



European Institute of Innovation,
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**Title: Crisis Communication Strategy for
Coastal Escapes Ltd. in the Aftermath of a
Fatal Water Sports Accident**

Student Name: Herr Sachin Kumar

Student ID: DE240044

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Abstract

This report presents a detailed and strategic crisis communication plan for Coastal Escapes Ltd., a global marine adventure tourism operator, following the unfortunate death of a tourist during a jet ski excursion. The plan incorporates key components of internal and external crisis messaging, supported by crisis communication frameworks such as the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), intercultural communication models, and Business English strategies. The objective is to minimize reputational damage, express empathy, maintain operational transparency, and communicate effectively with a global and culturally diverse audience. The report includes three distinct communication tools: an internal memo, a press release, and a stakeholder reassurance letter. These elements are analyzed in the context of linguistic precision, tone, cultural appropriateness, and organizational ethics. The report concludes by discussing long-term strategic implications for crisis readiness and the need for consistent communication policy implementation in the tourism industry.

1. Introduction

Tourism, by its very nature, is vulnerable to unpredictable events—natural disasters, safety issues, health outbreaks, and sometimes, unfortunately, fatalities. In such cases, organizations must act swiftly, sensitively, and strategically. A single poorly-handled crisis can irreversibly damage customer trust, destroy brand equity, and create operational bottlenecks across global markets (Ritchie, 2004). Coastal Escapes Ltd., a multinational marine tourism brand offering activities such as jet skiing, diving, and kayaking, is now at the center of such a crisis. A recent accident during one of its jet ski tours in Thailand led to the tragic death of a guest, triggering negative media coverage, legal inquiries, and concern among stakeholders.

The focus of this assignment is to build a robust, contextually aware, and linguistically polished crisis communication strategy for Coastal Escapes Ltd. Using the lens of Business English and communication theories like the SCCT (Coombs, 2007), this plan aims to provide clear written responses for internal staff, the general public, and key stakeholders. The objective is not only to mitigate immediate backlash but also to preserve the long-term trustworthiness and ethical standing of the brand.

In line with the academic requirements outlined in the Business English for Tourism and Recreation module, this assignment covers key areas including internal employee communication, press/public engagement, and stakeholder reassurance. Each communication is designed to reflect tone, register, and persuasion strategies expected in high-stakes business contexts. Moreover, the report underscores the importance of cultural awareness, especially in the global tourism market where diverse grief responses and communication norms must be acknowledged (Hofstede, 2011).

The report is divided into structured sections, beginning with a comprehensive literature review exploring academic insights into tourism crisis management, Business English, and intercultural theory. The methodology section explains the strategic planning approach taken, followed by three real-world communication samples tailored to the crisis. The discussion evaluates the effectiveness of the plan against theoretical frameworks, concluding with reflections on future readiness.

2. Literature Review

Effective crisis communication, especially in tourism, requires a careful blend of theoretical understanding and real-world sensitivity. This literature review highlights four critical components that shape the foundation of this assignment: the unique nature of crises in tourism, the function of Business English in professional communication, frameworks for managing intercultural crises, and the strategic use of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT).

2.1 Crisis Communication in the Tourism Industry

Crisis management in tourism involves rapid, transparent, and coordinated communication across departments, cultures, and stakeholder groups. As noted by Ritchie (2004), tourism organizations are especially vulnerable due to their exposure to unpredictable environments and reliance on human interactions. Crises in this sector range from health outbreaks to natural disasters, reputational threats, and even fatalities. The emotional toll, combined with intense public and media scrutiny, calls for professional communication plans grounded in empathy, accountability, and clarity.

According to Paraskevas and Altinay (2013), most tourism-related crises become amplified due to ineffective or delayed communication. When fatal accidents occur—such as drownings or vehicular mishaps during excursions—the need for quick, transparent messaging becomes vital. A company's ability to bounce back depends not only on operational risk management but also on its linguistic response, tone, and cultural awareness.

Tourism organizations also face challenges in preserving their brand image during crises. As noted by Beirman (2003), tourists associate safety with trust. Once broken, that trust is difficult to rebuild unless the organization presents a reliable and compassionate front through its messaging. The stakes are higher in fatal incidents, making the integration of crisis communication theory and Business English practices essential for companies like Coastal Escapes Ltd.

2.2 The Role of Business English in Crisis Messaging

Business English is more than just fluency in English—it encompasses tone, structure, cross-cultural clarity, and emotional intelligence (Nickerson, 2005). In crisis contexts, Business English acts as both a tool for damage control and a medium for demonstrating corporate values such as accountability, professionalism, and care.

It is especially critical when communicating with international stakeholders, employees, and media. Toner and Freeman (2004) emphasize that effective Business English must balance neutrality and empathy. Messages should avoid jargon, passive voice, and ambiguity while delivering key facts with precision.

Business English also adapts to formality and tone. A press release meant for global media would differ significantly in voice from an internal staff memo. Internal documents might adopt a more comforting, inclusive tone, whereas external ones need formality and a strategic focus on brand preservation (Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). Thus, the mastery of Business English is essential in shaping how Coastal Escapes Ltd. frames its response.

2.3 Intercultural Communication Frameworks

In a globalized tourism market, where companies cater to diverse clientele and multinational teams, intercultural communication plays a key role in how messages are interpreted (Gudykunst, 2003). When a fatality occurs, different cultures express grief, responsibility, and forgiveness in varied ways. For example, Western cultures might expect open acknowledgment and public condolences, while collectivist cultures, such as in Asia, may value restraint, privacy, and symbolic gestures (Hall, 1976; Hofstede, 2011).

In this context, Hofstede's cultural dimensions offer useful tools for crafting communication. Cultures high in uncertainty avoidance (e.g., Japan, Greece) expect clear answers, even amid uncertainty. Meanwhile, low-context cultures (e.g., the U.S. and Germany) prefer direct language, whereas high-context cultures (e.g., China or Thailand) rely more on implied meanings and respectful tones (Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

Additionally, companies operating globally must localize their message without compromising their values. Coastal Escapes Ltd., with its multinational footprint, must therefore deliver a message that resonates globally while remaining culturally appropriate to audiences in Thailand, Europe, and North America. This requires adjusting word choice, emotional tone, and even timing of communication releases (Chen & Starosta, 2005).

2.4 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), developed by Coombs (2007), provides a model for selecting appropriate response strategies based on the nature of the crisis and the perceived responsibility of the organization. SCCT identifies three primary crisis types: victim, accidental, and preventable.

In Coastal Escapes Ltd.'s case, the incident classifies as an **accidental crisis**, since the company did not intentionally harm the guest, but operational lapses (such as equipment failure or inadequate safety measures) may contribute to public perception of negligence. According to SCCT, companies facing accidental crises should adopt **rebuilding** and **corrective** strategies—acknowledging the incident, offering condolences, and clearly outlining steps taken to prevent future occurrences (Coombs & Holladay, 2012).

Moreover, Coombs (2019) argues that crisis communication must move beyond public relations and into ethical territory, especially when lives are involved. Messages must not only protect the brand but also exhibit genuine remorse and a commitment to change.

SCCT also emphasizes the importance of **matching tone and response to audience expectations**. A mismatch—such as a defensive tone in a high-responsibility crisis—can further erode trust. Thus, Coastal Escapes Ltd. must carefully frame its responses based on these SCCT recommendations while tailoring the language to diverse cultural and professional expectations.

2.5 Integration of Theories in Tourism Crisis Context

Combining Business English with SCCT and intercultural frameworks allows organizations to communicate in a way that is strategic, clear, and respectful. In cases involving death, tourism companies are not only managing reputations but also navigating grief, justice, and public safety. As argued by Fearn-Banks (2016), the most successful crisis plans incorporate multiple dimensions—legal, ethical, emotional, and linguistic.

When these frameworks are synthesized, as this report aims to demonstrate, they can support the creation of powerful and well-received communications that both protect the brand and honor those affected. For Coastal Escapes Ltd., this means taking ownership where appropriate, speaking with empathy, using culturally neutral yet sincere language, and committing to preventive action—all through structured, well-composed Business English.

3. Methodology

In constructing this crisis communication plan for Coastal Escapes Ltd., a qualitative and theoretical methodology was employed to align with academic standards and the real-world expectations of global tourism communication. The methodological approach integrates communication frameworks such as the SCCT and intercultural communication models with Business English strategies for tone, clarity, and cross-cultural resonance. The crisis documents—internal memo, public press release, and stakeholder reassurance letter—were designed and evaluated in terms of their communicative goals, structure, linguistic choices, and alignment with international best practices in crisis communication.

3.1 Qualitative Case-Based Approach

This study adopts a **qualitative case analysis** approach, commonly used in business communication research (Yin, 2018). By focusing on a hypothetical but realistic scenario involving Coastal Escapes Ltd., the methodology simulates how organizations in the tourism industry respond to real-life crises. The approach allows for deep textual analysis and critical reflection on communication content, structure, and reception across diverse stakeholders. The fictitious case of a guest fatality was selected due to its high emotional and reputational stakes, requiring sophisticated and sensitive language handling.

Additionally, this method allowed exploration of how different stakeholders (employees, media, partners) interpret messages differently and how tone, diction, and timing can be optimized for each audience.

3.2 Application of SCCT Framework

The design of the communication documents follows **Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)**, which helps determine the appropriate messaging strategy based on organizational responsibility (Coombs, 2007). SCCT's model was used to categorize the accident as an **accidental crisis**, implying moderate organizational responsibility. The selected strategies—rebuild, correct, and bolster—are employed to reassure audiences while protecting the company's image.

For example:

- **Rebuild strategies** are used in the stakeholder letter, which includes commitments to policy change and future safety investments.
- **Corrective strategies** are visible in the press release, explaining the suspension of jet ski activities pending investigation.
- **Bolstering strategies**, such as highlighting the company's existing safety culture, are subtly embedded in all three documents to restore public trust.

3.3 Intercultural Communication Adaptation

To reflect Coastal Escapes Ltd.'s global presence, the communication strategy uses **intercultural communication theory** to shape the tone and format of each document. Hofstede's dimensions (2011) and Hall's high- and low-context theory (1976) guided decisions regarding directness, emotional tone, and clarity. For instance, while the stakeholder letter is more formal and data-driven (to suit low-context business cultures), the staff memo adopts a more emotionally supportive tone (to align with collectivist work cultures like Thailand).

Practical intercultural guidelines used in the development of documents include:

- Avoidance of idioms and slang
- Emphasis on clarity and simplicity
- Use of universal phrases like “we are deeply saddened”
- Respectful references to loss and mourning

This intercultural lens ensures that Coastal Escapes' messages do not alienate or offend global audiences and instead promote solidarity and empathy.

3.4 Business English Standards and Professional Tone

A core part of this methodology is rooted in **Business English principles**, especially the need for clarity, conciseness, register, and grammatical precision (Nickerson, 2005; Louhiala-Salminen & Kankaanranta, 2011). In each document, these elements were applied as follows:

- **Internal memo:** empathetic and instructive, brief sentences, employee-centric tone
- **Press release:** neutral and factual, avoiding emotional language that could be misinterpreted or sensationalized by media
- **Stakeholder letter:** persuasive and formal, using industry language and future-oriented phrasing

All written content follows conventions such as:

- Active voice for clarity and responsibility
- Proper transitions and logical sequencing of information
- Structured paragraphs with topic sentences and evidence-based support

3.5 Development and Review Process

The document development process involved three stages:

1. **Drafting:** Based on theoretical research, each communication draft was written in alignment with the SCCT strategy and Business English tone. These included a 300–400 word internal memo, a 400–500 word press release, and a 500–700 word stakeholder letter.
2. **Theoretical Matching:** Each draft was evaluated against SCCT response strategies and intercultural principles. For instance, the internal memo was cross-checked for emotional appropriateness using grief communication norms, while the stakeholder letter was analyzed for persuasive techniques.
3. **Final Editing and Review:** All documents were edited for grammar, tone, structure, and professional formatting. The language was also reviewed for potential cultural misunderstandings or emotional insensitivity, using both academic and practical crisis communication guidelines.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Finally, ethical considerations in crisis communication were a major influence on this methodology. As emphasized by Fearn-Banks (2016), responsible crisis messaging must balance legal caution with moral obligations. Coastal Escapes Ltd.'s strategy includes acknowledging harm, offering support, and avoiding blame-shifting—all of which reflect ethical communication practice. Messages were also designed to avoid exploitation of the incident for public relations purposes, aligning with modern CSR expectations in tourism (Sigala, 2020).

4. Findings

This section presents the core outputs of Coastal Escapes Ltd.'s crisis communication strategy in response to a fatal jet ski accident. The three primary communication artifacts—an internal memo, a public press release, and a stakeholder reassurance letter—are crafted to reflect the tone, register, and ethical responsibility suitable for each audience. These outputs embody the organization's effort to address the crisis with transparency, professionalism, and cultural sensitivity.

4.1 Internal Memo to Staff

To: All Coastal Escapes Ltd. Employees
From: Regional Operations Director, Asia-Pacific Division
Subject: Incident Response and Support Resources
Date: 15 July 2025

Dear Team,

It is with deep sorrow that I write to inform you of a tragic incident that occurred yesterday at our Phuket, Thailand location. One of our guests lost their life during a scheduled jet ski excursion. The incident has profoundly impacted not only the guest's family and travel companions, but also our entire Coastal Escapes community.

First and foremost, we extend our sincerest condolences to the family of the guest. We are working closely with local authorities to investigate the cause of the accident and to ensure full transparency and cooperation. In line with our company values, we are committed to understanding what happened and ensuring it does not happen again.

We also recognize the emotional toll this event may take on our team members, particularly those working at the site or involved in the guest experience. Coastal Escapes is providing free and confidential counseling services through our Employee Assistance Program. We encourage any employee feeling affected by this incident to reach out to Human Resources or access services directly via our wellness portal.

Effective immediately, all jet ski and motorized water sport activities at the Phuket center have been temporarily suspended pending the outcome of the investigation. Please adhere strictly to this operational suspension and await further guidance from site management.

As a representative of the brand, you may be approached by media or guests. We kindly remind all team members to avoid commenting publicly or speculating on the incident. Instead, please direct all inquiries to our Regional Communications Office at comms.asia@coastalescapes.com.

This is a deeply challenging moment for our company, and we acknowledge the distress this may cause. We thank you for your professionalism, compassion, and commitment to safety. Together, we will move forward with respect, clarity, and unity.

With care,
Rajiv Patel
Regional Operations Director – Asia-Pacific
Coastal Escapes Ltd.

4.2 Public Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

COASTAL ESCAPES LTD. ADDRESSES TRAGIC ACCIDENT IN PHUKET, THAILAND

Phuket, Thailand – 15 July 2025

Coastal Escapes Ltd. expresses deep sorrow over a tragic incident that occurred on 14 July 2025 at our marine adventure center in Phuket. During a routine jet ski excursion, a guest was involved in a serious accident. Despite rapid intervention by our trained safety personnel and emergency response teams, the guest succumbed to injuries sustained during the incident.

We extend our heartfelt condolences to the family, friends, and loved ones of the deceased. Our thoughts are with them during this incredibly difficult time.

Coastal Escapes Ltd. has temporarily suspended all motorized water sport activities at the Phuket facility and has launched a full internal investigation in coordination with Thai maritime and public safety authorities. The company is also supporting the family of the guest in all necessary arrangements.

“This is a heartbreaking day for our entire organization,” said CEO Isabella Flores. “We are focused on doing everything in our power to understand what happened, support those affected, and ensure that our safety procedures meet the highest possible standards.”

Coastal Escapes Ltd. is committed to the safety of all our guests and team members. As a multinational company operating in diverse cultural and environmental settings, we continuously train our staff and review our operational protocols. Safety and accountability remain at the core of our business.

Further updates will be made available on our website and through our official media channels. For press inquiries, please contact:

Media Contact:

communications@coastalescapes.com
www.coastalescapes.com/news

4.3 Stakeholder Reassurance Letter

To: Global Partners, Investors, and Regulatory Affiliates

From: Office of the CEO

Subject: Stakeholder Update – Phuket Water Sports Incident

Date: 16 July 2025

Dear Partners and Stakeholders,

I hope this message finds you well, though I must share difficult news regarding a recent incident at our Phuket location. On 14 July 2025, a guest tragically lost their life during one of our guided jet ski excursions. This is the first such fatality in our 14-year history of global operations, and it has shaken our entire organization.

We have initiated a comprehensive internal investigation and are cooperating fully with Thai authorities. We have suspended all jet ski and related motorized activities at the site pending a full review of safety systems, staff protocols, and equipment maintenance. The early stages of investigation suggest this was an isolated event, but we are treating the matter with the utmost seriousness.

At this time, we are prioritizing support for the guest's family and offering our employees emotional health resources. We have also begun an external safety audit led by an independent maritime safety expert, and a special task force has been assembled to present policy recommendations within 30 days.

We recognize the potential implications this may have for your confidence in our operations. Please rest assured that we are committed to maintaining the transparency, operational integrity, and risk oversight you expect of us. The trust you have placed in our brand is not taken lightly, and this incident only strengthens our resolve to lead the industry in safe and responsible marine recreation.

Our commitment to delivering exceptional and secure guest experiences remains unchanged. We will provide all stakeholders with a detailed report once investigations conclude and corrective actions are finalized.

Thank you for your continued support, patience, and partnership during this difficult time.

Sincerely,
Isabella Flores
Chief Executive Officer
Coastal Escapes Ltd.

5. Discussion

The crisis communication materials developed for Coastal Escapes Ltd. in response to the fatal jet ski accident reflect not only the company's strategic priorities but also the application of key business communication principles and crisis management frameworks. This section critically evaluates the content, tone, structure, and cultural sensitivity of the internal memo, press release, and stakeholder letter through four main lenses: Business English proficiency, intercultural awareness, SCCT alignment, and long-term communication strategy.

5.1 Tone and Style of Business English

Each document was tailored using distinct tones suited to their respective audiences while maintaining consistency in brand voice and values.

- The **internal memo** employed a supportive and instructive tone. Language choices such as “we recognize the emotional toll” and “please reach out for support” demonstrate care and empathy, which are essential in internal communications following traumatic events. The memo also follows Business English standards for clarity and brevity, which helps reduce ambiguity during high-stress situations (Nickerson, 2005).
- The **press release** was composed using neutral, transparent language. It strategically avoided speculation, legal terminology, or overpromising outcomes. Sentences such as “we extend our heartfelt condolences” and “we have launched a full investigation” reflect a balance between emotional expression and professional restraint. This aligns with the expectations of international media and minimizes reputational risk (Fearn-Banks, 2016).
- The **stakeholder letter** was more formal, structured, and future-oriented. It included phrases like “comprehensive internal investigation,” “external safety audit,” and “policy recommendations,” which convey accountability and leadership. By presenting a data-backed and corrective approach, it communicates responsibility without inviting liability, a hallmark of effective crisis response in business settings (Coombs, 2019).

In all cases, Business English techniques such as active voice, parallel sentence structure, and transitional coherence were used to enhance readability, especially for global audiences.

5.2 Intercultural Sensitivity and Grief Norms

Tourism companies like Coastal Escapes Ltd. must communicate across diverse cultural settings. This makes cultural competence in crisis messaging essential. Hofstede's (2011) cultural dimensions help evaluate how well the documents accommodate audience expectations.

- In high-context cultures such as Thailand, where the accident occurred, subtlety and respect for hierarchy are vital. The **memo** avoids assigning blame and uses collectivist language such as “our entire Coastal Escapes community,” which aligns with cultural norms.
- The **press release** avoids dramatic or sensationalist language, which could be viewed as disrespectful in cultures that approach mourning with privacy and formality. Moreover,

the release was careful not to specify unnecessary details about the deceased guest, honoring global standards for privacy and ethical communication.

- The **stakeholder letter** was designed for a low-context business audience (e.g., European investors or North American regulators). It included factual updates, timelines, and structured commitments to reassure recipients used to transparency and action-based reporting.

By using culturally neutral wording, avoiding idioms, and tailoring the emotional depth according to context, Coastal Escapes' communication strategy demonstrates a strong understanding of intercultural grief communication (Gudykunst, 2003; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012).

5.3 Reputation and Media Management

Reputation management is central to any crisis response. Tourism organizations operate under intense media scrutiny, and their handling of fatal incidents often determines their long-term brand survival. The messaging in this communication plan demonstrates effective reputation preservation techniques.

The **press release** includes emotionally intelligent quotes from the CEO, which humanize the brand while communicating accountability. This approach reflects best practices in media engagement, where authenticity and leadership visibility are valued (Ritchie, 2004).

Additionally, by stating that all operations are suspended pending investigation, the company exhibits procedural caution. This not only builds credibility but also limits misinformation and media speculation—common risks when companies respond late or ambiguously to crises (Coombs & Holladay, 2012).

The **stakeholder letter** further contributes to reputation management by proactively addressing concerns, outlining concrete actions, and reinforcing the brand's historic safety record. These techniques support recovery and rebuild stakeholder trust.

Moreover, directing media inquiries to an official email account reduces the risk of unauthorized messaging or conflicting narratives, which could confuse audiences or damage brand integrity.

5.4 Long-Term Crisis Communication Strategy

Beyond immediate damage control, effective crisis communication also looks ahead. The Coastal Escapes communication strategy integrates long-term planning, policy development, and transparency, which are essential for sustainable brand recovery.

In the **stakeholder letter**, the mention of an “external safety audit” and the creation of a “special task force” signal a shift from reactive to proactive crisis handling. This aligns with Sigala’s (2020) view that modern tourism brands must integrate corporate social responsibility (CSR) into their crisis response frameworks.

From a Business English perspective, the tone shifts from empathetic in the short-term to strategic and reform-oriented in the long-term, especially in communications aimed at investors and regulators. This shift is important, as it shows growth, learning, and transformation in response to tragedy.

Furthermore, the company’s effort to keep communication channels open, as shown in the contact details and update commitments, reflects a willingness to remain accountable beyond the initial crisis phase. This builds a stronger foundation for customer loyalty and future crisis resilience (Fearn-Banks, 2016).

6. Conclusion

This report has presented a comprehensive crisis communication plan for Coastal Escapes Ltd., following the tragic fatality during a jet ski excursion in Phuket, Thailand. Through the application of Business English strategies, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), and intercultural communication models, the assignment has demonstrated how strategic and empathetic communication can help an organization manage public perception, mitigate reputational damage, and support both internal and external stakeholders during crisis situations.

The findings section provided three essential written artifacts: an internal memo for staff, a public-facing press release, and a stakeholder reassurance letter. Each was crafted with precision, aligned with theoretical frameworks and cultural expectations. The internal memo fostered a supportive and clear environment for employees during a traumatic period. The press release maintained transparency and emotional intelligence, suitable for global media audiences. The stakeholder letter offered a data-driven, professional tone, ensuring continued trust among business partners and regulators.

The discussion emphasized the importance of tone, clarity, and timing in high-stakes communication. It further illustrated how intercultural nuances, if ignored, can compromise even the most well-intentioned crisis response. Cultural grief norms and communication preferences—whether direct or indirect, public or private—must shape how messages are crafted and delivered. Coastal Escapes Ltd.’s strategy also showed how Business English is a critical skill in crisis leadership, combining linguistic clarity with emotional depth.

In the tourism industry, where experiences and reputations are highly sensitive, crisis communication must not be reactive alone. It must be proactive, culturally fluent, and ethically driven. Coastal Escapes Ltd.’s response plan integrates all these priorities, setting a standard for global hospitality firms navigating similar challenges.

Finally, this assignment underscores that crisis communication is not only about protecting a brand—it's about doing justice to the people affected, learning from the past, and committing to a safer, more transparent future.

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