

strategic Communication Plan for Coastal Escapes Ltd. Following a Jet Ski Fatality

Student Name: Jagdeep Kumar

Student ID: DE 240144

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Abstract

This report presents a communication strategy designed for Coastal Escapes Ltd., a global provider of marine tourism and leisure services. The strategy addresses the company's response to a tragic incident involving the death of a customer during a jet ski experience. The document demonstrates how to craft and deliver effective communication using Business English in a crisis setting, focusing on clarity, cultural nuance, and professional tone. Incorporating principles from Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and cross-cultural communication models, the plan outlines internal and external messaging to preserve stakeholder confidence, manage media relations, and support staff during this sensitive time.

1. Introduction

The tourism industry, particularly in adventure and water-based recreation, inherently involves risks. Coastal Escapes Ltd., a leading tourism operator specializing in ocean activities, recently faced a crisis following a fatal accident during one of its jet ski tours. This incident necessitates a structured communication plan that considers ethical responsibility, brand reputation, and cross-cultural expectations. This report outlines a communication approach tailored for diverse audiences, applying Business English standards and relevant communication theories to manage the fallout and support affected stakeholders.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Importance of Business English in Crisis Communication

Business English is more than grammar and vocabulary—it includes tone, formality, structure, and appropriateness, especially in high-pressure environments. Guffey and Loewy (2020) highlight that effective crisis messaging must be concise, empathetic, and strategically worded to avoid misunderstanding or escalation. For international businesses, language use must be globally understandable and culturally appropriate.

2.2 The Role of SCCT in Strategic Messaging

SCCT, developed by Coombs (2007), guides organizations on how to tailor their messages based on the nature of the crisis. For incidents considered accidental, companies are encouraged to express concern and demonstrate corrective actions. This theory is especially relevant in tourism, where reputation and safety are closely linked to consumer trust.

2.3 Cultural Sensitivity in Tourism Communication

Cultural norms significantly influence how information is perceived, particularly in crisis situations. As Hofstede (2011) and Hall (1976) explain, some cultures prefer indirect language and subtlety, while others expect direct communication and transparency. In tourism, where clientele and staff often represent various cultures, messaging must be carefully crafted to avoid offense and ensure clarity.

3. Methodology

This plan was developed using qualitative analysis and scenario-based modelling. A hypothetical fatality during a jet ski tour at Coastal Escapes Ltd. serves as the focal incident. Three core messages were created, each serving a different audience:

An internal staff message

A public-facing media statement

A letter to external stakeholders

These communications were then analysed using SCCT and cultural frameworks to ensure their appropriateness in a multinational environment.

4. Findings

4.1 Staff Communication: Internal Memo

Subject: Important Update – Safety Incident at Phuket Resort

Dear Team,

We are deeply saddened to report a tragic accident that occurred at our Phuket resort on 22 July 2025. A guest lost their life during a jet ski tour.

This is a profoundly difficult moment for all involved. As we investigate the situation, jet ski activities have been temporarily suspended. Counselling support is available for any staff who need assistance.

Please avoid discussing the incident publicly or on social media. All media questions should be forwarded to our Communications team.

Thank you for your professionalism and care.

Sincerely,

Operations Director, Coastal Escapes Ltd.

4.2 Public Media Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement Regarding Jet Ski Incident at Phuket Resort

Phuket, Thailand – 23 July 2025

Coastal Escapes Ltd. confirms that an incident occurred during a guided jet ski tour at our Phuket facility on 22 July 2025, which unfortunately resulted in a fatality.

Our thoughts are with the guest's family and friends. We are cooperating fully with local authorities to investigate the circumstances and have paused all jet ski operations during the review.

As a company committed to guest safety, we are taking this matter with the utmost seriousness and will be re-evaluating our procedures.

Media Contact:

Sarah Wong

Corporate Communications Lead

press@coastalescapes.com

4.3 Stakeholder Letter

Subject: Crisis Response Actions Following Phuket Incident

Dear Valued Partner,

We are writing to inform you of a recent tragedy at our Phuket resort, where a guest passed away during a scheduled water activity.

We have initiated an internal investigation and engaged third-party experts to review all related safety protocols. While the incident is under review, we have suspended jet ski tours across our properties.

Although this was an unforeseen event, we are committed to transparency, accountability, and continuous improvement. A formal incident report will be made available within the next two weeks.

Thank you for your trust and support as we address this sensitive situation with care and diligence.

Best regards,

Elena Vasquez

Chief Executive Officer, Coastal Escapes Ltd.

5. Discussion

Each communication example was developed using Business English tailored to its intended audience. The internal memo provides clear guidance while maintaining an empathetic

tone. The public statement ensures transparency without speculating on blame or liability, aligning with SCCT's recommended "diminish" strategy for accidental crises. The stakeholder letter reassures partners with operational facts, timelines, and a forward-looking tone.

SCCT categorizes this incident as "accidental," meaning responsibility is perceived as low but still requires acknowledgment and reassurance. Combining this with an understanding of high-context and low-context communication cultures, messages were crafted to be direct yet respectful, informative yet emotionally aware. This is particularly important in global tourism, where a misstep in language can escalate a crisis.

6. Conclusion

In the tourism and recreation industry, crisis communication must be swift, respectful, and strategically planned. This report has demonstrated how Coastal Escapes Ltd. can use structured Business English, supported by SCCT and cross-cultural communication models, to address a fatal accident professionally and sensitively. By carefully considering tone, audience, and cultural context, businesses can maintain their credibility while managing internal morale and public trust during critical events.

7. References

Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 10(3), 163–176. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.crr.1550049>

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8. Appendices

Appendix A: Pre-Incident Jet Ski Safety Protocol

Appendix B: Crisis Communication Response Checklist

Appendix C: Chart – Cultural Differences in Response to Tragedy