



European Institute of Innovation,
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**Title: Crisis Communication Strategy for
Coastal Escapes Ltd.**

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Abstract

This assignment presents a crisis communication framework developed for Coastal Escapes Ltd. following a fatal guest accident involving a jet ski excursion in Thailand. The report demonstrates how Business English, when combined with intercultural sensitivity and theoretical insight, can serve as an effective response tool during organizational crises. Through three carefully written communications—a staff bulletin, a public statement, and a stakeholder message—the report explores language strategies, emotional balance, and content structure tailored to specific audiences. Guided by Image Repair Theory and Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), the approach aims to rebuild trust, manage public reaction, and reinforce the company’s commitment to safety and ethics. The report critically evaluates how professional language choices influence perception, comfort stakeholders, and maintain corporate integrity within a highly vulnerable sector such as tourism.

1. Introduction

Tourism companies face frequent reputational risks due to the unpredictable nature of guest behavior, environmental conditions, and complex service delivery. One serious incident, particularly involving injury or fatality, can threaten the future of a brand. Coastal Escapes Ltd., a multinational adventure tourism provider, finds itself in such a situation after a guest died during a jet ski activity in Phuket. This unfortunate event not only calls for immediate operational review but demands a strategic communication response to various stakeholders.

The aim of this assignment is to construct a clear and appropriate crisis communication strategy for the company, using professional Business English tools, academic frameworks, and real-world case learning. The strategy is tailored for three different audiences: internal employees, the media/public, and strategic stakeholders such as investors and regulatory bodies.

As per academic requirements and the communication expectations laid out in the course module, this report will demonstrate writing skill, cultural understanding, and ethical awareness. Communication during crises must serve not only to inform but to calm, protect, and rebuild. Therefore, the three messages provided in this assignment are evaluated in terms of style, structure, cultural relevance, and alignment with communication theory.

The next sections cover literature relevant to tourism risk, communication theory, and cultural frameworks. Following that, the methodology explains the simulated approach used to design the documents. The findings section includes the full crisis communications, followed by analysis in the discussion and concluding thoughts on ethical and professional crisis response.

2. Literature Review

Tourism, by its very nature, is a risk-exposed industry. From weather disruptions to political unrest, the sector must consistently manage real-time vulnerabilities. When these vulnerabilities lead to tragedies such as guest fatalities, the onus falls on companies to respond quickly, ethically, and strategically. This section reviews academic perspectives on tourism crises, the importance of Business English in emergency communication, intercultural sensitivity, and applicable theoretical frameworks including Image Repair Theory and SCCT.

2.1 Understanding Crisis Impact in Tourism

Tourism involves trust. Visitors engage in activities they are not trained for, often in foreign environments, relying on providers for both safety and guidance. When a fatal incident occurs—such as the recent jet ski tragedy at Coastal Escapes Ltd.—the emotional and reputational fallout can be profound. As Beirman (2003) highlights, crises in tourism not only affect those directly involved but also ripple across brand perception, destination image, and economic sustainability.

Faulkner (2001) categorized tourism crises into natural, political, technological, and human-related events. In the case of Coastal Escapes Ltd., the incident fits the last category—where

company operations, training, or oversight may be indirectly questioned even without evidence of misconduct. This kind of event demands immediate reputational management alongside legal and ethical review.

Guest fatalities are particularly damaging in adventure tourism, where activities are marketed as thrilling but “safe.” When the safety narrative is broken, recovery becomes more difficult. A company's communication must fill that gap—rebuilding emotional trust and demonstrating technical accountability.

2.2 The Strategic Role of Business English

In international tourism companies, English serves as the global standard for business and media communication. But Business English is not simply conversational—it is targeted, intentional, and audience-sensitive. According to Louhiala-Salminen and Kankaanranta (2011), effective Business English must balance three key dimensions: professionalism, clarity, and cultural neutrality.

In crisis moments, language takes on even greater responsibility. The wrong phrase can escalate blame or appear insincere. Business English in a tourism crisis must:

- Use formal but approachable tone
- Avoid legal pitfalls (e.g., admitting fault unintentionally)
- Express empathy without excessive emotionalism
- Provide action plans that reassure both internal and external readers

Nickerson (2005) adds that Business English must shift register depending on audience. A press release uses neutral, fact-based reporting. An employee memo may adopt a more empathetic and relational tone. Stakeholder communication demands precision and credibility. This assignment reflects these distinctions across the three documents.

2.3 Intercultural Considerations in Tourism Crises

Tourism is a multicultural space. The people involved in a single incident may come from vastly different cultural backgrounds, which influences how they interpret both the crisis and the company's response.

Hofstede's cultural dimensions (2011) offer insight here:

- **Power Distance:** In Thailand, where the incident occurred, respect for authority and restraint in public expression are valued. Thus, an overly emotional or informal internal memo might seem disrespectful.

- **Individualism vs. Collectivism:** Western cultures (e.g., the U.S.) expect direct acknowledgment and personal accountability. Eastern cultures often prefer indirect communication and collective responsibility framing.
- **Uncertainty Avoidance:** In high uncertainty-avoidance cultures like Japan and Germany, stakeholders need structured, detailed information to feel reassured.

Hall's (1976) **context theory** also applies. In **high-context cultures** (e.g., Thailand, Indonesia), communication relies on subtlety and background cues. In **low-context cultures** (e.g., the UK, U.S.), messages must be explicit and complete.

This assignment's written communications take such intercultural filters into account—adjusting phrasing, structure, and tone to avoid cultural insensitivity and maximize message effectiveness.

2.4 Theoretical Models: Image Repair Theory and SCCT

Two communication theories provide the foundation for Coastal Escapes Ltd.'s messaging strategy: **Image Repair Theory (IRT)** and **Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)**.

Image Repair Theory, developed by Benoit (1995), focuses on how organizations can restore their reputation after a public failure or accusation. The theory outlines five main strategies:

1. **Denial**
2. **Evasion of responsibility**
3. **Reducing offensiveness**
4. **Corrective action**
5. **Mortification (apology)**

In the case of an accidental guest fatality, the most appropriate strategies would be **corrective action** and **reduction of offensiveness**—acknowledging the tragedy, outlining safety measures, and expressing sympathy without assigning guilt or invoking legal language unnecessarily.

SCCT, by Coombs (2007), adds nuance by classifying crises based on responsibility:

- **Victim (low responsibility)**
- **Accidental (moderate responsibility)**
- **Preventable (high responsibility)**

The Phuket jet ski fatality would be categorized as **accidental**, placing the company in a position where it must balance empathy with risk avoidance. SCCT recommends **rebuilding** and **bolstering strategies** here—like explaining what improvements are underway while showing concern and compassion.

Together, IRT and SCCT help shape the emotional and structural content of Coastal Escapes Ltd.'s three key crisis communications, ensuring that the company responds in a way that protects its stakeholders, honors the victim, and safeguards its brand.

3. Methodology

The methodology behind this crisis communication assignment for Coastal Escapes Ltd. draws on a simulated case study framework. Although the jet ski incident is fictional, it reflects realistic circumstances and stakeholder reactions in the tourism and recreation sector. The written responses were constructed to align with academic theory, intercultural sensitivity, and practical Business English standards. This section explains the scenario approach used, the design of each message type, and the ethical and cultural principles applied during development.

3.1 Scenario Planning Approach

To simulate a believable crisis, the writing process began with creating a backstory based on common accidents reported in tourism hotspots. The selected case—a guest fatality during a jet ski excursion—mirrors real-world events such as water sports accidents in Thailand, Indonesia, and Mexico, where safety procedures are often criticized post-incident (Beirman, 2003; CNN Travel, 2019).

By approaching the situation as a “**live case**,” the tone, urgency, and emotional balance in the messages were adjusted as if the company were under media and regulatory scrutiny. This form of **case-based simulation** (Yin, 2018) helped replicate authentic workplace communication demands under pressure.

Key decisions were made early in the planning phase:

- The fatality was handled as an **accidental crisis**, not preventable or intentional.
- The location (Phuket, Thailand) required intercultural awareness in internal and external communication.
- The emotional tone would need to vary across employee, public, and investor audiences.

3.2 Structure of Written Documents

Each message was shaped using a different Business English model and tone register:

1. **Internal Staff Bulletin:**

- Format: Memo-style, short paragraphs, direct tone
- Focus: Staff emotional support, safety updates, and procedural clarity

- Tone: Warm, respectful, minimally emotional to suit Thai business culture
- 2. **Public Media Statement (Press Release):**
 - Format: Inverted pyramid (start with core facts, follow with details)
 - Focus: What happened, condolences, actions taken
 - Tone: Neutral, professional, crisis-aware but not defensive
- 3. **Partner Reassurance Communication (Stakeholder Letter):**
 - Format: Business letter with formal greeting, body, and closing
 - Focus: Reputation management, operational changes, strategic transparency
 - Tone: Formal, future-oriented, precise and proactive

These formats were inspired by real-life samples from international tourism brands such as Royal Caribbean and Marriott International, as well as academic writing models (Charles, 2007; Fearn-Banks, 2016).

3.3 Ethical Filters and Cultural Framing

Throughout the writing process, ethical and intercultural lenses were used to shape message tone, language choices, and emotional pacing. This was critical, as tourism operates across multiple worldviews, each with different interpretations of tragedy and accountability.

The following ethical and cultural filters were applied:

- **Do no harm:** Avoid blame, name omission of the victim, respect for grief.
- **Transparency without overexposure:** Be honest, but do not speculate.
- **Emotionally intelligent language:** Show empathy without appearing unstable or unprofessional.
- **Intercultural awareness:**
 - Avoid direct accusations (respect for Thai hierarchical culture).
 - Balance indirect and direct expressions to suit both Asian and Western stakeholders.
 - Include collective language (“our team,” “we are reviewing”) to reinforce shared responsibility.

In addition, **Image Repair Theory** guided the tone selection for the stakeholder and public letters, while **SCCT** shaped the emotional balance in the internal bulletin—reassuring employees without overpromising or placing blame.

All drafts were edited using the **three-stage writing method**:

1. **Planning** – Define purpose, audience, tone
2. **Composing** – Construct paragraphs with audience-specific framing
3. **Reviewing** – Edit for grammar, tone alignment, and intercultural sensitivity

4. Findings

The following three documents have been prepared for Coastal Escapes Ltd. to address the accidental fatality during a jet ski activity in Phuket. Each message is targeted to a distinct audience and crafted to reflect both the emotional weight of the event and the communication best practices outlined in the methodology.

4.1 Internal Staff Bulletin

To: All Coastal Escapes Thailand Team

From: Head of Human Resources, Asia-Pacific

Date: 18 July 2025

Subject: Workplace Response to Jet Ski Incident – Employee Guidance & Support

Dear Colleagues,

We are all processing the deeply unfortunate event that occurred earlier this week at our Phuket resort. On the afternoon of 14 July, a guest passed away following an incident involving a guided jet ski activity. The event is being thoroughly investigated by local authorities and by our internal safety review panel.

Our heartfelt sympathy goes out to the guest's family and all those affected. I want to personally acknowledge the emotional impact this may have on each of you—especially those based in Phuket or working in water activity operations.

Please note the following steps now in place:

- **Jet ski and high-speed water excursions are suspended** until full safety reassessment is completed.
- Our **Employee Wellness Hotline (available in Thai and English)** is open 24/7 for counseling support.
- Managers have been briefed and are available to assist you during this time.

You are reminded not to discuss the incident with any external parties, including the media or guests. All questions should be referred to the Phuket Office or directly to the Crisis Response Unit at: response@coastalescapes.com.

Most importantly, please know that the leadership team is here for you. In challenging moments like this, we must lean into our values—professionalism, empathy, and safety above all.

We will provide regular updates and encourage you to reach out if you have concerns or need clarification.

With support,
Aanya Maheshwari
HR Director – Asia-Pacific
Coastal Escapes Ltd.

4.2 Public Media Statement

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE COASTAL ESCAPES LTD. RESPONDS TO FATAL INCIDENT IN PHUKET, THAILAND

Phuket, 18 July 2025 – Coastal Escapes Ltd. confirms that a tragic accident occurred at its Phuket resort location on 14 July 2025 during a guided jet ski experience. Despite timely assistance provided by on-site emergency responders, the guest involved did not survive the incident.

Our entire organization is devastated by this loss. We extend our sincerest condolences to the guest's family and loved ones and are fully cooperating with Thai marine safety authorities to determine the exact circumstances of the incident.

As an immediate precaution, we have suspended all water-based motor activities at our Phuket center pending an extensive internal and third-party safety review. Our crisis management team and local leadership are coordinating closely with authorities and support agencies.

"Guest safety is our highest commitment," said Isabella Flores, CEO of Coastal Escapes Ltd. "We are fully committed to transparency and to implementing any improvements required to prevent future incidents of this nature."

Coastal Escapes Ltd. operates with a zero-compromise policy on guest safety and compliance. We are working diligently to support our team, guests, and affected parties.

For verified updates, please refer to our media room or contact:

press@coastalescapes.com

www.coastalescapes.com/press

4.3 Stakeholder Reassurance Letter

To: Global Tourism Authorities, Investors, Safety Regulatory Bodies

From: Executive Board – Coastal Escapes Ltd.

Date: 19 July 2025

Subject: Strategic Response to Fatal Jet Ski Incident – Phuket Location

Dear Partners and Stakeholders,

We are writing to formally inform you of a critical incident involving a fatal guest accident that took place on 14 July 2025 during a jet ski excursion at our Phuket resort. The situation is deeply troubling, and we are treating it with the gravity it demands.

Emergency procedures were activated within minutes, and local authorities were immediately notified. Despite the fast response, the incident resulted in a fatality, and the guest's family has been contacted and offered full support.

While investigations are underway, we have already activated the following protocols:

- Immediate **suspension of jet ski operations** at the site
- Comprehensive **safety audit**, led by our Global Risk Taskforce and a third-party safety agency
- Reinforcement of **staff emergency training** across all Southeast Asia locations
- A **formal review** of vendor partnerships involved in marine sports at Coastal Escapes locations

Our communication efforts are transparent and guided by both ethics and legal considerations. All staff have been advised against speculative communication, and we have implemented a coordinated crisis communication strategy aligned with international standards.

We understand the reputational and operational concerns this raises. We assure you that:

- We remain committed to the highest international standards of health and safety
- We are cooperating in full with local and international authorities
- We will share the outcomes of our internal and external reviews transparently

Thank you for your continued trust in Coastal Escapes Ltd. We remain committed to responsible tourism and ethical guest care.

Sincerely,
Board of Directors
Coastal Escapes Ltd.

5. Discussion

The fatal jet ski accident at Coastal Escapes Ltd.'s Phuket resort called for a rapid and culturally aware communication response. This section examines the three documents presented in Part 4—each tailored for a different audience—and discusses how Business English, intercultural strategy, and communication theory shaped their tone, structure, and effectiveness.

5.1 Strategic Use of Business English in Crisis

Business English is more than linguistic correctness; it is a deliberate, strategic form of expression shaped by audience needs, message intent, and organizational tone (Nickerson, 2005). In all three messages, this assignment reflects that precision:

- The **staff bulletin** used simple, direct vocabulary, short paragraphs, and familiar structures like “please note the following” to clearly convey support and rules. The message showed empathy without panic, maintaining professionalism.
- The **press release** adopted a formal media tone—headline, date, location, followed by objective narrative and a CEO quote. Action verbs like “suspended,” “launched,” and “confirmed” added authority.
- The **stakeholder letter** used technical and managerial language (e.g., “compliance,” “audit,” “taskforce”), signaling to regulators and investors that the company is acting decisively and within international standards.

These differences reflect the idea of **contextual writing**—matching style to reader. Charles (2007) emphasizes that adapting structure and tone is central to credibility, especially when dealing with global audiences.

5.2 Adapting Tone Through Cultural Awareness

Tourism crises often involve international guests, local staff, and cross-border stakeholders. Therefore, cultural sensitivity in wording, emotion, and tone is crucial. This assignment employed several intercultural communication strategies based on Hofstede (2011) and Hall (1976):

- The **internal staff memo** respected Thailand’s **high power distance** and **collectivist** culture. It avoided assigning blame or dramatizing the event and emphasized team unity and support, using phrases like “our heartfelt sympathy” and “we will provide regular updates.” The tone was calm and community-focused.
- The **public statement**, for a global audience, struck a balance between **low-context** Western readers (who expect detail and accountability) and **high-context** Asian readers (who value tact and emotional restraint). It avoided legal jargon, gave just enough detail to satisfy curiosity, and used neutral verbs (“confirm,” “respond”) to avoid escalation.
- The **stakeholder letter**, targeting international authorities and investors, leaned toward **low uncertainty tolerance** expectations (e.g., Germany, Japan), where people demand structure and clarity. Bullet points, audits, and reassurances demonstrated managerial control and transparency.

Chen and Starosta (2005) argue that intercultural communication success comes from understanding value systems, not just language. These documents mirror that belief by expressing sensitivity through pacing, structure, and strategic emotional tone.

5.3 Applying Image Repair Theory and SCCT

This crisis was framed as an **accidental event** under **Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)** (Coombs, 2007), and therefore required **rebuilding** and **corrective action** strategies. The goal was not to deflect blame but to show sincere responsibility, initiate review, and comfort stakeholders.

The staff memo applied SCCT's internal stakeholder communication approach, focusing on reassurance and controlled information flow.

The press release demonstrated **Image Repair Theory** (Benoit, 1995) in action through:

- **Corrective action:** Suspension of motor activities and review of safety.
- **Reducing offensiveness:** Showing compassion, emphasizing immediate response.
- **Minimizing reputation damage:** By presenting the company as responsive and caring.

The stakeholder letter built trust through transparency and forward-looking planning—an SCCT and IRT combination that matched an accidental crisis type. The inclusion of procedural updates and future audits aligned with best practices for accidental or low-responsibility events.

These theoretical applications ensured that the crisis messages didn't just communicate facts—they rebuilt trust while avoiding legal or emotional overreach.

5.4 Practical Takeaways for Tourism Communication

Several key lessons emerge from this simulated writing experience that apply broadly to crisis communication in tourism:

1. **Structure creates calm.** All three messages used consistent formatting—headings, bullet points, short paragraphs. This increases readability and supports anxious readers.
2. **Emotions must be filtered.** Overly emotional language in crises can damage credibility. These messages expressed **professional empathy** (“sincere condolences,” “heartfelt sympathy”) without appearing panicked or unbalanced.
3. **Cultural flexibility is non-negotiable.** Writing for a global audience means adjusting not just language, but values—formality, responsibility, and emotional openness all differ across cultures.
4. **Theories work in real life.** Both SCCT and Image Repair Theory helped structure responses that were appropriate for the situation. Understanding these models helps communicators avoid the extremes of denial or over-apology.
5. **Preparation is protection.** Having templates, tone guides, and structure models can help tourism brands respond faster and smarter in emergencies.

In summary, these messages weren't only written to sound professional—they were designed to strategically rebuild trust and project Coastal Escapes Ltd. as a responsible, compassionate tourism leader in the face of adversity.

6. Conclusion

The fatal accident at Coastal Escapes Ltd.'s Phuket resort served as the foundation for developing a comprehensive crisis communication response rooted in clarity, compassion, and strategic professionalism. This assignment demonstrated how crisis communication, when informed by Business English principles and theoretical insight, can both protect a brand and honor human lives.

The three crisis documents—a staff memo, public media statement, and stakeholder letter—were each tailored to meet the emotional and informational needs of their audiences. The internal memo provided structure and support to employees directly affected by the incident. The press release maintained neutrality and transparency for the broader public, while the stakeholder communication offered detailed risk management assurances for investors and authorities.

Through the use of **Image Repair Theory (IRT)** and **Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)**, each message was adapted to fit the accidental nature of the event, using strategies like corrective action and reducing offensiveness to rebuild reputation while avoiding premature blame or defensiveness. Cultural frameworks such as Hofstede's dimensions and Hall's high- and low-context theory ensured that each communication respected audience expectations, particularly important in the international tourism industry.

Importantly, this assignment also highlighted the real-world value of Business English as a leadership tool—not simply as a language exercise. By combining tone, structure, and empathy, the assignment reflected how effective communication can support teams, calm the public, and maintain stakeholder trust during the most difficult circumstances.

In the modern tourism landscape, where trust and perception can shift overnight, mastering strategic communication is not optional—it is essential. This assignment affirms that with thoughtful preparation, cultural awareness, and ethical language use, even the most serious crises can be met with clarity, accountability, and hope for renewal.

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