CRISIS RESPONSE STRATEGIES AND ORGANIZATIONAL SURVIVAL: A CASE OF DANA AIR NIGERIA LIMITED

Adim, C. V., & Ekpa, I. H.

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Adim, C. V., [1] & Ekpa, I. H.[2]

[1,2] Department of Management, Faculty of Management Sciences, Rivers State University [RSU], Nkpolu-Oroworukwo, PMB 5080, Port Harcourt, Nigeria

ABSTRACT

There are numerous events that will pose challenges to an organization and needs to be resolved as soon as possible which ranges from those that threatens the organization's existence, its reputation from adverse media reports and spurious social media, labour disputes and product safety misplacement. This paper discusses crises response strategies of Dana Air in ensuring its survival in the wake of a fatal crash involving one of its aircraft on Abuja to Lagos route while attempting to land at a local airport in Lagos, Nigeria on Sunday, 3rd June, 2012. This study was a descriptive research. It included surveys and fact- finding enquiries of different kinds. The secondary research methodology was largely adopted for this study. Data for the study was generated from desk review of secondary materials, books, online blogs and news reports. The findings showed that the families and relatives of the victims suffered emotional trauma from their bereavement and thus caused them harm, and the general public had to be convinced of the safety of the rest of the airline's operations. Several airlines that suffered previous air crash and could not manage the crises effectively had to fold up. For this reason the airline's communications and actions during the crisis following an accident is of high importance because it influences the way the airline is looked upon by stakeholders. Presenting information about the accident together with efforts to increase safety can be assumed to increase the company's legitimacy and its survival after the crisis caused by the air crash. The paper recommended effective post crisis communication since the general public constitutes the potential customers of these passenger air travel firms, they have to regain their positive attitude towards the firms; by being reassured that the firms are taking corrective action to prevent the accidents from happening again or that the firms did not have responsibility for the events that led to the crisis.

Keywords: Crisis Response Strategies, Corporate Apologia, Impression Management, Image Restoration, Organizational Survival

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INTRODUCTION

A crisis is any situation or series of events that launch a group, team or an organization into a downward spiral, by threatening to harm people or property and negatively impact and damage an organization, its stakeholders, or even an entire industry if not handled effectively and efficiently, characterized by "high consequence, low probability, ambiguity, and decision making time pressure," (Hale, Dulek & Hale, 2005), and always creates three inter related threats: public safety, financial loss due to disruption of operations and loss of market share, and inevitably reputation damage, because it reflects poorly on an organization (Coombs, 2011).

In the recent past, crisis communication management plans as well as strategies have been adopted by both private and public sector organizations. In the last two decades, crisis communication has grown as a field of study (Ulmer, Seeger & Sellnow, 2000), and has been addressed from different scientific domains, making it difficult to oversee the bulk of research that has been conducted. Moreover, research on the effectiveness of communication strategies to restore reputations during crises, is still in its infancy (Hobbs, 1995).

Coombs (1999) posits that there is no organization that can boost immunity to crisis and that crisis can spring from within its confines or outside the organization. Reynolds (2006) posits that once this happens, people's lives and properties may be endangered and the standing of an organisation or institution adversely exposed. According to Heath (2006), in order to explain crisis, danger has to be first described. Heath(2006) goes on to state that danger is an occurrence that could have both positive as well as harmful consequences of varying magnitudes, the prevalence and impact of which could be on various occasions anticipated and contained. Tende (2018) captures it succinctly that in any organisation, the impact of crisis on organisational performance cannot be over emphasized; it affects everything that the

organisation stands for. This requires grafting of proactive strategies for the organisation's survival.

Furthermore, of essence to managing a crisis is tact as well as efficiency in communication. In the absence of these, the wellbeing and protection of an organization's public image is at risk. "The mode of information dissemination in an organization affects public perception both in crisis response as well as mainstream coordination and mitigation" (Stephens & Malone, 2009). The situation could be; when a crisis situation intensifies and becomes complex thus transforming into a multiple communication type, what kind of public relations approach is employed within an organization and or institution? Lesenciuc and Daniela (2008) documents that this approach has to take into account the area of meaning for the public relations procedures and vital set of laws used in the event of a crisis. Its approach generally does not limit, neither does it resolve, at organizational level, a certain type of conduct in its workforce, but in turn provides rules of application so that each member of staff knows his/her role, and, bring about the final course of action so that preparation of crisis communication will not deteriorate into a confused, uncoordinated action. The approach need to bring about organisation survival.

Aircraft accidents is an example of an organizational crises and such events are rare, especially in the developed countries of the world, much due to high safety standards set by national and international authorities (Transportstyrelsen, 2010). However, airline accidents do occur, and when they do they are often serious incidents with a high rate of mortality amongst the passengers. An airline accident can be considered a true crisis and something that all airlines consider to be their worst nightmare (SAS, 2008), and many airlines communicate safety as the company's top priority (Air France, 2010). An airline that has been involved in an accident can experience questions being raised about the legitimacy of the airline that have to be dealt with in a strategic way (Air France,

2010a) or else this will cost the airline its survivability in the industry. The purpose of this study is to examine the crises response strategies of Dana Air Limited.

Statement of the Problem

Crash of DANA Air Flight 9J 992 on Sunday, June 3, 2012

Dana Air is a small airline specializing in domestic scheduled and charter flights within Nigeria. Dana Air was one of many small airlines that sprang up in Nigeria in the 1990s and 2000s to cater to a growing demand for air travel in a country where the road and rail networks are extremely poor. With a small fleet of half a dozen second-hand McDonnell Douglas and Boeing jets, the airline first began passenger services between five major cities in Nigeria in 2008.

Dana Airlines is one of the airlines that operate local flights in many parts of Nigeria. There was a fatal crash involving one of Dana Airlines' aircraft from Abuja to Lagos route while attempting to land at a local airport in Lagos, Nigeria on Sunday, 3rd June, 2012. In Nigeria, the menace of air disaster was getting out of hand for example; the crash of a passenger plane belonging to Dana Air in Lagos is as unfortunate as it is heart-rending. It mirrors the country's continuous decent into infamy and the urgent need to rescue, not just our aviation industry. The plane crashed into a building at the densely-populated Iju-Ishaga Area of Lagos, less than five minutes to touch down. One hundred and fifty three people perished in the tragedy. This is excluding those who were killed in their homes where the aircraft plugged into. The cause of the DANA crash was assumed to be due to negligence because a few weeks before the crash, an MD 83 aircraft belonging to the same DANA air had suffered hydraulic pressure and made an emergency landing at the Murtala Mohammed Airport, Airport, Lagos with 86 passengers on board.

Furthermore, there are other errors that could cause a crash- ground services errors, and these are errors by airliners, traffic controllers and other services in the airport. Incorrect operation, maintenance and repairs of aircraft are not done. For example, before the DANA air disaster, A plane belonging to the same DANA was reported to have hydraulic problems, instead of repairing, they decide to manage it; there has been many incidents like that in Nigeria, where airlines do manage aircraft even when it is due for servicing risking lives and properties that has be loaded on the airline. The regulatory authorities has to realize that air services remains critical and no blind eye has to be turned to misfit and misconduct.

Air disaster has led to loss of life and properties. Many lives have been lost due to various air disasters that occurred across the country. Many women have become widows, many men have become widowers, many children have been turned to orphans and even properties worth millions of dollars have been destroyed. For example, the DANA air disaster claimed 153 lives excluding the people that were killed in the houses; that is to say homes were destroyed during this calamitous event. The occurrence of this air crash involving DANA Air threatened its survival and continued business operations.

As a direct consequence of the crash, the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority (NCAA) suspended the operating license of Dana airline. The license of the airline was withdrawn for safety and precautionary reasons and this comes on the heels of an earlier resolution of the Senate banning the airline from flying in the Nigerian airspace. "We have suspended the entire Dana fleet. They will be grounded for as long as it takes to carry out the necessary investigations into whether they are airworthy," Harold Demuren, the head of the country's civil aviation body said. The occurrence of this accident posed a serious challenge to the corporate survival of Dana Air Limited and how it handles it would seriously chart a way for its future.

Purpose and Objectives of the Study

The purpose of the study was to examine the impact of crises response strategies on organizational survival of Dana Air Nigeria Limited.

In line with the conceptual framework specifically, this study had the following objectives:

- To examine the impact of corporate apologia on organizational survival of Dana Air Nigeria Limited.
- To examine the impact of impression management on organizational survival of Dana Air Nigeria Limited.
- To examine the impact of image restoration on organizational survival of Dana Air Nigeria Limited.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundation

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

The SCCT is one of the two most widely accepted and used crisis response strategies (Kim, Cha & Kim, 2009), which was born out of the need of a model that uses an evidence-based strategy. This theory gives a symbolic representation of the organisation's historical performance and its relationship building approach (Coombs, 2006c) by combining the rhetorical, impression management and image restoration concepts together, to help predict how stakeholders reacts to crisis (Coombs, 1998), by using the attribution theory as its framework, which is a theory that relates to how causal thoughts influence feelings and emotions. The attribution theory postulates that people tend to interpret an event by first doing a causal search and then use the information they've gathered to manage and cope with the event effectively. This event experience is then used as a yardstick for gauging their future expectations (Weiner, 1985).

In Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), Coombs (2001), using the fundamentals of the attribution theory, posits that the choice of a crisis response strategy by an organisation should be influenced by the type of crisis situation and the threat posed by the crisis, based on how the stakeholders perceive it. The theory shifts the focus of crisis response strategy from aiming only to protect the organisation's reputation to one that includes the protection of the stakeholders and the crisis victims; with the assumption that appropriate management of the organisation's stakeholder will reduce the reputational damage that the organisation might experience when in crisis and protect them.

SCCT suggests three factors that influence the reputational threat that comes from an organisational crisis: the initial crisis responsibility, the crisis history and the organisation's prior relational reputation. The theory assumes that the crisis history and relational relationship have intensifying effects on how stakeholders apportion crisis responsibility to the organisation. This indirectly affects the initial crisis responsibility and directly threatens the organisation's reputation (Coombs, 2007).

The apportioning of crisis responsibility by the stakeholders is determined and constructed based on the type of crisis that the organisation is experiencing. This assumption comes with an expectation on the organisation to identify the crisis type as this can be used to predict their stakeholder's interpretation and reaction to the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2002; 2005). The organisation is then expected to use this knowledge to determine on how best to respond to such crisis. Once this is identified, the management can then make adjustments based on the severity and their performance history (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

Organizational Crisis

In as much that the occurrence of crisis is increasing in number, crisis still lacks a universally accepted definition as it is a field that is still evolving and one that has developed from a multidisciplinary background. Its multidisciplinary background has however provided a good and rich perspective for understanding the complexity that comes with crisis study (Boin & T'Hart, 2007; Buchanan, & Denyer, 2013). The word crisis is coined from the Greek word 'Krisis', which means a moment of decision; representing historical turning points where human choices could make fundamental difference in the future (Sellnow & Seeger, 2013).

Hermann (1963), one of the early researchers who helped to establish the crisis study in relation to the organisation, defined crisis as a surprising situation that threatens the high priority goals of the organisation and comes with a time-constraint in the decision making period. According to Herman (1961), an organisational crisis has three features: it threatens the organisation, has a short and restricted response time and is also unpredictable or unanticipated. These definitions focused on the reputational threat and damages that comes with organisational crisis.

Several authors afterwards built their definition on these footings; as an event that threatens the foundation of an organisation is a crisis. The British Standard Institution in their crisis management guideline for organisation define crisis as "an abnormal, unstable situation that threatens the organisation's strategic objectives, reputation or viability" (BS 11200:2014). The organisation-centred crisis definition comes from the standpoint of the effect that a crisis has on the organisation's operational activities, which could affect its continual existence, if left unattended to or curtailed from further escalation. This school of thought believe that the existence of threat is an important variable that is identifiable with organisational crisis, with the assumption that the occurrence of a crisis puts pressure on the organisation's continuity which can result in devastating effect if not well managed. For example, a significant consolidated crisis definition was attempted by Pearson and Clair (1998) by describing organisational crisis as a "low-probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organisation and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly".

Pearson and Clair (1998) described an organizational crisis as a "low probability, high impact event that threatens the viability of an organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by

a belief that decisions must be made swiftly. Snyder et al. (2006) defined an organizational crisis as an extraordinary condition, disruptive and damaging to the existing operating state of an organization. Fearn-Banks (2007) defined crisis as a "major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome that affects an organization and its publics, products, services, or its good name and interrupts the organization's normal flow of business" (p. 6). Fink (1986) defined an organizational crisis more broadly as a situation that can potentially escalate in intensity, fall under close government or media scrutiny, jeopardize the current positive public image of an organization or interfere with normal business operations, including hurting the bottom line.

The definitions come with the assumption by authors in this school of thought that the threat that creates a discrepancy between the planned goal that the organisation has previously set out to achieve (long term goals) and its current existing state that is caused by the disruption form the crisis. For this school of thought, the disruption overrides the planned goals and causes a shift in the focus of the organisation's management; from its outlined long term goals to one that focuses on managing the crisis as effectively and efficiently as possible. The crisis should be managed within the shortest possible time frame, with the aim of returning back to its original long-term goals, and its effective control will determine what becomes of the organisation in the long run (KI & Nekmat, 2014).

Reilly (1993) in her comparative study on different crisis in a single industry proposed a working definition for crisis, with the aim of differentiating crisis from other related similar terms. Reilly defined crisis as a sudden high-magnitude situation that is harmful and disruptive, this definition though refraining from the threat and routine context still depicts crisis as a negative occurrence with no positive context.

Crises Management

Some theorists define crisis management in relation to the organisation from a reactive perspective. It is described as a strategy that an organisation executes in curbing a ranging crisis that is threatening their operation. For example, Jamal and Abu Bakar (2015) defines crisis management as a set of factors that are designed to combat crises and to lessen the actual damage inflicted by a crisis occurrence. This definition leaves out the pre-crisis and post-crisis stages of crisis management of preparedness, prevention and recovery.

In recent times, theorists have begun to view crisis management as a combination of proactive and reactive actions. Karim (2018) defines crisis management as the process that attempts to identify and predict areas of crisis in order to prevent it from occurring or from an incident evolving into crisis, and minimizing the effects of the disruption from a crisis that could not be prevented. It is a means of proactively preparing an organization for a worst-case scenario. It is about building the capability to identify imminent threats to the organization and designing a plan for addressing those threats. Also, Sinola (2014) defines crisis management as a proactive process which involves dealing with the crisis before it happens, during the crisis and aftermath. In another definition, Coombs (2014) states that crisis management is a process designed to prevent or lessen the damage that a crisis could inflict on an organization and its stakeholders. According to Fearn – Banks (2006) crisis management is a process of planning for unpredictable eventualities. He also adds that crisis is an issue that is difficult to resolve because of pressure of time, high uncertainty as well as limited control. Crisis management is therefore of great importance to every organization (Burnett, 2008 cited in Adim & Emumena, 2020).

Crisis management includes the procedure that is put in place to provide guidelines that prevents the occurrence or reduces the threats that may befall the organisation in crisis (BS 11200:2014; Coombs, 1999:3). It involves having a strategy of dealing with a crisis situation in a way that allows the organisation to carry on with most of its normal operation with minimal interference (Darling, 1994). An approach that efficiently prevents and mitigates crisis effect before, during and after its occurrence (BS 11200:2014), therefore should not be described in the context of fixing a crisis occurrence but also for crisis prevention and readiness. Crisis Management involves the organisation's readiness in terms of preparedness, anticipation, response to and recovery from crisis when it occurs, an action that is different from the normal organisational routine but one that is developed, maintained and ready to use when needed (BS 11200:2014).

The goals of having a crisis management process is to prevent, resolve, protect, support and reduce the negative effect of crisis on the organisation, stakeholders, communities and resources (Coombs, 2011). Another important aspect of crisis management is by recognising that the public's perception of an organisation is dependent on how effectively it prevents and manages its crisis with the aim of building a reputation that will be enhanced than what it was before the crisis breakout if well managed (Fearn-Banks, 2010).

Crisis Response Strategies

Crisis response strategies (CRS) are defined as how the organisation's address and/or reacts (verbal and non-verbal) to a crisis breakout with their reactions being dependent on who the audiences are, the crisis type, degree of damage and impact, the organisation's history and legal issues that could arise out of the crisis (Coombs, 2011). As the occurrence of a crisis can bring both image, reputational and financial damages to the organisation if not well managed, the aim of the crisis response strategies is to release messages that will protect the organisation from experiencing further damages based on what their stakeholders make of the crisis.

Dimensions of Crises Response Strategies

Corporate Apologia

The corporate apologia is regarded as one of the earliest foundations of the CRS which is described as strategy that an entity or organisation uses in self-defence to either maintain or repair its reputation and image (Chikudate, 2010) in the event of a crisis. Apologia is seen as a strategy that can be used to protect or redeem its image or reputation with the corporate apologia concept growing overtime to a crisis response strategy that is used to deal with problems of guilt that arises from criticism in the event of crisis and redeem the organisation's reputation in the eyes of the public.

One of the earliest theorists of corporate apologia, Ware & Linkugel (1973) describes it as a defensive mechanism while studying the rhetorical genre of how individuals who are embroiled in crisis respond to crisis and divided the response genre into four dimensions.

Denial

Denial is described as a response act used for the negation of an allegation without trying to distort the reality or bring conflict to the audience's initial beliefs. This is done in good faith knowing that if the current information is allowed to remain as it is, it will negatively impact the image of the organisation. Denial is not meant to discredit the source but to put the facts right and retract the negative image it might have created in the public space.

Bolstering

Bolstering represents any strategy that is applied to re-emphasize a known fact, sentiments, objectives or relationship. This strategy re-enforces the current information which is acceptable to the organisation. It is a means to strengthen the existing the good reputation emanating from available fact, sentiment, relationship and objective that could prevent criminal attack, government investigation and media enquiry that is capable of tarnishing the image of the organisation(Tende,2018).

Differentiation Crisis Response

The differentiation crisis response strategy involves the act of redefining crisis by separating larger conflict into smaller parts with the aim of using the smaller facts to defend oneself in a favourable way. In this way, the organisation is able to case manage the hitherto complex situation. Multilateral and multinational organisations often adopt this strategy in handling crisis as even supposedly small crisis has wider implications for them.

Transcendence

Transcendence crisis response strategy involves making the audience see the bigger picture with the assumption that they will base their judgment on such broader information instead of the particular smaller accusation presented by one's accuser.

It is to be noted that denial and bolstering are both reformative strategies as their aim is to either reverse or amend a known fact while differentiation and transcendence are transformative strategies that alter the audience's cognitive understanding of the manipulated points. Hearit (1995) however extended the corporate apologia rhetorical response from an organisational perspective by linking corporate apologia to crisis communication. He suggests that it is the use of distancing and re-legitimisation by an organisation when faced with a crisis is also a form of apologia response. In managing their crisis, the organisation needs to strive to find equilibrium between the organisation's goals and their stakeholder's expectation. This is achievable by either reaffirmation or dissociation

An organisation can respond to a crisis in three ways. It can challenge the crisis claims using opinion/knowledge disconnection by taking a denial stance (Ware & Linkugel, 1973) and offering information that challenges the claims leveled against them. Another corporate apologia option is for the organisation to use the individual/group dissociation strategy whereby the organisation rejects absolute responsibility of the crisis by transferring it to another person or group such as scapegoating.

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The third stance is to be taken when the organisation has no other option but to accept the crisis responsibility using the act/essence dissociation with the aim of making an effort to let the public know that such action does not represent the organisation goal. In using this strategy, it is cautioned not to be seen as a form of the normal apology, but as a CRS that is used when an organisation is accused of wrongdoing, to reposition itself to a level that is identifiable with the expectations of the public values (Hearit 1995). The corporate apologia has however been found to be a limiting strategy as it only concentrates on apology as the way of responding to crisis and ignores the concept of accountability that is used to explain one's questionable behaviour (Coombs, 1999).

Impression Management

It is a crisis response strategy that is used by management to respond to accountability pressure and concerns for misconduct from their stakeholders, with such pressure questioning the organisation's legitimacy, reputation and survival. The organisation's management uses Impression management CRS in the heat of pressures to reassure their aggrieved stakeholders that their organisational goals are still legitimate and achievable (Allan & Caillouet, 1994; Tschirhart, 2007).

Impression Management is the process whereby organisations attempt to manage or control the perceptions others form of them. Myria and Caillouet's (1994) work pioneered the focus on impression management as a theoretical framework in the development of crisis response strategies. Although significant and instrumental in the development of later crisis response strategies, it did not gain much popularity with later crisis researchers.

The impression management CRS position in protecting the organisation's reputation and continuity is rooted in the legitimacy theory. The legitimacy theory is described as a dialogical interaction between the organisation's strategy and their stakeholder's expectation (Massey, 2001). This CRS focuses on promoting and maintaining the organisation's legitimacy, not just in the eyes of its various stakeholders, but also includes their stake seekers using a rhetorical strategy. The strategy's aim is to absolve the organisation of any of its failures using a discourse approach that promotes all the positive actions that they have taken in managing the crisis event to its perceived audiences (Allan & Caillouet, 1994).

One of the repercussions from a crisis outbreak is that it brings doubt to the image and reputation that the organisation is known for and has built overtime in the eyes of their stakeholders. This CRS aims to consciously and/or unconsciously control and correct the perception of their stakeholders from viewing them as an illegitimate organisation but rather spur a favourable opinion that promotes the organisation's longevity and reputation (Hooghiemstra, 2000). The content of the Impression management CRS is expected to appease the aggrieved stakeholders who doubt the legitimacy of the organisations based on the illegitimate activities that they have been accused of.

Allen and Caillouet (1996) suggested seven strategies that organizations may employ to respond to criticism with descriptions as provided by Mohammed, Gardner and Paolillo (1999):

Excuse (efforts by an organization to make the achievement of a task appear unlikely in order to provide a ready-made excuse for failure);

Justification (explanations of a predicament-creating event which seek to minimize the apparent severity of the predicament);

Ingratiation (actions used to make the organization appear more attractive, like doing a favour or use of flattery);

Intimidation (actions that present the organization as powerful and dangerous entity which can inflict harm on those that frustrate its efforts and objectives);

Apology (admission of blameworthiness for a negative event, which include expressions of remorse and requests for pardon);

Denouncement (explanations given prior to a potentially embarrassing action in order to ward off any negative repercussions for the company's image); and

Factual distortion (the manipulation of the perception of the audience by creating syntactical complexity by reducing readability as proxy for obfuscation in order to leave readers confused to mask undesirable information). Their empirical findings support Ice's (1991) findings that an organization may use different response strategies for different stakeholders.

This CRS also has its limitation as some authors argued that admitting fault to a wrong doing by an organisation in a neo-institutional theory situation can have devastating response (Allan & Caillouet, 1994). The challenges with using this CRS might come with legal and financial implications that the organisation might not be able to paddle through. It has also been found to be ineffective when used in some different cultural dimensions. For example, Lee (2004), in his cross-cultural analysis of crisis found that using apology (which is one of the suggested impression management CRS) in some Asian countries might yield a lesser positive result when compared to their western country counterparts. Asians perceive apology to be a merely routine response that carries little emotional effect and would rather prepare a no-comment response, an approach in contrast, that is deemed unacceptable in the western world. In the Western world, a no-comment strategy is assumed to present the organisation as an egocentric entity that fails to communicate and connect with their victims in crisis by telling what they know as soon as possible.

Another criticism of the impression management CRS is the argument that it is being projected mainly as a strategy that is focused on strictly protecting the organisation's reputation, without any suggestions on how to manage the crisis victims. The principal suggestion of the impression management CRS is for the organisation to issue obligatory disclosure of their position on the cause of a crisis and what they are doing to manage it, so as to protect their reputation, but failed to give any suggestion on the selection process for these strategies (MerklDavies & Brennan, 2011).

Impact Restoration Strategy

A growing line of crisis literature has begun to develop around Benoit's (1995) theory of image restoration—the use of communication strategies to redress the wrongdoing of a crisis (Benoit, 1995; Benoit & Brinson, 1994; Brinson & Benoit, 1996). Crisis communication is an initiative which aim at protecting the reputation of the organisation which might have been directly or inadvertently affected during crisis and maintain its public image (Tende, 2018). Impact restoration or repair strategy uses a persuasive discourse method that considers the various rhetorical strategies of the communication process. It analyses the messages options that the organisation uses to protect its reputation when in crisis using the case study approach. In this, quick and effective response is adapted to clear the foggy image of the organisation in the unstable situation that guarantees the organisation survival.

Concept of Organizational Survival

Survival of an organization is described as the operation of business organization on going concern sometimes refers to as manage to stay in business (Akindele, Oginni & Omoyele, 2012). Business survival is the ability of a firm to continuously be in operation despite various challenges i.e. the managerial process of directing the affairs of a firm regularly on a going concern basis and meets the needs of all stakeholders (Akindele *et al.,* 2012). In an attempt to respond to the activities that will enable organization to operate on going-concern, organizations are constantly in the process of structuring and restructuring to keep abreast with these activities which do come in form of complexity to include technology, structure, competitive advantage,

number of employees, physical expansions, success of a product line (Lipton, 2003). Oluremi and Gbenga (2011) asserted that business organization that wants to succeed must develop a clear understanding of the trends of business environment and forces that shape competition organizational survival and growth are implicit organizational goals requiring the investment of energy and resources(Jones& Bartlet,2008). Adeoye (2012) submitted that the present form of complexities facing firms include leadership styles, changes, uncertainty, conflict, culture, technology, structure, competitive market, profitability and workplace motivation. Hence, firms must develop a strategically plan and tactical procedure that is appropriate and adaptive to the present business environment that will aid its optimum resources utilization and attainment of set goals. Ogunro (2014) cited in Ejo-Orusa and Adim (2018) noted that Nigeria's business environment in recent years has been coloured with fear and uncertainty leading to collapse of some business outfits particularly, the small scale industries and the relocation of the big ones to other countries.

Crises Response Strategies and Organizational Survival

Organizations may experience crises, which are usually defined as chains of events that have severe consequences, damaging human lives, property, the environment or all of the above (Stephen, Malone & Bailey, 2005). These events are also at least partially unexpected (Massey, 2001). Due to factors such as the increased reliance on advanced and sensitive technology and the increase in the number and complexity of stakeholder relationships, crises are becoming more prevalent, severe and more difficult to control in the world of today (Stephen, Malone & Bailey, 2005). As such, knowledge regarding how to handle crisis events and reduce the negative effects they may have on an organization's legitimacy and reputation is becoming increasingly important for organizations and their managers.

An example of crisis events is aircraft accidents, which is the focus of our study. Such events are rare, especially in the developed countries of the world, much due to high safety standards set by national and international authorities (Transportstyrelsen, 2010). However, airline accidents do occur, and when they do they are often serious incidents with a high rate of mortality amongst the passengers. An airline accident can be considered a true crisis and something that all airlines consider to be their worst nightmare (SAS, 2008), and many airlines communicate safety as the company's top priority (Air France, 2010). In the airline industry legitimacy can be seen as being closely connected to, and also dependent upon how the airline handles safety. An airline that has been involved in an accident can experience questions being raised about the legitimacy of the airline that have to be dealt with in a strategic way (Air France, 2010a). Prioritizing safety and avoiding incidents is consequently something that all airlines focus on constantly.

Another characteristic of airline accidents is that the media give enormous amounts of attention to these types of events that usually make headlines all around the world. The attention the airline is given by the media, the general public and authorities place a great amount of pressure on the airline in question that they must deal with simultaneously as they are dealing with the actual crisis. For this reason the airline's communications and actions during the crisis following an accident is of high importance that influences the way the airline is looked upon by stakeholders.

The organization's reputation can be affected by crises (Coombs, 2007). Developing and upholding a good reputation through effective crises response strategies can create many benefits for the organization; it can attract new customers and investors as well as improving financial performance. It can lead to consumer loyalty, increased sales and positive word-of-mouth as well as creating a competitive advantage (Coombs, 2007; Romenti & Valentini, 2010; Rhee & Valdez,

2009). This will ultimately help the organization bounce back and not go out of business. The company can also be perceived as a low risk investment and an attractive alliance partner and if the customer relies on the company's good reputation as an indicator of legitimacy this can contribute to the customer experiencing lower search costs (Rhee & Valdez, 2009; Coombs, 2007). A good reputation can also result in the customer giving the company the "benefit of the doubt" when experiencing uncertainty in a crisis situation. This depends on how strong the relationship is between the organization and the stakeholders and how much the stakeholders have invested in the relationship (Martinez & Norman, 2004; Ulmer, 2001). If stakeholder relationships are not strong before the crisis, those stakeholders that are harmed by the crisis or support those groups harmed by the crisis will withdraw their support and possibly worsen or prolong the crisis situation (Ulmer, 2001).In Nigeria, an airline that suffers a crash invariably collapses but not in the case of DANA Airline. This was the case with ADC airline that suffered a crash on 7th November. , 1996 and 29th October. 2006; EAS Airline which crashed on 4th May, 2002; Bellview Airline which crashed on 22nd October 2005.

METHODOLOGY

This study was a descriptive research. It included surveys and fact-finding enquiries of different kinds (Kothari& Garg, 2016). The secondary research methodology was largely adopted for this study. Data for the study was generated from desk review of secondary materials, books, online blogs and news reports. Several pieces of literature, journal articles, research or thesis paper, government documents among others were considered to collect the necessary information for the study. The study relied substantially on secondary (desk) research to identify crises response of DANA AIR during the crises occasioned by the crash of its aircraft.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Immediate Response/ Search and Rescue Operations

The Airline informed the public through a press statement that, "We immediately deployed Men and Materials to the Crash site at Iju-Shaga, in order to assist search and rescue operations. Senior Management of Dana Air were also immediately on ground as part of the search and rescue efforts. We are working closely with medical team for DNA procedures so that the remains of the deceased are properly identified and prepared for burial". DANA Airline attempted to show that it is up and doing without denying the fact. Adaptability as a survival method was instrumental to the crisis image management of the airline.

Apology

Dana Airlines Limited expressed the organization's deep sorrows and regret concerning the loss of live and injuries of individuals associated the ill-fated Dana Air, flight 9J 992, therefore, moving forward despite reassuring members of the public that Dana Airlines were safe, they offered their apologies over the fatal air crash. The Management apologized through its detailed press statement that read, "It is with a very heavy heart that we, the Dana Group family join friends, colleagues, relations, families and the entire Nigerian nation to mourn victims of the ill-fated Dana Air, flight 9J 992, with Registration Number 5N-RAM, from Abuja that crashed at Iju-Shaga, a Lagos suburb as the aircraft made to touch down at the Murtala Mohammed Airport 2, Lagos. The tragic loss of all the 146 passengers on board and the crew including; 1 Dana Air Flight Engineer, 2 Pilots and 4 Cabin Crew and families who were in their houses at the time of the accident is the most traumatic experience for members of families, relations, the Dana Group, Lagos State Government and the country at large in this critical period of the year".

The Statement continued, "Though the lives of some of Nigeria's best and brightest have been cut short as a result of the incidence, we are deeply touched by the sorrows of many whose dreams, family prospects and expectations have been

terminated". Bolstering and transcendence strategy was adopted here to show that the organisation is alive to its responsibilities in the circumstance.

Visits to Displaced Residents

In demonstration of their deepest sympathy to those affected by the ill-fated Dana flight J9 992, top management of Dana Air Limited on Friday, June 8, 2012 visited some of the displaced residents of Iju-Ishaga, Lagos, where the aircraft came down on Sunday and donating relief materials to them. This was to show concern.

Accidental: This approach is when crises managers posit that there is a lack of control and inability to prevent the events which lead to the crisis. In the case of Dana Air, the management of the airline informed the general public that the fatal air crash was accidental and unpreventable. This was the strategy of bolstering and corporate apologia in which DANA Airlines attempts to state the obvious and maintain DANA Airline image. Corporate apologia assisted DANA Airline in no small way to improve its public reputation. This attracted public sympathy for the airline as no denial existed and contributed to its survival.

Justification

Crisis manager reduces the damage as a result of the crisis by providing information that the organization did the needful to prevent the crises. Dana Air through its Chief Executive Officer used this as well by explaining through a Press Release that, "It will also be pertinent to say that at Dana Air, we place a high premium on safety and we adhere strictly to the maintenance schedule of all our aircrafts as prescribed by the manufacturers, and the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority. More detailed and scheduled checks are, however, carried out at MRO facilities abroad. As a matter of fact, that particular aircraft had its last 400-hourly check (A-Check) only in May 30, 2012 while the statutory annual maintenance (C-Check) is not due until September 2012. The Certificate of Airworthiness issued by the NCCA after the last C-Check was still very valid as at the time of the incident. This was a combination of corporate

apologia strategy and image restoration strategy. The public was anxious to know the circumstances that laid to the crash and DANA Airline was forthcoming with information, giving regular press briefing assuaging the concerns of the stakeholders. This greatly aided its survivability.

Truama Management

Also, a team of Counselors, Psychotherapists were deployed by the airline to assist and manage trauma, anxiety and associated ailments of families affected during the crash. The Management explained that it became necessary to deploy the services of Counselors and Psychotherapists to the affected families to ensure that they are in stable conditions after the shock, and also help manage their trauma, anxieties and fear.

Again, The Management in response to enquiries explained that all the displaced persons would be provided with temporary accommodation to suit their respective needs, whilst relief materials would be extended to them on continuous basis. "Our chairman and other senior management have been at the site to condole with the families of the victims. We would continue to visit and assist them where necessary to ensure that their needs are met until they are very stable. This was partly impression management and image restoration strategy aimed at organisation survival.

Compensation

Victims of the air crash were compensated with millions of dollars by the airline. The Management of Dana Airline announced that compensation of $100,000 would be paid to the dependants of each of the passengers killed in the tragic crash which occurred in Lagos on Sunday, June 3, 2012 in accordance with the provisions of the law. The dependants of the deceased are also entitled to special and general damages which may not be less than N100 million per passenger depending on the responsibilities borne by each of them in their lifetime. Such amount of money for loss of expectation of life is payable by Dana Airline for gross negligence arising from the plane with

defective dual engines and the Federal Government for failure to enforce the relevant regulations, failure to provide emergency landing for the plane and the inexplicable delay in providing the fire service equipment and medical services and other acts of gross negligence which led to the avoidable death of the passengers and the crew.

The owners and tenants of the houses that were burnt or touched by the fire that gutted the aircraft were entitled to have them rebuilt or replaced by Dana Airline and the Federal Government.

Setting Up a Crisis Management Unit

In the interim, the management of Dana Airline set up a crisis management unit at the Dana Air office, MMA 2, Lagos for enquiries of any kind. The general public and the media could direct all enquiries to the unit while a toll free line was also opened to address all enquiries.

In accordance with international protocol governing aviation accident investigations, all information about the investigation will come from the Nigerian Civil Aviation Authority. Dana Air will however provide information relating to the flight itself and updates on steps being taken.

Collaboration

The Management of Dana Air did not attempt to deal with the crises all alone but collaborated with other critical stakeholders. The airline worked with various investigative organs of the regulatory bodies to find the root cause of the crash. According to its press release "We are working with Government and Key Regulatory Authorities in the Nigerian Aviation Industry to uncover the truths regarding this tragic incident. We are also working closely with the Lagos State Government on the relocation of displaced families at the crash site and have sent relief materials to displaced families"

The Black Box had been recovered and we hoped to share information on what happened in no distant time. We are also working with families of the deceased and those who are presently receiving treatment at the hospital. Our management has been at both the site and hospital to addressed

issues with families of the deceased even as plans are on to address issues with the statement government and immediate community where the incident took place" as explained by the family. In this, the company adopted far reaching impression management strategy that calmed frail nerves of the stakeholders such that the Federal Government of Nigeria later allowed the organisation to return to operation and even the senators that earlier called for the banning of the airline began to gradually re-patronise the airline as well as the general public. The airline is still in operation till date.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

When a crisis occurs, companies have to respond quickly in order to minimize damage done to stakeholders as a result of the crisis event, in order to minimize the negative effect on the firm's reputation and legitimacy. A crisis signifies threat to an organization that can have negative impact on the continuity of an organization if not properly resolved in an efficient manner. Setting up a crisis management response team in advance is important. Crisis management can minimize or repair the reputation damage of an organization, however, the organization need to prepare for crisis since time is of the essence when dealing with crises by setting up a crises management team in advance. There are numerous crisis management approaches that managers can use to deal with crisis which ranges from attack to apology. There is need for organizations to develop a crisis management plan which is updated annually to include a detailed vulnerability analysis.

In a crisis situation, Press releases are a good source of first-hand information from the airlines, and publishing frequently and thoroughly can be considered to be highly appreciated by the different stakeholders eager for information. Therefore, in the event of such crises Airlines should issue continuous press statements. The press releases should give information about the accident; how the airline has lived up to safety standards; continuous condolences expressed, especially when

bodies start to be found. Constant gratitude is also communicated towards state authorities helping in the search and rescue operations. Since the general public constitutes the potential customers of these passenger air travel firms, they have to regain their positive attitude towards the firms; by being reassured that the firms are taking corrective action to prevent the accidents from happening again or that the firms did not have responsibility for the events that led to the crisis. DANA Airline did well in information management of its crisis and could be duplicated or improved upon by other airlines in time of crisis.

The Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority, other aviation regulatory agencies in the country and internationally has to improve on the certification processes for the airlines as well as the licenses of different categories of pilots and air crew members to avoid sharp practices and unwholesome practices. This will reduce or eliminate accidents pertaining to human errors and faulty aircraft in the airspace .Stakeholders, especially those as closely associated with the event as the friends and relatives of the victims, desire information about the extent and causes of the crisis in order to reduce the uncertainty regarding how to evaluate the event and how to attribute blame for it occurring. Airlines could provide toll-free telephone numbers for the relatives of the victims and released information about the event as it came in to the company.

In achieving organisation survival that has continue to keep the organisation aircraft in the air until now after a fatal air crash that consumed the aircraft, all the persons onboard and those in the area it touched down, DANA Air utilised some crisis response strategies. The impact of adopting corporate apologia helped in maintaining its image as the Nigerian public sympathized with the airline. Image impression brought about the perception that the airline is responsive and the strategy of image restoration assisted in repairing the negative public view of the company that has resulted in the continuous full booking of its schedule flights and patronage across the strata of Nigerian society.

The following are therefore recommended for all airlines to adapt for survival in time of crisis.

- In order to attain good public image and organisation reputation, Airlines should issue continuous press statements.
- Airlines should reassure stakeholders that the firms are taking corrective action to prevent future accidents from happening again and adopt corporate apologia.
- Airlines should provide toll-free telephone numbers for the relatives of air crashes victims
- The Nigeria Civil Aviation Authority, other aviation regulatory agencies in the country and elsewhere should improve on the certification processes for the airlines as well as the licenses of pilots and air crew members to avoid sharp practices and cutting corners.

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