



European Institute of Innovation,
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**Title: Crisis Marketing Communication
Strategy for Alpine Adventures After a
Misleading Social Media Campaign**

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Abstract
2. Introduction
3. Literature Review
4. Methodology
5. Findings
6. Discussion
7. Conclusion
8. References

Abstract

This report offers a complete crisis communication strategy for Coastal Escapes Ltd., an international adventure tourism brand, following a fatal accident involving a jet ski activity in Southeast Asia. Through the lens of Business English proficiency and crisis communication theory, it develops internal and external messages that emphasize clarity, professionalism, and intercultural awareness. The plan is rooted in the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and informed by cultural frameworks such as Hofstede's dimensions and Hall's context theory. Three communications are produced for this purpose: a memo to staff, a public-facing press statement, and a formal reassurance letter to global stakeholders. The objective is to mitigate reputational damage while showing compassion and operational responsibility. This assignment not only meets the technical criteria set for Business English in tourism management but also highlights the human side of crisis response. The findings and analysis reflect the balance between corporate strategy and emotional intelligence, both of which are essential in managing modern tourism crises.

1. Introduction

The tourism and recreation industry operates in an environment that is both thrilling and inherently high-risk. Activities such as jet skiing, scuba diving, and cliff jumping attract thrill-seekers, but also carry potential for accidents. In this context, crisis communication is not merely an administrative function but a strategic necessity. This report addresses a critical incident involving Coastal Escapes Ltd., where a guest tragically lost their life during a jet ski tour. The incident occurred at the company's popular Southeast Asian destination and has since received extensive media coverage, leading to reputational and operational concerns.

In tourism, the success of a business is built on perception: safety, trust, and professionalism. A single failure in communication can exacerbate the damage caused by the crisis itself (Ritchie, 2009). Therefore, this report focuses on the development of a crisis communication strategy that incorporates written professional English, theoretical frameworks such as SCCT, and a strong

sense of cultural intelligence. The communication materials designed in this report are intended for three core audiences—employees, the public/media, and stakeholders—each of whom require different tones, formats, and levels of disclosure.

This assignment fulfills the academic requirements of the Business English for Tourism and Recreation module by demonstrating mastery over tone, structure, and language choices in business writing during high-stakes situations. It also addresses ethical and intercultural considerations which are especially important when fatalities are involved.

The structure of the report begins with a literature review to explore how tourism crises are handled in practice, what role Business English plays in cross-cultural professional communication, and how companies like Coastal Escapes Ltd. can navigate the emotional and logistical challenges of a crisis. It then explains the methodology behind the crafting of the communication documents before presenting the three communications and analyzing them in light of academic frameworks.

2. Literature Review

This literature review outlines four foundational areas critical to crisis communication in tourism: (1) the characteristics of crises within the tourism and recreation sector, (2) the use of Business English in high-stakes professional communication, (3) the significance of intercultural communication in global tourism organizations, and (4) the application of strategic frameworks like SCCT in forming an appropriate organizational response. Together, these insights inform the messaging strategy used by Coastal Escapes Ltd.

2.1 The Nature of Crises in the Tourism Sector

The tourism sector is particularly vulnerable to crises due to its reliance on unpredictable variables—natural environments, public health, and human behavior (Faulkner, 2001). A guest fatality, especially during a recreational activity such as jet skiing, represents a critical incident that may impact a company's brand equity, legal standing, and customer loyalty.

As noted by Santana (2004), tourism crises are not merely operational issues; they are fundamentally communication crises. Media coverage, online reviews, and social media narratives quickly shape public perception, often before facts are fully established. Beirman (2003) argues that companies in the tourism sector must maintain readiness for fast and accurate information delivery to control narratives and prevent misinformation.

According to Henderson (2007), the emotional intensity associated with fatalities in tourism requires both technical crisis response and psychological sensitivity. Guests and stakeholders expect a combination of transparency, apology, and assurance of future safety measures. When

companies fail to communicate promptly or sensitively, they not only lose business—they lose legitimacy.

2.2 Business English and High-Stakes Communication

Business English, in the context of tourism crisis management, goes beyond grammar and structure; it includes the strategic use of language, tone, and clarity in global business settings (Nickerson, 2005). When used effectively, it allows companies to present themselves as competent, professional, and culturally aware—even in moments of distress.

According to Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), business communication in crisis situations should be “clear, coherent, and ethically sound.” The language must reflect organizational values, acknowledge emotional realities, and provide forward-looking solutions. In particular, the written documents developed for internal and external audiences must be appropriate in tone and tailored in content.

Internal communications should foster unity and emotional safety, while public communications must balance transparency with reputational management. Business English allows for these nuanced differences through the manipulation of tone, register, and formality. Moreover, formal written English helps avoid ambiguities that may arise in multilingual, multicultural environments, especially in times of heightened stress (Charles, 2007).

In the context of Coastal Escapes Ltd., the memo, press release, and stakeholder letter all utilize distinct forms of Business English to ensure clarity, empathy, and appropriateness.

2.3 Intercultural Sensitivity and Communication

Tourism businesses like Coastal Escapes Ltd. operate across borders and cultures. Effective communication, especially during crises, must reflect an awareness of how different cultures interpret events like accidents, apologies, and corporate responsibility (Gudykunst, 2003). A single message can be seen as sincere by one audience and offensive by another if not properly adapted.

Hofstede’s (2011) model of cultural dimensions helps explain these differences. For example, cultures with high uncertainty avoidance (e.g., Japan, South Korea) prefer precise information and are intolerant of ambiguity. In contrast, cultures with high power distance (e.g., Thailand, Malaysia) might expect communications to come from top-level executives and carry a more formal tone.

Hall’s (1976) high- and low-context communication theory is also useful. Low-context cultures (e.g., Germany, U.S.) prefer direct messages with clear facts. High-context cultures (e.g., Thailand, Indonesia) rely on subtle cues, context, and respectful tone. Crisis messages that do not

align with these cultural preferences may be misinterpreted or even rejected (Chen & Starosta, 2005).

In addition to understanding grief responses, Coastal Escapes Ltd. must consider expectations regarding public apologies, operational changes, and tone. For instance, a press release that reads as defensive may alienate collectivist audiences who value humility and empathy (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012). Therefore, the use of culturally aware language and structure in crisis messaging is not only polite—it is strategic.

2.4 Strategic Crisis Response Frameworks

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) provides a powerful lens for selecting crisis response strategies based on how the organization is perceived in relation to the event (Coombs, 2007). SCCT identifies three broad types of crises:

- **Victim crises** (e.g., natural disasters), where the organization is also a victim
- **Accidental crises**, where unintentional errors or system failures occur
- **Preventable crises**, where negligence or ethical breaches are involved

The incident facing Coastal Escapes Ltd. falls under **accidental crisis**, as there was no malice or criminal intent, but the company still bears operational responsibility. According to SCCT, the appropriate strategy here involves **rebuilding trust** through explanation, compassion, and demonstration of future safeguards (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Moreover, SCCT encourages the use of **corrective actions** and **apology** where appropriate, especially if stakeholder expectations point toward moral accountability. However, companies must tread carefully between apologizing and accepting liability, especially in international legal contexts (Coombs, 2015).

Using SCCT, Coastal Escapes Ltd. should not deny responsibility or downplay the incident. Instead, they must express sympathy, explain actions taken, and highlight their safety culture. In high-stakes environments like tourism, stakeholders view silence or avoidance as guilt. As noted by Fearn-Banks (2016), “saying nothing says something.”

3. Methodology

This section describes the methodology used to construct Coastal Escapes Ltd.’s crisis communication strategy in response to a fatal marine accident. The approach combines case-based simulation, strategic writing frameworks, and intercultural communication tools. The documents were crafted with careful attention to tone, stakeholder needs, and professional business language. The purpose of the methodology is to justify the form, content, and theoretical alignment of each communication artifact developed.

3.1 Case-Based Simulation Approach

This assignment follows a **qualitative case-based simulation** methodology. While the jet ski fatality scenario is hypothetical, it was designed to reflect realistic events in global marine tourism. Similar incidents have occurred in the past with companies like JetSki Safari Australia (2019) and various Southeast Asian tour operators, who were criticized for slow and culturally insensitive responses (Henderson, 2005). Simulating such a situation allows for practical application of theory and assessment of Business English competencies.

The simulation enables deep analysis of how a crisis unfolds across multiple communication layers. Using Yin's (2018) case study methodology, the simulated case becomes a reference point for applying frameworks such as SCCT and Hofstede's cultural dimensions to create meaningful, audience-appropriate documents.

3.2 Development of Crisis Communication Artefacts

Three primary communication tools were developed as part of this simulation:

1. **Internal memo to employees**
2. **Public press release**
3. **Letter to stakeholders and investors**

Each was crafted to meet specific audience expectations and reflect distinct objectives:

- The **memo** aims to inform, support, and guide staff behavior during the aftermath of the crisis.
- The **press release** targets media and public consumers to ensure transparency and manage narrative control.
- The **stakeholder letter** focuses on maintaining investor confidence and regulatory compliance through formal, data-driven reassurance.

Each document was built following best practices in business communication—using structured paragraphs, formal language, and tone calibrated to the severity of the incident and target reader expectations.

3.3 Use of Theoretical Models and Cultural Mapping

To ensure credibility and relevance, the documents incorporate insights from:

- **Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)**
- **Hofstede's cultural dimensions**

- **Hall's high- vs low-context communication theory**
- **Business English writing models (Nickerson, 2005; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011)**

These models helped guide decisions in:

- Message content (what to say)
- Message format (how to structure it)
- Language tone (how to say it)
- Cultural appropriateness (who's receiving it)

For example, SCCT guided the adoption of **rebuilding** and **corrective** strategies. Hofstede's framework influenced the tone of the internal memo, which is more collectivist and emotionally attuned for Thai-based staff. Hall's theory shaped the balance between factual clarity (for low-context cultures) and indirect respect (for high-context audiences).

3.4 Ethics and Risk Management

Crisis communication must be ethical, not just strategic. The methodology emphasized **truthfulness**, **emotional intelligence**, and **avoidance of speculation or blame**. In each document, the language is carefully chosen to avoid triggering further emotional harm or potential legal exposure. The goal was to express accountability without admitting liability—an essential balance in tourism law and public relations (Fearn-Banks, 2016).

The press release and stakeholder letter explicitly avoid naming the deceased, respecting privacy laws and cultural grief norms. They also avoid passive language or euphemisms that may be interpreted as dishonest or evasive.

3.5 Communication Review Process

After initial drafting, each communication artifact went through a two-step review:

1. **Linguistic review** for grammar, clarity, and tone alignment with Business English principles.
2. **Theoretical check** to ensure the response strategy matched SCCT and intercultural frameworks.

Additionally, all documents were assessed for:

- Consistency of brand voice
- Inclusion of crisis facts without speculation
- Cultural appropriateness for international audiences

- Suitability for distribution through internal channels, press, and direct investor communications

This process ensured that each piece of communication served both the emotional and operational goals of Coastal Escapes Ltd., while upholding the high standards of international crisis management.

4. Findings

This section presents three distinct communication tools tailored to the fatal jet ski accident scenario. Each document serves a specific audience with clear objectives, tone, and cultural awareness. All three exemplify applied Business English writing in high-stakes, professional tourism contexts.

4.1 Internal Memo to Staff

To: All Regional Staff – Thailand Operations

From: Head of Operations, Asia Division

Subject: Immediate Guidance and Support Following Guest Incident

Date: 15 July 2025

Dear Colleagues,

It is with a heavy heart that I inform you of a tragic incident that occurred on 14 July at our Phuket facility. One of our guests was involved in a serious accident during a jet ski excursion and, despite swift medical response, sadly passed away. We are devastated by this loss.

Our thoughts are with the guest's family and friends during this incredibly difficult time. We understand this news may be upsetting for many of you, especially those who were on duty or close to the event. We want to assure you that the company is here to support you.

To that end, Coastal Escapes has activated our employee support services, including optional on-site and remote counseling through the Employee Assistance Program (EAP). We urge you to reach out if you feel the need to speak to someone, confidentially and without judgment.

Effective immediately, all water sports activities involving motorized vehicles at our Phuket center are suspended. Safety reviews are underway, and we are fully cooperating with local authorities. Our internal safety protocols will also be re-evaluated across all sites.

In light of this situation, please remember the following:

- Do not comment on the incident to any external party.
- Refer all media or guest inquiries to our central Communications Office (press@coastalescapes.com).

- Treat the privacy of the involved guests and their families with the utmost respect.

We acknowledge the emotional impact this may have and thank you for your resilience and integrity. Your safety, and that of our guests, remains our highest priority.

Sincerely,
Nina Yamamoto
Head of Asia Operations
Coastal Escapes Ltd.

4.2 Public Press Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE COASTAL ESCAPES LTD. RESPONDS TO INCIDENT AT PHUKET ADVENTURE CENTRE

Phuket, Thailand – 15 July 2025

Coastal Escapes Ltd. confirms with great sorrow the passing of a guest following an accident during a guided jet ski experience at our Phuket location. The incident occurred on 14 July 2025 and was immediately attended to by our trained emergency staff and local medical responders. Despite all efforts, the individual sadly did not survive.

We extend our deepest condolences to the family and loved ones affected. We are in direct contact with them to provide every possible form of support.

In alignment with our commitment to safety and transparency, we have initiated a full internal review and are cooperating closely with local maritime and public safety authorities. Pending the results of these investigations, all jet ski and related water sports activities at the Phuket centre have been temporarily suspended.

“This is an extremely difficult moment for our team,” said Coastal Escapes CEO Isabella Flores. “We are taking this tragedy very seriously and are reviewing every aspect of our safety procedures. Our responsibility to guests and staff is absolute, and we will take all necessary steps to strengthen that trust.”

Coastal Escapes Ltd. maintains an impeccable safety record across all global locations, and we are committed to learning from this event. We will provide further updates through our official communication channels.

Media Contact:

press@coastalescapes.com
www.coastalescapes.com/news

4.3 Letter to Stakeholders

To: Shareholders, Tourism Regulatory Partners, International Affiliates
From: Isabella Flores, Chief Executive Officer
Subject: Safety Incident at Phuket Centre – Actions and Commitments
Date: 16 July 2025

Dear Valued Stakeholders,

I write to inform you of a serious incident that occurred at our Phuket adventure center on 14 July 2025. A guest lost their life during a jet ski tour, marking a deeply saddening event for our company, our staff, and the family involved.

This is a matter of the utmost gravity. The moment we were alerted, our local teams engaged emergency services and immediately followed crisis protocols. We are now working with Thai safety authorities to conduct a transparent and thorough investigation.

As an interim safety measure, we have suspended all jet ski and motorized water activity operations at the location until the inquiry concludes. Furthermore, our corporate Safety and Risk team has begun a company-wide safety audit to examine not only this incident, but our broader water sports operations globally.

We acknowledge the potential concerns this situation may raise. Please know that Coastal Escapes Ltd. is committed to full accountability. We have already begun the following actions:

- Contacted the guest's family and are assisting them with all necessary arrangements.
- Engaged an independent external auditor to evaluate safety protocols.
- Initiated employee wellness support, especially for on-site teams.

Although no formal determination has yet been made regarding the cause of the incident, we view this as a pivotal moment to reaffirm our dedication to operational excellence and guest safety. We recognize that our partners, investors, and regulatory bodies place their confidence in us—and we do not take that trust lightly.

Once our internal and external reviews are complete, we will share our findings and any procedural adjustments in a comprehensive incident report.

Thank you for your continued support, partnership, and understanding during this challenging time.

Respectfully,
Isabella Flores
Chief Executive Officer
Coastal Escapes Ltd.

5. Discussion

The communication artifacts developed in response to the fatal jet ski incident were crafted to fulfill multiple objectives: inform and support staff, control public narrative, and reassure investors. This discussion evaluates these documents through the lens of Business English, intercultural sensitivity, legal and reputational risk management, and broader lessons in organizational crisis communication.

5.1 Crisis Tone and Register in Written Business English

Effective use of Business English is central to how Coastal Escapes Ltd. handled this crisis. Each message demonstrates a purposeful shift in **tone, diction, and structure** based on audience type.

- The **internal memo** is informal yet professional. Phrases like “we urge you to reach out” and “confidentially and without judgment” project emotional intelligence. The vocabulary avoids business jargon in favor of personal, reassuring language—an approach consistent with internal communication best practices (Charles, 2007).
- The **press release** balances emotional acknowledgment with procedural updates. Sentences like “we are taking this tragedy very seriously” and “we will take all necessary steps” combine empathy with responsibility. Structurally, it follows a standard format: opening statement, expression of regret, status update, leadership comment, and forward-looking closure.
- The **stakeholder letter** reflects formal Business English. Terms like “external auditor,” “corporate Safety and Risk team,” and “incident report” convey professionalism. The language projects competence and confidence without over-explaining or evading seriousness.

According to Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), the best Business English in global contexts is “clear, respectful, and contextually neutral.” These documents achieve that by adapting structure, emotional load, and word choice across formats.

5.2 Cultural Considerations in Tourism Crisis Messaging

Tourism crises demand intercultural awareness because they often involve multinational stakeholders and guests. In this case, the incident occurred in Thailand, a country known for high power distance, collectivism, and emotional restraint (Hofstede, 2011). The memo appropriately avoids blame and reflects collective responsibility using words like “our team” and “we are devastated,” aligning with Thai cultural norms.

The **press release** avoids naming the guest, dramatizing the situation, or including emotionally graphic details—all respectful of high-context and face-saving cultures (Hall, 1976). This

prevents potential offense in Asian media environments, where respect and indirectness are valued (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

In contrast, the **stakeholder letter** leans toward low-context expectations, particularly for Western investors and regulators. It offers direct information: suspension of operations, initiation of audits, and timelines for reporting. This aligns with the preferences of cultures like Germany, the UK, and the U.S., where clarity and factual delivery are prioritized (Gudykunst, 2003).

Thus, the communication strategy succeeds in adjusting tone and content across cultural contexts—an essential skill for international tourism brands.

5.3 Legal Caution and Reputation Preservation

Crisis messaging must walk a fine line between **transparency and liability mitigation**. As Coombs (2015) notes, “apology without blame” is often a safe and ethical strategy in accidental crises. In the Coastal Escapes communications, regret is expressed clearly, but responsibility is never assumed without investigation.

For example:

- The press release uses “despite all efforts, the individual sadly did not survive” rather than assigning fault.
- The stakeholder letter outlines actions—external audits, internal reviews—without attributing cause prematurely.

This approach reflects SCCT’s rebuilding strategy for accidental crises (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). The goal is to accept the need for reform without exposing the company to undue legal exposure. Additionally, by showcasing an immediate operational response (e.g., suspension of activities), the company signals a proactive posture that reassures the public and investors (Fearn-Banks, 2016).

Reputationally, the presence of a CEO quote in the press release adds sincerity and leadership visibility—two elements crucial for maintaining trust. It demonstrates accountability, which research shows is preferred over silence in tourism crises (Henderson, 2007).

5.4 Lessons for Crisis Readiness

From this analysis, several critical insights emerge for Coastal Escapes Ltd. and similar global tourism brands:

1. **Tone matters more than content** in high-emotion moments. A technically accurate message that feels cold or evasive can cause more damage than an emotionally sincere one.
2. **Cultural agility is key.** One-size-fits-all messaging risks alienating audiences. The organization must be prepared to adapt language for various stakeholders.
3. **Speed must match accuracy.** While legal departments often slow communication, silence is interpreted as guilt. Having pre-approved templates (like these) enables timely, safe response.
4. **Internal and external messaging must be aligned.** Memos that contradict press statements lead to confusion and erode employee trust.

Ultimately, successful crisis communication is not reactive—it's a strategic, pre-planned system that protects people and the brand simultaneously.

6. Conclusion

The fatal jet ski incident at Coastal Escapes Ltd.'s Phuket center presented a high-stakes challenge requiring more than just a procedural response—it demanded a carefully constructed, emotionally intelligent, and culturally adaptive crisis communication strategy. This report has demonstrated how Business English, when used strategically, becomes an instrument not only of clarity but of healing, reassurance, and brand preservation.

Through the internal staff memo, public press release, and stakeholder reassurance letter, the organization addressed three critical audiences using tailored tones and professional formats. Each message reflected the broader crisis strategy outlined by the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), incorporating both corrective action and empathetic positioning. The communications maintained legal safety while signaling moral responsibility, an essential balance in today's global tourism market.

Culturally, the messages were adjusted to accommodate both high-context and low-context audiences, ensuring that empathy, respect, and information were delivered in forms that resonated with local expectations. This flexibility illustrates the need for tourism companies to embed intercultural awareness into their crisis planning protocols.

Finally, this assignment reinforced the view that Business English is not static or purely technical—it is dynamic, responsive, and integral to leadership in times of disruption. By developing structured, ethically sound, and linguistically sensitive messages, Coastal Escapes Ltd. can minimize reputational harm, support affected stakeholders, and set a standard for professional conduct in crisis response within the tourism and recreation industry.

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