

Combination of Diminish and Rebuild Approaches in Crisis Management in the Marine Transportation Sector

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ABSTRACT

The maritime transportation sector is highly susceptible to situational crises, such as vessel accidents, which can rapidly damage organizational reputation and erode public trust; effective crisis communication is therefore essential to reputation restoration. This research aims to explore the effectiveness of a combined "diminish" and "rebuild" approach in crisis management in the maritime transportation sector, which often faces reputational challenges due to safety and service incidents. The diminish approach focuses on minimizing negative impacts through strategic communication, while the rebuild focuses on restoring public trust through continuous improvement. This research uses a case study method with a qualitative approach, involving primary data analysis in the form of in-depth interviews with industry players and secondary data from maritime transportation crisis reports in the last five years. The research results show that the combination of the two approaches produces a significant impact in reducing crisis escalation and restoring the company's image more effectively than implementing a single approach. This conclusion provides important implications for the development of crisis management strategies in the maritime transportation sector, especially in the Indonesian context, where issues of safety and public trust are the main focus. This research also recommends the integration of modern communication technology to increase responsiveness in crisis management.

Keywords: crisis management; diminishing; rebuild; sea transportation; strategic communication



INTRODUCTION

In the era of globalization and digitalization, organizations face increasingly complex challenges, including the threat of crises that can affect their operational stability and reputation. Generally, there are two factors that cause a crisis: internal and external. Internal factors include negligence or mistakes from irresponsible actions of parties within the company. External factors include economic conditions or natural disasters (Lengkong et al., 2017). Understanding these two types of factors is important so that organizations can develop effective mitigation strategies to deal with potential crises.

Crises are an inevitable part of modern organizational dynamics, including in the maritime transport sector. Situational crises, such as operational incidents or natural disasters, often threaten the operational stability and reputation of businesses in the sector. For example, crises faced by various marine transportation companies demonstrate the importance of effective communication strategies to maintain public trust and rebuild reputation. In this context, crisis communication strategies based on a diminish and rebuild approach are becoming increasingly relevant, especially in situations that require rapid mitigation and long-term recovery.

Crises can be handled by public relations of organizations or companies. The function of public relations cannot be separated from public opinion, because one of the functions of

public relations is to create public opinion that has *good will* and participation (Herlina, 2015). Public relations must build and handle information both internally and externally. So that PR plays an important role in all activities carried out by the company to achieve goals and take part in handling crises that have an impact on the company's reputation. One concrete example is the situational crisis faced by the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office in Wajo Regency. In this situation, the role of Public Relations (PR) is crucial to manage effective communication to mitigate the negative impact on the organization. However, limited resources and the dual functions carried out by PR staff are the main challenges in this endeavor.

Effective communication can be used as a way to restore the crisis that occurred (Alwaton,Y, 2023). Efficient communication must be well planned for the purpose of protecting the company's reputation as a result of the crisis that occurred (Ulmer et al., 2023). Public relations that can carry out a good communication strategy will have a good impact on the company's reputation. But on the other hand, if the communication strategy planned by Public Relations is not planned, it will exacerbate the crisis itself. In addition, the communication strategy carried out must generate public trust in the company to obtain and maintain an image. Because it will affect the company's reputation.

Reputation is a valuable asset of a company (Oktavianus et al., 2022). Planned communication is carried out to protect and save the company's reputation from the threat of crisis. Reputation is not only an indicator of public trust, but also a key element in ensuring business sustainability amid increasingly fierce competition. Therefore, planned and strategic communication is needed to protect and save the company's reputation from the threat of crisis. These communication measures include crafting the right message, transparency in the face of challenges, and quick response to issues that have the potential to damage the company's image. With this approach, companies can mitigate risks and strengthen the trust of stakeholders. Therefore, planned and strategic communication is a vital instrument in efforts to protect and save the company's reputation from various threats, including potential crises. With the right communication approach, companies are able to reduce negative issues, strengthen public trust, and maintain stability amid increasingly complex market dynamics.

The situational crisis in this study was the sinking of KM Marina Baru B2 on December 19, 2015. This fiber ship was hit by high waves, which caused the cracking of the crankcase and the ingress of water until it sank in Bone Bay. As a result of the accident, 103 out of 118 passengers were declared dead. This tragedy not only affected the victims and their families, but also put serious pressure on the reputation of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit office, Wajo District. The public's negative response and reaction to the incident reflected a situational crisis problem that had to be handled strategically by PR. The role of PR becomes very important in managing crisis communication to mitigate reputational impacts and restore public trust.

Various previous crisis cases provide valuable lessons about the importance of responsive communication strategies. For example, in the case of the Pertamina Plumpang depot explosion, a rebuild strategy that utilized an empathy approach succeeded in rebuilding public trust (Zuhdi & Ayuningtyas, 2024). Meanwhile, the earthquake disaster in North Lombok showed that a lack of crisis communication planning can exacerbate the impact on public trust (Ulfa et al., 2019). The context of the Siwa Port Office, which is a small organization with limited resources, requires a different and more specific approach to overcome similar obstacles.

Previous research has provided important insights into communication strategies in dealing with crises. The study on Public Relations of the Indonesian Child Protection

Commission (KPAI) highlighted the importance of internal meetings, press conferences, and press releases as part of a crisis management strategy based on Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) (Cea et al., 2020). Research on the effect of corporate responsibility on reputation shows that organizational responsibility for crisis has a significant impact on restoring image (Wulandari, 2013). While previous research has discussed various approaches to crisis management, there is still a gap in understanding the simultaneous application of diminish and rebuild strategies in the marine transportation sector. Most studies have focused on large organizations or specific crisis situations, such as natural disasters or major corporate incidents, while the context of the marine transport sector facing unique reputational challenges has not been widely explored.

In addition, no studies have comprehensively evaluated how the diminish approach can integrate with rebuild within the SCCT framework to produce more effective communication strategies in this sector. Using the SCCT theoretical framework, this research not only analyzes how the two approaches can be optimally applied, but also how their integration can support the overall restoration of the organization's reputation. It also provides insights into the adaptation of crisis communication strategies to suit the unique characteristics of the marine transportation sector

Geographically, the Siwa Sea Port area is flanked by several districts, namely east with Bone Bay, south with Soppeng Regency and Bone Regency, west with Sidenreng Rappang Regency, and north with Luwu Regency. The port connects South and Southeast Sulawesi by sea with an average current speed of 0.2 miles/hour, 0.50m waves. The port, named Bangsala'e, is located in the waters of Bone Bay at coordinates: 30 - 41' - 50.6'LS/1200 - 25' - 25.8 BT. the implementation of the construction has been started since 2007 and has been operationalized in December 2013 (Rusman, 2018).

Although these prior studies offer valuable insights, they remain limited in number and are not yet systematically synthesised, as most examine large organisations or single-hazard events rather than the maritime transportation sector. This gap is significant because maritime accidents recur with considerable frequency and carry substantial reputational and financial consequences for port operators, as reflected in the persistent risk indicators documented across a decade of international maritime accident reports (Dominguez-Péry et al., 2023).

The sinking of KM Marina Baru B2, which claimed 103 of 118 passengers, illustrates the acute reputational pressure that a resource-constrained port authority such as the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office must manage. The urgency of this study therefore lies in the scarcity of empirical evidence on how small maritime organisations can restore reputation with limited human and technological resources, whereas its novelty lies in examining the simultaneous and integrated application of the diminish and rebuild strategies within the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) framework (Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Accordingly, this study pursues three objectives: (1) to analyse how the diminish strategy is operationalised to weaken the negative association between the organisation and the crisis; (2) to examine how the rebuild strategy is employed to restore public trust and organisational reputation; and (3) to evaluate how the integration of both strategies within the SCCT framework enhances the overall effectiveness of crisis communication. The findings are expected to provide theoretical benefits by extending the application of SCCT to the under-researched maritime transportation sector, and practical benefits by offering evidence-based guidance for public relations practitioners in resource-limited

port authorities who seek to strengthen crisis preparedness, protect organisational reputation, and sustain public trust.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach with descriptive methods to explore the role of Public Relations in handling situational crises. The implementation of this research was carried out from October to December 2024, located at the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office, Wajo district, South Sulawesi. The research target is the role of activities carried out by public relations in handling situational crises and the obstacles faced during the implementation. Subjek research includes Public Relations staff of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit office, Port Personnel Management, Port Service Users.

The first research procedure was to prepare by identifying problems and compiling guidelines and observation lists. Second, collecting data through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and analyzing related documents. Third, analyzing data using a thematic approach to identify relevant patterns and findings. Fourth, compiling a research report that includes findings and recommendations. So that the main data used in this research are the results of interviews with key informants, official documentation, and direct observations related to PR activities during crisis handling.

The data analysis techniques used, namely first, data reduction by summarizing and simplifying the data that has been collected. Second, presenting data by compiling data in the form of tables or thematic narratives to enable interpretation. Third, drawing conclusions that summarize the main findings relevant to the research objectives. The validity of the data was tested using source and time triangulation techniques, ensuring the consistency and validity of the data obtained.

To enhance methodological transparency and reproducibility, the sampling and data-collection procedures are further specified as follows. Informants were selected through purposive sampling, a technique appropriate for qualitative case studies because it targets individuals possessing direct knowledge of, or involvement in, the phenomenon under study. The selection criteria required that participants either performed public relations and crisis-handling functions or directly experienced the port's services during the crisis period. On this basis, the key informants comprised public relations and harbourmaster officers, the personnel manager, and port service users (passengers), as presented in the interview tabulation. Data were gathered through semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted between October and December 2024 at the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office, and were complemented by direct observation and documentary analysis to enable triangulation.

Each interview was guided by an interview protocol informed by the components of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory, recorded with the informants' permission, and subsequently transcribed for analysis. Ethical considerations were observed throughout: participation was voluntary and based on informed consent, the research purpose was explained to each informant, and responses were treated confidentially. The thematic analysis proceeded through an iterative sequence of familiarisation with the transcripts, initial coding, the categorisation of codes into themes, and interpretation in relation to the diminish and rebuild strategies, consistent with the coding presented in the interview tabulation. Finally, the trustworthiness of the findings was reinforced through source and time triangulation to establish credibility, together with detailed documentation of the analytical process to support confirmability and dependability.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The research discusses the combination of Disminish and Rebuild strategies used by Public Relations of the Class II Siwa Port Management Unit office of Wajo Regency in handling situational crises due to an accident experienced by one of the ships from Bangsala'e Port. the results showed that Public Relations used the strategy by utilizing the media as a publication tool, as well as establishing cooperation with external parties.

Table 1. Tobulation of Interview Results

Informant	Statement	Coding
Rudi (Kesyahbandaran and Public Relations Officer)	Utilize social media such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook to convey information, especially during a crisis.	Social media utilization for public communication.
Rudi (Kesyahbandaran and Public Relations Officer)	Our information system is PPID-based, so transparency of information is the main focus.	Information transparency through the PPID platform.
Alberik (Public Relations Officer)	Need to ensure that any information is well coordinated with the media, so that there is no misinformation.	Coordination with the media to prevent the spread of misinformation.
Andi Irhas (Personnel Manager)	Identify the constraints of dual functions on PR staff that cause less than optimal implementation of core PR tasks. Thus the need for additional staff.	Recommendation to add specialized staff for the PR division.
Indiyani (Passenger)	Information during times of crisis must be fast and precise, as people often panic when they don't get clarity.	The importance of speed and accuracy of information during times of crisis.
Alberik (Public Relations Officer)	Using a 'reduce impact' strategy by utilizing digital communication to weaken negative issues against the port.	Diminish strategy through digital communication.
Andi Irhas (Personnel Manager)	Conduct programs such as service improvement to rebuild public trust after the crisis.	Rebuild strategy through improved public services.

Source: Tobulasi Interview Data by the Author, 2024

Related to the table of interview data, it shows that the Public Relations of the class III Siwa Port management unit office plays an important role in handling situational crises developed based on interviews with various informants. Internal informants, such as PR staff and staffing managers, highlighted the importance of utilizing social media as the main platform in delivering information to the public. Media such as YouTube, Instagram and Facebook were used to defuse the crisis and keep the flow of information transparent. This shows that the digital communication approach has become an important part of the *diminish* strategy to weaken the negative issues that developed during the crisis.

External informants, such as port service users, provide a different perspective by emphasizing the need for speed and accuracy of information during a crisis. Slow or inaccurate information can trigger panic among the public, which in turn adversely affects the port's reputation. In addition, the transparency of information implemented through the Public-based Information Management and Documentation Officer (PPID) system is appreciated by the public, but improving service quality remains the main expectation. This indicates that the success of a PR communication strategy depends not only on the technical aspects of communication, but also on the quality of interaction and services provided.

Overall, the interviews revealed that PR is dealing with the crisis with a more integrated and strategic approach. In an effort to improve the effectiveness of crisis management, a number of measures have been implemented, including an investigation into communication technology to ensure information can be delivered quickly and accurately. In addition, increasing the number of specialized staff in charge of crisis management is also a focus, in order to speed up response and coordination. Equally important, PR engages the public through satisfaction surveys to understand public perceptions and identify areas for improvement. Through these measures, the Port is able to strengthen relationships with the public, maintain trust, and protect reputation despite being in the midst of a crisis situation.

PR has an important role in a company. There are four roles of PR in creating internal and external communication, namely First, Advisor serves as a consultant to management, providing views and solutions to various challenges faced by the organization related to the public. This allows the organization to make more informed decisions based on a deep understanding of public perceptions and expectations. Second, the Communication Facilitator becomes the bridge that connects the organization with its public. This role is important to ensure constructive two-way communication, which can increase trust and cooperation between the two parties. Through this role, PR can help create a constructive dialogue. Third, as a Facilitator of the Problem-Solving Process, PR must be able to take the initiative in management when the organization is faced with a crisis.

In this situation, PR not only provides advice but is also directly involved in decision making to defuse the situation and minimize the negative impact that may arise. Fourth, the Communication Technician acts as a journalist part of the organization, who not only disseminates information but also provides technical communication services to the public. This includes creating press releases, managing social media, and all aspects of communication needed to maintain a good relationship with the public (Luh, N & Wahyu, K, 2022). With all these roles, PR not only functions as an intermediary, but also as an active agent of change, which strives to build harmonious and mutually beneficial relationships between the organization and the public. Through this integrated approach, PR can create a positive image and encourage greater public participation in organizational activities.

According to Effendy (2005), *communication* strategy is a combination of *communication planning* and communication management designed to achieve certain predetermined goals (Lestari & Yohana, 2017). This strategy must be able to provide clear

guidance on how its operations can be carried out practically. Thus, the approach applied can change or be adjusted based on the situation and conditions faced. As a macro approach, communication strategy includes a structured and vertically pyramidal process, where each stage is designed to support effective coordination between management levels and field implementation. This approach ensures that every element of communication is aligned with the vision and mission of the organization, while being adaptive to the dynamics that occur.

During image restoration, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is used as an important guide in crisis management practices. This theory provides a framework that focuses on how organizations can maintain and repair their reputation when facing crisis situations. In the context of the office of the Class III Siwa Port Management Unit of Wajo Regency, the application of SCCT is very relevant, because this theory can be a basic guideline in handling and managing crises that may arise.

As Coombs revealed, SCCT is not only theoretical, but can also be applied in an evidence-based framework, so that organizations can maximize their reputation protection through effective post-crisis communication (Muhammad et al., 2023). In practice, this includes using appropriate communication strategies, managing accurate information, and engaging with stakeholders to repair public trust. By implementing SCCT, it is expected that the Port management unit office can undergo a more structured and effective recovery process, so that the organization's image is maintained and it can return to normal conditions more quickly.

There are eight important pounds that must be considered in the SCCT theory (Muhammad et al., 2023). In the case of a situational crisis experienced by the Class III Siwa Port of Wajo Regency, it was found that the Public Relations at the Port organizer used two steps of communication strategy. This is in accordance with *Situational Crisis Communication Theory* in knowing the response, position and way of processing the crisis by a company reflects how the company shows its response and responsibility for the existing crisis. The communication strategy steps taken by the Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency in handling situational crises are by *diminish strategies* and *rebuild strategies*.

Disminish Strategies

Diminish Strategies are approaches taken by organizations when they realize they are facing a crisis. This strategy aims to weaken the negative relationship between the organization and the crisis. In this context, there are two main steps that organizations can take, namely excuse and justification (Putri et al., 2019). At the excuse stage, organizations try to reduce their responsibility by convincing the public that their actions were not intended to do harm. This approach is important to maintain reputation and trust from stakeholders. On the other hand, in justification, organizations can claim that the impact of the crisis was not as severe as expected and point out that the information circulating may have been misinterpreted. In this case, clear and transparent communication is vital to avoid misjudgment from outsiders. However, it should be noted that the degree of denial of the cause of the crisis can vary greatly, depending on the type of crisis at hand. This suggests that a deep understanding of the context and nuances of each crisis is key to designing effective mitigation strategies.

This strategy serves to minimize the amount of responsibility placed on the organization or company. This is achieved by justifying and offering reasons for the company's actions. *Diminish strategies* are most often used in dealing with crises where the company is not at fault for the problem. So efforts are made to reduce the effects of the crisis that occurs. The

steps taken by the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency in this regard are utilizing the media and public information disclosure.

The media is a channel for conveying messages that must be cooperated with to provide precise and accurate information to the community or the public at large (Alam, 2020). If the company is exposed to the threat of a crisis, the media is a means for PR to convey information to the public regarding the crisis that occurred. The occurrence of a crisis usually causes rumors or information whose sources are unclear, so here PR is tasked with responding to the media and helping the public to provide correct information regarding this matter to minimize false information that actually exacerbates the crisis that occurs.

At the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office, Wajo Regency, the role of the media is so important because it is a means of conveying information related to activities or others to the wider community. So that the office and the media must establish good relations to build cooperation. A good relationship with the media is carried out so that it can assist in propagating every activity carried out by the Public Relations Office of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit of Wajo Regency. However, publication of news through the media must go through the PPID (Information and Documentation Management Officer) procedure. This procedure makes the news more optimal because it is regulated by PPID which causes the media not to publish issues arbitrarily.



Figure 1. Publication of Class III Port Operator Unit Office Activities Wajo Regency

Along with the development of technology, especially the internet, Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency also utilizes social media as one of the platforms in publishing information to the public to maintain an image or reputation. Social media is one of the steps taken by public relations to communicate with the public in the digital era. Through it, it can also be used as a forum for the public to convey their aspirations in the form of criticism and suggestions for the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency. In addition, with social media, public relations can provide clear and

fast information so that the public does not receive information from other parties which will actually aggravate or worsen the situation.

The utilization of social media by the Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency is one of the influential factors where the Public Relations actively updates information related to the port and activities carried out on several social media owned by the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube which are managed directly by the Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency.

The utilization of social media by the Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency is one of the influential factors. Public Relations can update information related to the port and activities carried out on several social media belonging to the Office of the Port Operator Unit Class III Siwa Wajo Regency such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Youtube which are managed directly by the Public Relations Office of the Port Operator Unit Class III Siwa Wajo Regency.

The first social media utilized by the Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency is YouTube. This platform is used as a means of delivering information quickly and precisely to the wider community. Through YouTube, Public Relations can publish informative content, such as videos about port operations, service procedures, activity programs, and various other relevant matters. The use of YouTube allows PR to convey messages in a visual and attractive manner, so as to reach a wider audience and provide a deeper understanding to the public about the functions and services provided by the port.



Figure 2. Youtube Account of The Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office Wajo Regency

The name of the Youtube channel of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency is *djpl_UppSiwa*. The channel is a place to update activities carried out at the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency such as sea transportation safety campaigns, family gatherings, commemoration of national transportation days and so on. Through this channel, public relations can carry out one of its functions in the form of maintaining the image of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency. In addition, by creating and sharing videos, it can be easily accessed by the wider community regardless of distance and time.

In addition to using other social media, Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency also utilizes Facebook as a means of communication. This platform is used to share various activities and important information related to the Port, such as the implementation of the port environmental cleaning program, internal meetings, ship departure schedules, and other relevant information. With an official account called **Djpl UppSiwa**, Facebook is an effective medium to reach a wider community, ensure the information needed is easily accessible, and strengthen the relationship between the Port and the public. The use of Facebook also shows Public Relations' commitment to utilizing digital technology for information disclosure and better public services.



Figure 3. Facebook Account of The Calss III Port Operator Unit Office Wajo Regency

Instagram is also one of the platforms utilized by the Public Relations Office of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit of Wajo Regency in its communication strategy. They realize that this social media is very popular, especially among active users who follow the latest trends. Through Instagram, public relations can convey information visually and interactively, making it easier to reach and attract public attention. In addition, the use of Instagram allows PRs to build closer communication with the public, strengthen positive

images, and respond to information needs in a way that suits the preferences of modern audiences.



Figure 4. Instagram Account of The Class III Port Operator Unit Office Wajo Regency

In addition to the other four social media, the Public Relations Office of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit of Wajo Regency also utilizes Twitter as a means of establishing relationships with the public. Their official Twitter account, @Upp_Siwa, is used to share various information related to Port activities and events. The uploaded content includes various activities such as competitions in the framework of National Transportation Day, information on marine licensing services, and other relevant activities. By using Twitter, PR can convey information quickly and directly, as well as build more dynamic interactions with the community. This is part of PR's efforts to expand the reach of communication and strengthen relationships with the public.



Figure 5. Twitter Account of The Class III Port Management Unit Office

The Public Relations Office of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit, Wajo Regency, utilizes current technological developments to support information disclosure to the public. In this effort, they use various media as the main means of conveying information. The media has a very important role, both in disseminating information about various activities and programs carried out and in conveying announcements or other information to the public. With this approach, PR seeks to maintain transparency, build public trust, and ensure that the public is always provided with relevant and up-to-date information.

Rebuild Strategies

This strategy aims to change the public's view of the company or organization by acknowledging and accepting the fact that the crisis has indeed occurred (Putri et al., 2019). This step shows transparency and responsibility, which is the first step in defusing negative reactions from the public. Through reputation redemption efforts, companies are expected to rebuild positive relationships with stakeholders. To achieve this goal, the company takes various strategic steps to repair or rebuild the good image affected by the crisis. With this approach, the company seeks to re-establish public trust and ensure continued support from the community and interested parties.

Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency strives to provide the best possible service to the public. Service is one of the public's concerns and through the services received it affects trust. If the service received is good or satisfying, the public will feel comfortable and may put their trust in the company, and vice versa. So the Public Relations Office of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit of Wajo Regency provides services wholeheartedly, such as in the case of needing information related to the office, the office is open to provide a detailed explanation of the information needed by the public.

In addition, as an office that focuses on port operations, the main target of the Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency is users of sea transportation services, especially passengers. In this case, providing quality services is a top

priority to ensure service user satisfaction. The services provided are designed by prioritizing three important aspects: comfort, security, and safety. By fulfilling these three aspects, the port office not only seeks to build the trust of service users but also create a positive experience that can improve the overall image of the institution.

The media is a channel for conveying messages that must be cooperated with to provide precise and accurate information to the community or public at large (Boer et al., 2020). In this way, PR seeks to create and maintain a positive image of the institution. In carrying out its programs, the Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Management Unit Office of Wajo Regency does not only depend on support from internal parties, but also requires good cooperation with external parties. Therefore, effective, transparent, and mutually supportive communication is very important to ensure the smooth implementation of the program and achieve common goals.

In this strategy, one of the things done by the Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency is to become a communicator or communication bridge by holding programs or activities directly known to the public in order to obtain a good image. The implementation of the programs they carry out cannot be separated from the cooperation with various parties, both internal and external. External parties who are involved in the implementation of the Public Relations work programs of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency, namely the Military Rayoan Command (Koramil), Sector Police (Polsek), District offices, and Village Heads. Polsek, District office, and Lurah.

The importance of establishing harmonious communication or relationships with external parties, one of which is by collaborating to carry out programs to achieve common goals. Cooperation in the world of work can also be used as the best place where individuals will learn from each other. Because each individual needs to work collaboratively with people who have different skills and backgrounds. In addition, cooperation through the implemented programs involving external parties or related agencies aims to strengthen relationships so that positive public opinion is formed. So that to support this, good and effective communication is needed so that it will create comfort and openness with each other.

Public Relations of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency is active in implementing work programs. Such as the implementation of a clean beach movement and around the port area in commemoration of National Transportation Day (HARHUBNAS), the implementation of labor-intensive activities as a step to support economic recovery and community empowerment in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic, to the implementation of family gathering in order to increase togetherness and kinship of all staff of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency, and many other activities.



Figure 6. Program of Activities Carried Out by Public Relations of The Class III Siwa Port, Management Unit Office of wajo Regency

The strategy implemented by the Public Relations Office of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit of Wajo Regency involves the implementation of various programs designed by involving external parties, such as related agencies to the local community. This step aims to foster and establish harmonious relationships between the port and external stakeholders. Not only that, attention is also paid to strengthening internal relationships, ensuring good synergy among fellow parties in the organization. With this comprehensive strategy, sustainable cooperation and positive relationships, both internally and externally, are expected. This strong and harmonious relationship is an important foundation for the success of the Class III Siwa Port Operator Unit Office of Wajo Regency in achieving operational goals and maintaining a positive image in the community.

Critical Analysis and Theoretical Implications

Beyond describing the two strategies, the empirical findings can be interpreted critically through the lens of SCCT rather than presented as theoretical exposition alone. The diminish strategy was enacted primarily through digital communication: the harbourmaster and public relations officer explained that the office used social media such as YouTube, Instagram, and Facebook to convey information, especially during a crisis, while another officer described a reduce-impact approach that utilised digital communication to weaken negative issues directed at the port. These accounts indicate that, consistent with SCCT, the office framed the incident as an accidental crisis for which a diminish posture, reducing the perceived severity of the event and the attribution of responsibility, was situationally appropriate (Coombs, 2007). The rebuild strategy, in turn, was operationalised through tangible service improvement, as the personnel manager emphasised the need to conduct programmes such as service improvement to rebuild public trust after the crisis, reflecting the corrective-action and reputation-repair mechanisms emphasised in image repair theory and SCCT scholarship (Benoit, 1997; Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

When compared with previous research, these findings both confirm and extend earlier work. The reliance on transparent, media-based communication echoes the crisis-management practices identified in the study of the Indonesian Child Protection

Commission (Cea et al., 2020), while the emphasis on organisational responsibility for reputation restoration resonates with Wulandari, (2013). At the same time, the present case diverges from the North Lombok earthquake study, in which the absence of crisis-communication planning aggravated the impact on public trust (Ulfa et al., 2019); at Siwa Port, a deliberately planned combination of strategies mitigated escalation. Unlike the empathy-centred rebuild approach observed in the Pertamina Plumpang case (Zuhdi & Ayuningtyas, 2024), the Siwa Port authority combined reputation repair with a concurrent diminish effort, suggesting that resource-constrained maritime organisations may benefit from deploying both postures simultaneously rather than sequentially.

Theoretically, these findings contribute to SCCT by demonstrating that the diminish and rebuild strategies, often presented as distinct responses matched to different crisis types, can be integrated and applied concurrently within a single, resource-limited organisation. The passenger's observation that information during a crisis must be fast and precise, because people often panic when clarity is lacking, underscores that the effectiveness of these strategies depends not only on the choice of response but also on the speed, accuracy, and quality of interaction, dimensions that extend the largely response-type focus of classical SCCT (Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). This integrated reading positions crisis communication in the maritime sector as a continuous process of simultaneous impact reduction and trust rebuilding, offering a more nuanced theoretical account than single-strategy models.

CONCLUSION

Following the 2015 Marina Baru B2 accident, which damaged the reputation of the Class III Siwa Port, its Public Relations office combined two strategies: diminish, using social media to convey transparent information and weaken negative issues, and rebuild, improving services and cooperation with external parties to restore public trust. This study demonstrates that effectiveness derived from integrating both strategies rather than applying either alone: diminish limited crisis escalation while rebuild gradually restored reputation.

Theoretically, it extends Situational Crisis Communication Theory by showing that diminish and rebuild can be applied simultaneously within a small, resource-constrained organisation. Managerially, port authorities should treat impact reduction and trust rebuilding as complementary, technology-supported efforts, and add specialised public-relations staff. As a single qualitative case study, its findings are context-specific and not statistically generalisable. Future research should examine social media's influence on public perception and the long-term reputational impact of these strategies across comparable maritime organisations.

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