prevailing in Lion Air provided a doorway for the management to manage the crisis and ensure that the company could address internal communication issues. A company's communication culture can directly affect how it can effectively engage in internal and external communication, as communication culture will dominate the way management thinks. This company's habits directly affect the management's perception and actions (Coombs, 2021).

Lion Air's officials deemed that "resolution of internal communication issues" during accident mitigation is key to avoiding chaos within the organization. All management areas, from staff to top-tier officials, must take the same stand in facing the situation. There must be no finger-pointing among the departments, as it would be detrimental to the company in the future. The company continued to operate, and all "internal stakeholders must protect its reputation."

Based on similar incidents in the global aviation industry, an organization must be able to resolve internal communication issues. The communication culture of a company would influence how it would address issues arising from wrongdoings or negligence (Heath, 1994). International perception concerning an accident must be made as the primary reference for how the management communicates information externally, given the complex nature of aircraft accidents.

The management of Lion Air did not ignore the fact that many aircraft accidents have occurred in other parts of the world. This concern relates to how the airline has been complying with rules and restrictions in the aviation industry, especially aviation safety regulations. The commitment of Lion Air to maintain its reputation in this context was through the application of standards and procedures that govern aircraft operations under the manufacturer's specifications and direction, including for aircraft maintenance, component servicing, crew training, and all other aspects.

"Internal stakeholder" is a positive force for an organization during times of crisis. Lion Air's management tried to study every aspect of the organization's issues and turned them into its strength when responding to the public as a user of their service. The company also followed the procedure set by the Directorate of Aircraft Airworthiness and Operations (DKPPU) of the Indonesian Ministry of Transportation, including procedures governing aircraft operations. Lion Air adopts 8-9 utilization hours per day, with an average of six aircraft on scheduled maintenance and five aircraft on standby.

Conducting "Communication Holding"

Hours after its Boeing 737 Max-8 registration number PK-LQP was reported lost due to a crash, Lion Air did not immediately take a position or issue any "substantial" message before receiving relevant information. The company's management chose to wait for the Indonesian aviation authorities to issue their statement through a stakeholder approach.

The airline's management exercised the strategy of "communication holding," which is a strategy of delaying the dissemination of information to the public. Any information that is circulating is not responded to immediately. Instead, they are collated and sorted to find which are the most relevant to be reissued once public emotions have subsided. The management established an order of priority, which information is most important and relevant to be issued. In this context, Lion Air's management also selected which persons should deal with communication. It refrained from broadcasting experts, practitioners, and the public opinions on the disaster. The management continued to focus on handling the key issues and did not argue with the opinions being circulated.

Through communication holding, the airline's management selected information from various sources, including electronic media, printed media, and the internet. Communication holding is also a

strategy to map which media are reporting and disseminating the news, including opinions from individuals and experts.

Lion Air's management then sorted and built a "large picture" of the opinions that prevail within the public and to what extent they impact are relevant to the company's reputation. One interesting situation that the company responded well to be the "communication culture" of the Indonesian public, which efficiently receive information and quickly forget them, which the company understood well. Also, during disasters that involve a high number of casualties, one should never begin with "I am not at fault. Therefore, I am not responsible".

Utilizing the "information map" produced from the "communication holding," Lion Air's management then sorted and selected relevant information to be communicated to the public as the largest stakeholder in the aviation industry. They were not influenced nor bound by the opinions of analysts, experts, and other sources appearing on television or other media. The management then inserted "special messages" to ensure that its business operation could continue. In that context, despite the "difficult times," Lion Air's management continued providing service to its consumers in Indonesia. It even provided service that was felt by the customers as being "more compassionate," such as when they asked passengers of Lion Group-operated flights to pray for the victims before the aircraft took off.

Communication holding is very relevant to the situation and communication culture of the Indonesian people. It requires an organization to refrain from reacting to the current situation but still selectively maintain communication with all stakeholders. Information supplied to the public must give the impression that they side with the public without compromising professionalism as a company undergoing a crisis. This strategy is very appropriate to be adopted when dealing with the Indonesian public, who are susceptible to sensitive information, requiring caution when issuing comments or opinions as their acceptance of information determines their perception of an event.

The strategy of communication holding (holding information from dissemination) during a post-accident crisis provides room for the management to analyse information that is relevant to the company (internally), to be subsequently released to the public as a stakeholder. Once proper communication methods are implemented by Lion Air's management, humanitarian services are provided to the stakeholders after they have complete control of information.

Centralization of Information Source

The second part of the discussion relates to how Lion Air's management centralized its information outlet concerning the accident. As a focus of its communication activities following the accident, the management needed to put in place a restriction on information strategy. The accident occurred during a revolutionary period, prompting the management to take over information sources, communication means, communication channels, and other actions that may impact the company's reputation due to the accident.

The management crisis mode that was quickly established by Lion Air's management following the accident was a critical step that should be viewed positively. The company's reputation and continuation of its business were at stake. The company's labelling of the incident as a 'crisis' seriously impacts its operational survival. The management was fully aware that the public's perception of the accident would determine the company's future operation.

Advancements in communication technology require the management to restrict the flow of information. Every crisis has the potential to both directly and indirectly threaten the reputation of an organization. An effective crisis management strategy would minimize damage resulting from a crisis. In other words, when a crisis afflicts a company's operations, an effective crisis management strategy becomes a tool to rebuild, restore and maintain the company's positive reputation.

Crises are marked by several characteristics, including that they happen very suddenly, pose a threat, lack information, leave limited time to respond, occur beyond the control of the affected party, cause a shift in relationships between and create tension among stakeholders (Lagedec, 1993). In the context of information restriction, the supply of information on the crisis must be the focus. Relevant information must be conveyed to the public. This barrier is no simple undertaking, as too much or too little information would affect public perception.

Through its vice president of corporate communication strategy, Lion Air's management put in place technical and systematic measures to restrict the supply of information, beginning with press

releases for media representatives after flight JT 610 was declared to have crashed. The management focused on the airworthiness of the aircraft that it operates. This concern was aimed to make the public understand the airworthiness and safety requirements that apply in the aviation industry. In this regard, the company assured the public that it has complied with the rules and regulations established by regulators.

As another industry stakeholder, the media obviously cannot be ignored. In this context, the media must be made a partner in conveying a positive message to the public. Current communication technologies allow the media to communicate to a broader audience and cover every second of an event, whether broadcast or electronic.

As part of its crisis management strategy, the management of Lion Air created an official information channel through the Lion Newsroom (<http://www.lionair.co.id>). To this day, the airline's management continues to engage in 'correspondence' with the public to provide them with 'official comments' on information issued by the government and conduct media monitoring.

A relevant source of information performs a highly strategic function in managing a crisis. The crisis management strategy of Lion Air's management was to restrict the supply of information to provide a complete message to the public. This aim was expected to foster a positive relationship with the community and protect the company's reputation by creating positive opinions and perceptions. According to Edwin and Emery (1988:32), the public relations function within a profit organization is responsible for creating a mutually beneficial relationship between the company or organization and various elements of the public in a planned and organized manner.

By restricting the supply of information, the management was able to 'control' information. Messages conveyed through the organization's official channel played an essential part during the crisis. In this context, the company provided relevant and complete information that represents the public interest as a measure to reduce the adverse impact borne by the company's reputation because of the accident.

Business Partner as "Communicator"

The crash was not the first air incident faced by Lion Air's management. Nevertheless, this incident was exceptionally fatal and required caution to be exercised by the airline's management. The reputation of the company was to be determined by the actions of the management. Any misstep in responding to the situation would cause the company's consumers to choose a different carrier. The companies knew that to face the adverse situation, they needed to engage Lion Air's partners to mitigate the incident.

The situation would be more problematic had Lion Air failed to act and got lost in the problem. The company must deal with the sparse information coming in from the field and the communication trend of the public. The various assumptions and perceptions that sprung up within a day following the accident were difficult to tackle. Lion Air's officials had to map and design a method to approach its partners to "meet" the demands of stakeholders.

One day following the crash, representatives from P.T. Asuransi Tugu Pratama Indonesia (Tugu Insurance) appeared before the public. The insurance assured them that Lion Air Group would honor all claims submitted by relatives of the victim of the crash involving Lion Air JT-610 PK-LQP, which crashed into the sea at Tanjung Karawang, West Java (Monday 29 October 2018). The president director of Tugu Insurance, Indra Baruna, stated that as the insurance company, Asuransi Tugu Pratama is prepared to meet its obligation to pay the claims to the heirs and dependents of the crash victims. The appearance of the insurer to talk to the public as a partner of Lion Air represent a strategy adopted by the airline's management to convey a "positive message" to the public. Lion Air has fulfilled its obligation of paying the applicable premium to the insurance company for the benefit of the passengers.

In a stakeholder-oriented approach, strategic partners such as vendors and suppliers have a common interest. Professionalism in providing service to stakeholders constitutes a measure of performance. Concerning the crisis faced by Lion Air, every partner has a role in conveying information relevant to its function.

The management viewed that the company's partners should be "participation" to convey positive messages to the public. During a crisis, a positive message may not be received positively by the public. The public's perception may be different had the message been communicated by Lion Air

itself. In this case, Lion Air assigned Tugu Asuransi as a "communicator" to convey a positive message from the management.

Referring to the communication theory put forward by Laswell (1948). "Who, Says What, In Which Channel, To Whom, With What Effect," is concern of Lion Air's management took into grave account the potential impact of a positive message by the spokesperson. The opinion perception of stakeholders greatly influences the reputation a company enjoys today. Lion Air's management implemented a brilliant strategy. Without directly taking over the stage (using its communication channel), the stakeholders saw the humanitarian values and reputation of the company in a positive light.

Adopting a Humanitarian Approach

Only after information was controlled could the management initiate humanitarian actions for the victims and other related parties. A humanitarian approach is aimed at the victims and relatives affected by accidents. The method by which Lion Air interacted with the victims and their relatives was unique. Two days following the disaster, communication with the victims' families was not done openly but rather through direct private visits to the victims and relatives.

The airline's management in this regard established a priority, what humanitarian action is most urgent and relevant to be taken prior to meeting with the victims and their families. Through the stakeholder-oriented approach, the management deemed it necessary to communicate to the public elegantly that (1) accident insurance and (2) compassionate funds will be paid to the victims' families. The strategy is quite interesting in the public relations context, as it was not the airline's management who made such assurance to the public, but rather the insurance company through the media.

All airlines seek to convey similar assurances that safety is their priority as a critical message. In addition, the experience in inflight, comfort in boarding, and post-flight greatly determine customer satisfaction. The brand image of an airline must also be built and maintained. Therefore, stakeholders must strengthen cooperation with all related elements in the event of an accident or peacetime (Leung et al., 2022). Vo et al. (2019) put forward the role of social media to establish interactive communication with stakeholders, especially customers and the public, and direct them so that brands and companies can discuss corporate social responsibility engagement activities that influence word of mouth on Twitter.

Lion Air's management was successful in engaging stakeholders to participate in responding to the crisis. The airline's insurance company stated to the public that the airline had been dutiful in paying the insurance premium for the victims before the tragedy occurred. As such, the insurance company will be fulfilling its obligation to the victims and their families. In this context, the airline's management restored its reputation as a credible and airworthy carrier in the eyes of the public as they have been compliant in paying the insurance premium. This approach proved to be effective and prevented Lion Air from losing its "compassionate side" in handling the crisis. Throughout the crisis, Lion Air's management never made a statement implying that the company "was not at fault" for the disaster.

A communication strategy utilizing the humanitarian approach can be adopted once the management has gained complete control of the supply of information. "Communication with one voice" is a strategy to deal with extreme situations, whereby communication is done through one voice. All statements made to the public must be coordinated in such a way so as not to create confusion or conflicting information in society. Lion Air's reputation can be safeguarded if its management can manage the available information. The company exhibited professional conduct by continuing to provide service during and following the disaster. This endeavour would naturally create a positive impression in the minds of stakeholders. Brand campaigns carried out by prioritizing corporate social responsibility have also been proven to provide a positive relationship for the public so that the public's memory is not fixed on the problem of accident incidents but on the role of building the community and the environment. The same thing was stated by Pomeroy and Johnson, who suggested that social activities be communicated through advertising to share corporate image (Blombäck & Scandeliuss, 2013).

Every event has the potential to threaten the reputation of an organization. In this context, effective communication during a crisis would minimize damage to the reputation brought about by the crisis. In other words, when a crisis afflicts a company's operations, an effective crisis management strategy becomes a tool to rebuild, restore and maintain the company's positive reputation. Messages

conveyed through the organization's communications play a vital role during a crisis. In this context, the company provides information impacted by the crisis and works towards minimizing the damage and adverse impact that the crisis brings on the company.

Communication relating to a crisis occurs during three phases of the crisis: (1) prior to the crisis, (2) during the crisis, and (3) following the crisis. Of the three phases, the crisis phase is the most critical, as the action or inaction of the company dramatically affects public opinion. During the actual crisis, stakeholders scrutinize how the organization handles the situation. If the company inappropriately handles the crisis, it may exacerbate the situation. An essential feature of crisis communication is managing the complexities of organizational communication.

CONCLUSION

Based on the field research, the public relations strategy implemented by the management of Lion Air to restore its reputation. The crisis was following the crash of its aircraft registration number PK LQP. The conclusion is that a communication strategy utilizing a stakeholder-oriented approach has provided Lion Air's management with room to manage information aimed towards providing positive information to build perception among the stakeholders that are in line with the company's expectations in maintaining its reputation.

Lion Air, specifically in the crisis period due to an accident, applies six public relations strategies such as 1) handling news in a crisis period, 2) internal perception within the company, 3) conducting "communication holding," 4) centralization of information source, 5) business partner as "communicator," and 6) adopting a humanitarian approach. These six public relations strategies have provided an understanding to the public and its customers that Lion Air is a company that is responsible and capable of solving a series of problems resulting from accidents. Finally, a responsive framework that can be used when a company faces a crisis will serve as a reference for the management to maintain and manage its reputation.

The research result implies that the aviation industry has a particular anticipation program to resolve the decline in reputation due to accidents. Similar programs must be organized and managed as emergency training for every commercial airline company.

Recommendations for future research are directed to be carried out with an empirical approach, especially to examine various factors that may have a psychological and sociological effect on passengers and the public.

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