Amanda van Rensburg

Communication specialist, Corporate Communication Division, Tshwane University of Technology, Pretoria West Campus (VanRensburgA@tut.ac.za)

Prof. DP Conradie

Research Professor, Faculty of Humanities, Tshwane University of Technology, Soshanguve North Campus (ConradieDP@tut.ac.za)

Dr HB Dondolo

Department of Integrated Communication, Tshwane University of Technology, Soshanguve North Campus (DondoloB@tut.ac.za)

THE USE OF THE SITUATIONAL CRISIS COMMUNICATION THEORY TO STUDY CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES AT A UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

ABSTRACT

Over the past few years, crises at South African universities have become a regular occurrence. A growing number of researchers have confirmed that Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) assists in understanding how management generally responds to a crisis situation. This study used SCCT to investigate how the crisis communication activities at one South African university of technology was perceived by the staff of that institution. The study examined, through a survey among a stratified random sample of staff members, the respondents' perceptions of the communication channels and crisis response strategies that management used when communicating with staff during crises related to student protests at the University. The findings suggest that the University mainly used the justification crisis response strategy to communicate to university stakeholders, while rarely using the other strategies found in SCCT. The communication channels most preferred by staff for crisis communication were SMSs and WhatsApp messages, while the University website was perceived to have been used most by management. The article finally makes some recommendations, but also points out some limitations of the study.

Keywords: crisis response strategies; reputation repair; Situational Crisis Communication Theory; communication channel; crisis communication

INTRODUCTION

An organisational crisis is a condition that can intensify and may threaten the image of an organisation, or even interfere with the everyday business activities (Stephens *et al*. 2005). Recent literature and media reports have acknowledged the prevalence of workplace crises. From a range of media sources, it can be presumed that the situation is increasing rapidly, affecting major corporates, universities, state organisations, as well as international brands and entities. Crises at South African universities are not a new phenomenon. For example, since 2015 the South African higher education sector saw countrywide student protests

over fees, known as the #FeesMustFall movement. This movement triggered unrest across South African universities, which led to temporary closures at some. For the first time, even those universities that are usually adept at resolving student crises were not equipped to handle the crisis.

Failure to manage crises has always been a driving force behind reputational damage (Fediuk *et al*. 2010: 635), and such damage is often caused by angry stakeholders who consider themselves victims (Stephens *et al*. 2005: 395). Therefore, crises provide a need for communication (Coombs 2007a: 166; Coombs 2015: 141). Mazzei and Ravazzani (2011: 247) state that ongoing communication with stakeholders about the crisis will improve their awareness and assure them that management is in control of the situation. However, a lack of communication during a crisis hinders restoring an organisation to its pre-crisis stage (Stephens *et al*. 2005: 395).

Motivated by the continued increase in student protests and how higher education institutions handle such crisis events, this article focuses on how the crisis communication activities at one South African university of technology (hereafter mostly referred to as "the university") were perceived by staff of that institution. The aim of the study was to understand what kinds of internal communication channels, and what kinds of crisis communication approaches, are perceived by employees at a South African university of technology to be effective and to be used most by management when communicating with employees during a crisis period at the University.

THEORETICAL APPROACHES TO UNDERSTANDING CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Several theoretical approaches have been put forward to explain how organisations could understand and manage communication associated with a crisis. One of these theories is Coombs' (2007b: 263) Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT). Coombs (2012: 11) categorises crisis management into three stages, namely the pre-crisis stage (involving signal detection, prevention, and crisis preparation), the crisis event (involving crisis recognition and crisis containment), and the post-crisis stage (involving evaluation, learning, and follow-up communication). One important approach to crisis communication is the Crisis and Disaster Management Theory (Ritchie 2004: 669), which encompasses all three stages of crisis management. As described by Mistilis and Sheldon (2005: 4), this approach developed a three-stage strategic planning and prevention strategy for addressing crises in organisations.

Another theoretical approach that can be used to investigate crisis communication in all three stages of an organisational crisis, is Chaos Theory. Chaos Theory can be described as an expansion of the systems perspective that analyses large, non-linear complex systems, and it can be used to explain communication about such complex systems (Sellnow *et al*. 2002: 269). Yet another prominent theory that focuses mainly on the actions of management in the post-crisis stage is the Image Restoration Theory of Benoit (1995). The Image Restoration Theory distinguishes five types of responses to crises, namely denial, evading responsibility, reducing the offensiveness of the event, corrective action, and mortification (Benoit 2015: 303).

The abovementioned theories are all relevant to managing crisis communication in organisations. However, in this study, where the focus was on crises that have been experienced at South African universities over extended periods, the need was for theoretical insights on what to do *during* such an extended crisis. One approach that does meet this requirement is Coombs' SCCT. SCCT provides a theoretical basis for understanding how management can respond, not only after a crisis, but also *during* an ongoing crisis event. SCCT was deemed suitable to serve as the theoretical basis of the current investigation, and this theory is therefore described in more detail in the next section.

The Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Drawn from the Attribution Theory, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is one the most influential theories used to understand crises and crisis response strategies (Coombs 2007b: 165). Consistent with the Attribution Theory, SCCT suggests that individuals will always search for causes of events. In the organisational context, it is believed that stakeholders often seek to apportion blame on the organisation in the wake of a crisis event. As posited by Coombs and Holladay (1996: 282), "the more publics attribute crisis responsibility to an organization, the stronger the likelihood is of publics developing and acting upon negative images of the organization". SCCT proposes that the reaction of stakeholders to a crisis might have behavioural consequences for an organisation, and that what an organisation does or says during a crisis might affect its reputation (Coombs 2007b: 163). In such cases, organisations may use a variety of response strategies based on the severity and duration of the crisis.

Over the years SCCT has suggested several ways in which crisis response strategies can be classified and understood. For example, Coombs (2007b: 168) proposes that crisis responses can be grouped into three clusters, namely the victim cluster, the accidental cluster and the preventable cluster. Coombs (*ibid*.) explains that the victim cluster consists of natural disasters, rumours, workplace violence and product tampering actions, and the organisation itself is also a victim of the crisis. An organisation that distances itself from the crisis and refuses to take responsibility for the crisis fits the definition of the victim cluster (An & Gower 2009: 107). The accidental cluster is characterised by technical-error accidents, technical-error product harm, and challenges (leading to inappropriate actions). Within the accidental subtype, the organisation has minimal attributions to the crisis event (Coombs 2007b: 168) and does not have crisis intentions in its actions (Claeys *et al*. 2010: 256).

The third crisis cluster characterises a crisis as an event that a company creates by deliberately placing people at risk, taking inappropriate actions, or violating laws/regulations (Coombs & Holladay 2002). This cluster is referred to as the preventable cluster and consists of human breakdown accidents and recalls, organisational misdeeds with or without injuries, organisational misdeed and management misconduct (Coombs 2007b: 168). In these instances, stakeholders may be correct to attribute the crisis to the organisation. Regardless of the type of crisis, a response strategy will be required. In that case, the response strategy will be determined by the complexity and

the type of the crisis event (Coombs 2012: 11). Typically, organisations are likely to use a combination of strategies when responding to a crisis.

Another relevant SCCT approach is that crisis response strategies can, according to Coombs (2015: 142), be divided into three categories (dealing with the reason why information is being provided), namely instructing information, adjusting information, and reputation repair. Instructing information strategies describe how stakeholders can protect themselves from a crisis. The instructing information strategy involves warning people about the crisis and how they can protect themselves from physical harm and from becoming victims. The adjusting information strategy has been offered as a useful strategy in helping stakeholders cope psychologically with a crisis. The adjusting information strategy appears as an expression of sympathy, providing information about the crisis event, offering counselling and taking corrective action (*ibid*.).

SCCT's reputation repair strategy attempts to reduce the negative effects that a crisis can have on an institution's reputation (*ibid*.). Within the reputation repair strategy, several types of crisis responses can be distinguished, e.g. denial, reducing offensiveness, bolstering and redress. The reputation repair strategies are built upon Benoit's Image Restoration Theory (1995), which posits that communication is a goal-directed activity and that maintaining a positive reputation is central to communication (Benoit 2015: 303). According to Coombs (2007: 171), "SCCT draws upon the crisis response strategies articulated in Image Restoration Theory by integrating those strategies into a system that predicts how stakeholders should react to the crisis and the crisis response strategies used to manage the crisis". Thus, SCCT "provides a set of tools for evaluating crisis situations in terms of how people will perceive crisis responsibility" (Benoit 2013: 270). Furthermore, SCCT provides an understanding on "how crisis response strategies could be used to protect or repair the reputation damage associated with a crisis" (Benoit 2013: 271).

An organisation may use as many as ten crisis response strategies to repair or protect its reputation (Coombs 2004: 265). Table 1 presents such an SCCT classification of ten crisis response strategies, which have been divided into four different groups of response strategies, namely deny, diminish, rebuild and bolster (Coombs 2007b: 171; 2012: 158). This SCCT classification was considered most relevant for the purposes of this investigation, and the study's survey questionnaire was based largely on the crisis response strategies that are outlined in Table 1.

TABLE 1:   SCCT CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES

SCCT CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES
1)   Deny crisis response strategies *Attack the accuser*: Crisis manager confronts the person or group claiming something is wrong with the organisation. *Denial*: Crisis manager asserts that there is no crisis. *Scapegoat*: Crisis manager blames some person or group outside of the organisation for the crisis.

SCCT CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES
2) Diminish crisis response strategies *Excuse*: Crisis manager minimizes organisational responsibility by denying intent to do harm and/or claiming inability to control the events that triggered the crisis. *Justification*: Crisis manager minimizes the perceived damage caused by the crisis.
3) Rebuild crisis response strategies *Compensation*: Crisis manager offers money or other gifts to victims. *Apology*: Crisis manager indicates the organisation takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks stakeholders for forgiveness.
4) Bolstering crisis response strategies *Reminder*: Tell stakeholders about the past good works of the organisation. *Ingratiation*: Crisis manager praises stakeholders and/or reminds them of past good works by the organisation. *Victimage*: Crisis managers remind stakeholders that the organisation is a victim of the crisis too.

(Source: Coombs 2007b: 171; 2012: 158)

Subsequent writings by Coombs have gone beyond providing crisis response strategies to include crisis communication guidance for organisations going through a crisis. Table 2 shows the crisis communication guidance, which describes the outcomes that can be expected when choosing a particular crisis response strategy, taking into account the type of crisis situation and the organisation's level of responsibility for the crisis.

TABLE 2: CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGY GUIDANCE

CRISIS SITUATION	CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES	OUTCOMES
No crisis responsibility	Denial	Preserve reputation and purchase intention Lessen antagonism and any possibility of negative word of mouth
Minimal crisis responsibility	Instructing and adjusting information	Preserve reputation and purchase intention Lessen antagonism, nervousness, possibility of negative word of mouth
Strong crisis responsibility	Instructing and adjusting information. Apology, compensation, or both.	Preserve reputation and purchase intention Lessen antagonism, nervousness, possibility of negative word of mouth

CRISIS SITUATION	CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES	OUTCOMES
Integrity-based crisis	Instructing and adjusting information. Apology, compensation, or both.	Preserve reputation and purchase intention Lessen antagonism, nervousness, possibility of negative word of mouth
Competence-based crisis	Instructing and adjusting information, apology	Preserve reputation and purchase intention Lessen antagonism, nervousness, possibility of negative word of mouth
Long-term threat	Instructing and adjusting information. Apology, compensation, or both.	Preserve reputation and purchase intention Lessen antagonism, nervousness, possibility of negative word of mouth
Timing	Instructing and adjusting information	Preserve reputation and purchase intention Lessen antagonism, nervousness, possibility of negative word of mouth

(Source: Coombs 2015: 141)

Coombs (2015: 141) believes that this guidance may help crisis managers to make informed decisions about the strategic use of communication during time of crises. Coombs (2015: 145) does not view these crisis communication guidelines as representing best practice, but rather as "insights regarding which crisis response strategies can be beneficial in a particular crisis and which strategies can actually make the crisis situation worse".

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Based on the above, the study's overall research question was formulated as follows in terms of SCCT as a theoretical approach: Which internal communication channels and approaches – as defined by the different types of crisis response strategies that are contained in the Situational Crisis Communication Theory of Coombs (2007b: 171; 2012: 158) – are perceived by university employees to be the most used and the most effective when management is communicating with employees during a crisis at a university of technology?

To address this overall research question, the following three research sub-questions were posed and addressed in this study:

i) Which *crisis response strategies*, as defined by SCCT, are perceived by university employees to be *used most* when management is communicating with employees during a crisis?

ii) Which *communication channels* are perceived by university employees to be *used most* when management is communicating with employees during a crisis?

iii) Which *communication channels* are perceived by university employees to be *most effective* for management to use when communicating with employees during a crisis?

METHODOLOGY

The study's general research design is summarised in Table 3.

TABLE 3:   GENERAL DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Research approach	Sampling	Data collection		Data analysis approach
		Method	**Time frame**	
Descriptive	Systematic random sampling of academic and support personnel at three campus types (city-based, community-based, distance campuses)	Survey	Cross-sectional	Quantitative; Descriptive statistics

This investigation followed a descriptive approach, as opposed to an exploratory or explanatory/causal approach (Bellamy 2012: 308). The study can further be described as a cross-sectional investigation consisting of a survey using self-administered questionnaires that were administered to a sample of university employees. For the purposes of this article, the target population for this study, namely those people to which a researcher would want to generalise the research findings (Orodho 2005: 33), consisted of all academic and support staff at the university's nine campuses. Of these nine campuses, three were city-based, three were community-based, while the other three were distance campuses. While it would ideally have been preferable for the researchers to have accessed the study's entire target population, in practice, this was not possible. The size of the University made accessibility a challenging aspect to conduct research, and this resulted in respondents being sampled from only one city-based campus, one community-based campus and one distance campus.

The sample of respondents that participated in the survey was obtained by means of a systematic random sampling procedure that was applied to the University's official list of academic and support staff members on the various campuses. The realised sample consisted of a total of 75 staff members from the three campuses. Of these, 71 responded with usable questionnaires. The questionnaire contained both open-ended and fixed-response questions that formed part of a larger investigation dealing with corporate crisis communication messages and channels, expectations of corporate communication, the role of management within corporate crisis communication, and

suggestions to improve corporate crisis communication. For this article, attention was focused on those quantitative responses (made on a 5-point scale) that dealt with the respondents' perceptions of the University's corporate crisis communication responses, as formulated in terms of SCCT, and on those questions dealing with communication channels used in crisis communication. This yielded quantitative data that were analysed by means of descriptive statistical procedures in the SPSS statistical package.

RESULTS

The findings in this section presents the research findings that address the study's three research sub-questions. In other words, the section first describes which SCCT crisis response strategies were perceived to be used most by the participating internal stakeholders. Secondly, the section outlines which communication channels were perceived to be used most in the crisis communication, and thirdly, it is pointed out which communication channels the employees preferred most for purposes of crisis communication.

Crisis response strategies that were perceived to be used

The study's first research sub-question dealt with which crisis response strategies, as defined by SCCT, were used most when management communicates with employees during a crisis. Table 4 shows the crisis response strategies perceived by the respondents to have been used at the University. For ease of reporting, the five response options were grouped into three categories: the "totally disagree" and "disagree" responses were grouped together and labelled "Totally disagree + Disagree". Similarly, the "totally agree" and "agree" responses were grouped together and labelled "Totally agree + Agree". The third category was the "Not sure" response category. Also for the ease of reporting, any cell in the table representing the choice of a majority of the respondents (i.e. more than 50%) was shaded with a grey background.

TABLE 4:   CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES USED AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY

Crisis response strategies	Was the crisis response strategy used by the University?		
	Totally disagree + Disagree (%)	Not sure (%)	Totally agree + Agree (%)
Deny strategies	75	15	10
Attack	54	7	39
Denial (downplay)			
Scapegoat (blame)	49	20	31

Crisis response strategies	Was the crisis response strategy used by the University?		
	Totally disagree + Disagree (%)	Not sure (%)	Totally agree + Agree (%)
Diminish strategies	46	17	37
Excuse (no harm intended) Justification	23	8	69
Diminish strategies	54	27	19
Compensation Apology (accept responsibility)	55	17	28
Bolstering strategies	56	24	20
Reminder	52	17	31
Ingratiation Victimage	41	28	31

From Table 4, it is apparent that there was only one response strategy that was perceived by a majority of the respondents (as indicated by 69% of the participants) to have been used by the University, and that was the justification response strategy. On the other hand, the majority of the respondents disagreed that any of the two response strategies in the diminish cluster of strategies, namely compensation (54%) and apology (55%), had been used. Similarly, the majority of the respondents disagreed that the University had used the attack (75%) or denial (54%) response strategies (in the deny cluster of strategies), or the reminder (56%) or ingratiation (52%) response strategies (in the bolstering cluster of strategies).

Perceived use and effectiveness of crisis communication channels

The respondents' perceptions regarding the use and effectiveness of communication channels for crisis communication are presented in Table 5. In response to the study's second research sub-question, the table firstly shows which communication channels were perceived by the respondents to have been used for crisis communication by the University. The percentages in the "Yes" column of the table show that the two channels used most frequently by management during a crisis period were the University's website (reported by 82.3% of the respondents) and emails (reported by 75.7%), followed by WhatsApp and SMS messages, then eTutor (an electronic university newsletter) and lastly, Facebook notifications (The WhatsApp facility is currently a non-corporate channel as no official WhatsApp platform with a dedicated cell phone number has been developed). It is interesting to note that on four of the six platforms, the majority of the participants stated that they did not receive any crisis communication from management.

TABLE 5:   PERCEIVED USE AND EFFECTIVENESS OF CRISIS
        COMMUNICATION CHANNELS

Channel	Was it used?		The channel is effective for crisis communication		
	Yes (%)	No (%)	Totally disagree + Disagree (%)	Not sure (%)	Totally agree + Agree (%)
Emails	75.7	24.3	30.6	8.0	61.4
SMS	44.3	55.7	12.0	0	88.0
Website	82.3	17.6	26.7	9.3	64.0
eTutor	32.8	65.6	46.7	21.3	32.0
WhatsApp	44.1	55.9	6.7	4.0	88.0
Facebook	21.3	78.7	28.0	12.0	60.0

In response to the study's third research sub-question, Table 5 shows how effective the respondents believed each of the channels, which are used by the University, could be for crisis communication. As was done in Table 4, for ease of reporting the five-response options were grouped into three categories. From the percentages in the last column of Table 5 it can be seen that a significant majority (88.0%) of respondents agreed that SMS messages could be used effectively as a corporate communication channel during a crisis period. Similarly, a total of 88% of respondents agreed that the WhatsApp channel could be used effectively. The channel perceived to be the third most effective corporate crisis communication channel, as indicated by 64% of the respondents, was the University's website.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

From the findings above it can be concluded that all three of the study's research sub-questions were answered. The first research sub-question was answered by the finding that the respondents believed that the University management, in its internal crisis communication during a crisis, tended mainly to make use of the justification response strategy from the diminish cluster of SCCT crisis strategies. Concerning the second and third research sub-questions, it was found that the respondents were of the opinion that the University mainly made use of its website and emails as channels for its internal crisis communication actions, but they believed that SMSs and WhatsApp could be more effective corporate crisis communication channels. It is therefore recommended that the University should consider these communication channel preferences when dealing with future crises.

The finding that the University tended to use mainly the justification response strategy can be better judged in the light of other investigations with similar findings. An example is the study conducted by Vielhaber and Waltman (2008: 308) on "changing uses of technology crisis communication responses in a faculty strike", where the

justification strategy was also found to be one of the main strategies used to respond to a crisis. Literature also indicates that an organisation tends to use the justification strategy when it acknowledges the existence of a crisis, and when the organisation hopes that this response will result in stakeholders attributing minimal responsibility to the organisation for the crisis (Coombs 2006: 241; Benoit 2013: 213). The purpose of the justification strategy is to minimise perceived damage (Cooley & Cooley 2011; Jin *et al*. 2014) by stating that the "crisis is not that bad" (Fediuk *et al*. 2010: 166). It is therefore reasonable to conclude that in the current study, the University was mainly concerned about being seen to be in some way responsible for the crisis, and therefore used the justification response strategy to prevent a perception of being responsible.

Studies have further shown that organisations tend to use the justification strategy when the crises have resulted in some level of attribution of crisis responsibility, and there are intensifying factors in existence (Fediuk *et al*. 2010: 635). According to these authors, two factors are responsible for intensifying a crisis, namely crisis history and prior reputation. The authors argue that past crises and how organisations dealt with such crises intensify the threat from a crisis. Regarding prior reputation, stakeholders will evaluate how well the organisation has treated them in the past.

Fediuk *et al*. (*ibid*.) observe that when stakeholders attribute greater crisis responsibility to the organisation, this intensifies the threat from a crisis. These authors recommend that when organisations are faced with crises with low attribution of crisis responsibility with no intensifying factors, the use of justifying strategies is appropriate.

In the current study, there was an intensifying factor present in the form of a history of prior student crises and thus, according to the reasoning of Fediuk *et al*. (*ibid*.), the use of the justifying response strategy was appropriate. However, it was not clear what the institution's prior reputation was among the internal stakeholders, and there was no evidence that they considered the University to be in any way responsible for the crisis. This means that using only one response strategy could be considered to be excessive, and it is therefore recommended that in future crises, other SCCT response strategies should also be used.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Although it is hoped that the findings of the present study will contribute meaningfully in some way to the literature of crisis communication, there are a number of limitations to consider. Firstly, readers should interpret the findings with caution because the findings are biased towards one particular university of technology in the Gauteng province of South Africa. Respondents at other universities may perceive different patterns of response strategies being used at their institutions during a crisis. Therefore, the findings cannot necessarily be generalised across the entire South African higher education sector. Secondly, the size of the study's sample of participants was relatively small and future work could aim at larger samples. Lastly, future work could consider using more complex statistical approaches (e.g. structural equation modelling techniques) so as to investigate more complex processes and interactions between variables that are involved in crisis communication in the higher education sector.

REFERENCES

An, S.K. & Gower, K.K. 2009. How do the news media frame crises? A content analysis of crisis news coverage. *Public Relations Review* 35(2): 107-112. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2009.01.010

Bellamy, P.C. 2012. *Principles of methodology: Research design in social science*. London: Sage.

Benoit, W.L. 1995. *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration*. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Benoit, W.L. 2013. Image Repair Theory and corporate reputation. In: Carol, C.E. (ed.). *The handbook of communication and corporate reputation*. Chichester, UK: Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118335529.ch19

Benoit, W. 2015. Image Repair Theory in the context of strategic communication. In: Holtzhausen, D. & Zerfass, A. (eds). *The Routledge handbook of strategic communication*. London: Routledge.

Claeys, A.S., Cauberghe, V. & Vyncke, P. 2010. Restoring reputations in times of crisis: An experimental study of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory and the moderating effects of locus of control. *Public Relations Review 36*(3): 256-262. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.05.004

Cooley, S.C. & Cooley, A.B. 2011. An examination of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory through the General Motors bankruptcy. *Journal of Media and Communication Studies* 3(6): 203-211.

Coombs, W.T. 2004. Impact of past crises on current crisis communication: Insights from situational crisis communication theory. *The Journal of Business Communication* 41(3): 265-289. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021943604265607

Coombs, W.T. 2006. The protective powers of crisis response strategies: Managing reputational assets during a crisis. *Journal of Promotion Management* 12(3): 241-260. https://doi.org/10.1300/J057v12n03_13

Coombs, W.T. 2007a. *Ongoing crisis communication-planning, managing and responding*. (Second edition). London: SAGE.

Coombs, W.T. 2007b. 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

Coombs, W.T. 2012. *Ongoing crisis communication – planning, managing and responding*. (Third edition). London: SAGE.

Coombs, W.T. 2015. The value of communication during a crisis: Insights from strategic communication research. *Business Horizons* 58(2): 141-148. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2014.10.003

Coombs, W.T. & Holladay, S.J. 1996. Communication and attributions in a crisis: An experimental study in crisis communication. *Journal of Public Relations Research* 8(4): 279-295. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjprr0804_04

Coombs, W.T. & Holladay, S.J. 2002. Helping crisis managers protect reputational assets: Initial tests of the situational crisis communication theory. *Management Communication Quarterly* 16(2):165-186. https://doi.org/10.1177/089331802237233

Fediuk, T.A., Coombs, W.T. & Botero, I.C. 2010. Exploring crisis from a receiver perspective: Understanding stakeholder reactions during crisis events. In: Schwarz, A., Seeger, M.W. & Auer, C. (eds). *The handbook of crisis communication*. London: Wiley-Blackwell. https://doi.org/10.1002/9781444314885.ch31

Jin, Y., Liu, B.F. & Austin, L.L. 2014. Examining the role of social media in effective crisis management: The effects of crisis origin, information form, and source on publics' crisis responses. *Communication Research* 41(1): 74-94. https://doi.org/10.1177/0093650211423918

Mazzei, A. & Ravazzani, S. 2011. Manager-employee communication during a crisis: The missing link. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal* 16(3): 243-254. https://doi.org/10.1108/13563281111156899

Mistilis, N. & Sheldon, P.J. 2005. *Managing risk and crisis for sustainable tourism: Research and innovation*. Paper presented to the Best Education Network Think Tank V - Managing Risk and Crisis for Sustainable Tourism: Research and Innovation. June 16-19. University of West Indies Kingston, Jamaica.

Orodho, J.A. 2005. Research methods for Bachelor in Special Education. Module for the Institute of Open Learning. Kenyatta University.

Ritchie, B.W. 2004. Chaos, crises and disasters: A strategic approach to crisis management in the tourism industry. *Tourism Management* 25: 669-683. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tourman.2003.09.004

Sellnow, T.L., Seeger, M.W. & Ulmer, R.R. 2002. Chaos theory, informational needs, and natural disasters. *Journal of Applied Communication Research* 30(4): 269-292. https://doi.org/10.1080/00909880216599

Stephens, K.K., Malone, P.C. & Bailey, C.M. 2005. Communicating with stakeholders during a crisis: Evaluating message strategies. *Journal of Business Communication* 42(4): 390-419. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021943605279057

Vielhaber, M.E. & Waltman, J.L. 2008. Changing uses of Technology Crisis Communication Responses in a Faculty Strike. *Journal of Business Communication* 45(3): 308-330. https://doi.org/10.1177/0021943608317112