Studying The Importance of Communication Management Strategies in Addressing Internal Communication Crises Among Customer Service Officers in Malaysia: A Conceptual Paper

Nurbarirah Ahmad*
Faculty of Communication and Media Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam
Email: 2021299324@student.uitm.edu.my

Siti Rosnita Sakarji
Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Shah Alam

Khalijah Mohd Nor
Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Melaka

Raja Mayang Delima Mohd Beta
Faculty of Business and Management, Universiti Teknologi MARA, Negeri Sembilan

Abstract
Purpose: This article shall examine the importance of communication management strategies in addressing the internal communication crises. Customer service officers who are satisfied are less likely to quit, neglect work, and produce defective products, and they are more likely to remain loyal to the bank. Effective communication management is essential for attaining employee satisfaction. Additionally, organizations need to use communication management strategies to make sure that the appropriate information reached the right people at the right time.
Design/methodology/approach: The researcher plan to study the importance of communication management strategies in addressing internal communication crises among customer service officers in Malaysia.
Findings: The study's findings are anticipated to serve as a paradigm for communication management practices in the financial services industry's handling of internal communication crises. By devising the Communication Management Strategies Model for internal communication crisis management, organizations can mitigate the negative effects of such crises, such as employee stress, anxiety, and low morale.
Research limitations: The following studies should prioritize the examination of sectors, such as the tourism sector, oil and gas, or financial services industry. The study's generalizability is crucial for future research.
Practical implications: This investigation is also intended to benefit the public and private sectors, as well as employees.
Originality: It is crucial to identify and apply efficient communication management strategies to reduce the consequences of such a crisis. This aligns with the findings of a prior study that emphasized the significance of implementing effective communication management strategies within an organization.

Keywords: communication, customer service officer, internal crisis communication

Introduction

An organizational crisis, such as an occurrence that is viewed by managers and stakeholders as being highly significant, unforeseen, and potentially causing disruption, has the ability to jeopardize an organization's objectives and significantly impact its relationships with stakeholders (Bundy et al., 2017). When an organization is experiencing a crisis, it must engage in what is known as crisis communication to mitigate the situation. This dialogue entails accumulating, processing, and disseminating crisis information to the publics in order to lessen the uncertainty caused by the crisis and restore the tarnished reputation (Ndone, 2023). Given the importance of crisis communication, scholars have conducted extensive research on the most effective communication strategies that organizations can employ to mitigate the negative effects of a crisis, restore its reputation, and foster positive post-crisis relationships with its publics (Kim et al., 2019).

According to Wade (2019), when an internal communication crisis arises within these organizations, it can result in serious consequences and affect the confidence of clients and investors in the financial service sector. In today's fast-paced business world, effective communication plays a crucial role in the success of any organization, particularly in the financial service sector (Mahbob et al., 2019). Furthermore, communication management strategies are essential tools for financial institutions to ensure that the right information is delivered to the right people at the right time (Li et al., 2021). In this highly regulated industry, failure to communicate effectively can result in legal, financial, and reputational risks (Kalogiannidis, 2020). Furthermore, internal communication crises also require appropriate communication strategies. A crisis can also be defined as an unusual event that has the potential to negatively impact an organisation and requires immediate communication to limit the potential harm (Kuipers & Wolbers, 2021). During a crisis, effective internal crisis communication can foster a sense of support among employees.

Besides, internal crisis communication has become one of the most important research and practise areas in the disciplines of corporate communication and strategic communication due to the fact that it has been understudied in favour of the external perspective (Mazzei et al., 2022). According to Abbas Adamu (2018), the internal factor of crisis communication had been neglected for years, despite its influences in organisational performance and outcomes in terms of affective commitment, perceived organisational support, and employee perception of the crisis (Mohamad et al., 2022). Therefore, the problem statement aims to discover the value of communication management strategies in handling internal communication crises among customer service officers in Malaysia. It is vital to discover and implement effective communication management strategies to mitigate the impact of such crisis (Mukelabai Marylyn Musheke, 2021). This conceptual paper seeks to examine the value of communication management strategies in handling internal communication crises among customer service officers in Malaysia.

Literature Review
Introduction to Communication Management
Communication management encompasses all activities that involve planning, executing, monitoring, and controlling an organization's communication resources to achieve specific objectives (Painter & Martins, 2017). Effective communication management entails identifying key stakeholders and their communication needs, understanding the communication channels that are most effective, developing and implementing communication strategies, and evaluating the effectiveness of those strategies (Chmielecki, 2015). The

communicative approach helps us understand the organisation as a social system, as communication is the main activity that ensures the organization's parts work together harmoniously (Volkova, 2019). Therefore, effective communication is the key to any organization's success in reaching its goals. Nonetheless, communication remains one of the most contentious management issues, and the processes underlying its effectiveness are not yet fully understood (Volkova, 2019). Communication management is a concept that combines both management and communication. It encompasses crisis response regulation, which includes communication and coordination among the community, the government, donors, and non-governmental organisations (Susanto, 2021). The management process includes organising, planning, executing, and evaluating. According to Arcos (2016), the management process consists of four phases: identifying public issues, planning and programming, acting and communicating, and evaluating the programme. These phases describe the measures a government agency will take to address emerging issues. First, the issue must be identified. At this juncture, all difficulties and problems that arise are identified. These specifics facilitate problem resolution.

The Importance of Communication Management Strategies

Every organisation has a unique approach to communication strategy depending on its circumstances and internal adjustments. Nevertheless, not all administrators and organisational leaders are adept at effective communication. It is supported by Ashkenas (2000) who emphasises the importance of effective communication methods within an organisation's structure to achieve its goals and objectives. Mustaffa et al. (2022) emphasised that the duty of public servants is to provide services to customers. Therefore, proficiency in the process of information exchange is evaluated as one factor. Information exchange necessitates the use of communication techniques. Communication strategies assist in identifying the most effective communication tools by presenting ideas and obstacles encountered while pursuing organisational objectives.

According to Ophilia and Hidayat (2021), communication strategy is the direction of communication planning and management to achieve a company's specified goals. According to Koo et al. (2022), businesses employ communication methods to attain a predetermined objective. In addition, organisational managers and leaders rely on communication techniques to improve communication skills, surmount barriers that frequently arise during organisational change, and assist subordinate employees in resolving work-related issues (Downs, 2004). Certain elements must be present, according to Mintzberg (1991), for a strategy to be effectively implemented.

These include a clear objective and an understanding of how it will be implemented, the effort and commitment to act, worker concentration, flexible strategies, committed leaders, honest members of the organisation, and a peaceful organisational environment. It is essential for the entire organisation to collaborate to achieve the business's goals. In contrast, Ophilia and Hidayat (2021) emphasise that an organization's communication strategy should include elements such as communication target identification, situational factors, channel selection, message purpose, the role of communicators in communication, resource attractiveness, and source credibility. On the other hand, strategic communication contributes positively and directly to the successful completion of all operations, missions, and activities of an organisation by increasing public awareness and comprehension of organisational objectives and mechanisms and, consequently, increasing support among various audiences for specific activities carried out by the organisation (Brindusa, 2019).

Internal communication crisis

Internal communication crisis refers to a situation where a breakdown in communication occurs within an organization, resulting in confusion, misunderstandings, and potentially harmful consequences (Frandsen & Johansen, 2011). This can happen due to various reasons, such as poor communication infrastructure, lack of clarity in directives, conflicting messages from management, or even organizational culture issues (Adamu & Mohamad, 2019). In today's highly connected world, such crises can spread quickly, leading to damage in reputation and loss of trust among employees. Organizations need to be proactive in maintaining a transparent and effective communication system to prevent such crises from occurring and mitigate their impact if they do occur (Heide & Simonsson, 2021). Communication in a sense of crisis is a neglected topic in accounting studies (Andon & Free, 2014). Given the severe financial crisis that banks have been experiencing since 2007, this is especially startling.

Numerous bank failures, including those of Lehman Brothers, UBS, Barclays, Northern Rock (NR), and Royal Scottish, have received extensive media coverage and demonstrate the need for management and regulators to stabilise crisis conditions. Nonetheless, crisis-related media communications by senior-level managers and financial regulators remain largely unexplored and underanalyzed. During an internal communication crisis, when stakeholders have lost trust in numbers, their perceptions of a particular bank as a "good bank" are questioned. As a result of the "politics of representation" (Liff & Wahlström, 2018), the meaning of communication can never be determined beforehand.

Value of communication management strategies in handling internal communication crisis

Several studies have shown that effective communication management strategies can be instrumental in handling internal crises. According to a study by Ghantous and Alnawas (2021), communication is crucial during a crisis as it helps in reducing anxiety and confusion and ensures that individuals receive accurate, consistent, and timely information. Effective communication can also help in building trust and credibility with internal stakeholders such as employees and investors. One of the most critical communication management strategies during a crisis is transparency.

Research has shown that organizations that are transparent and open in their communication tend to have better outcomes during a crisis (Liu-Lastres et al., 2019). Transparency involves openly sharing information with stakeholders, including the causes of the crisis, the steps being taken to address it, and regular updates on progress. Another essential communication management strategy is the use of multiple channels to communicate with stakeholders. During a crisis, it is crucial to use a variety of communication channels, including social media, email, and face-to-face communication, to ensure that stakeholders receive timely information. It is also essential to tailor the message for each channel according to the needs of the stakeholders.

Strategic Employee Communication Model

The Barrett model is one of the most effective models for developing employee-centric strategic communication in a dynamic format. Stoyanova (2011) argues that Barrett's method emphasises communication changes in a few diagnostic areas. Consequently, businesses that employ change communication strategies can address the challenges that arise at each level, particularly during the change process and with the correct approach (Klein, 1996). In his methodology, Barrett advocates structured communication to impart fundamental objectives strategically. To assure the effectiveness of strategic communication, it is necessary to tailor

the message to a specific audience. Barrett provides two comprehensive factors for effective communication as a result, namely the interaction between strategic objectives and employee-to-employee communication. The importance of senior and intermediate management who are directly involved and accountable for communication up, down, and across the organisation is one of these factors. Second, the significance of communicating with specific audience information. Barret argues that different communication strategies should be employed for different audiences, that information should be adapted to the audience, and that alternative terms should be used. Assume, for example, that the wording for production and headquarters employees should differ from that of other departments' employees (Mahbob et al., 2019).

In addition, Barrett emphasises the significance of selecting and utilising suitable communication instruments. Because not every communication technology is suitable for every employee. Barrett also envisions communication professionals participating in the change management process. This is because the communication staff must "sit at the table" with senior management and participate in decision-making. When lacking a dedicated internal communication manager, an organisation relies on change agents to perform the communication function. However, the present study does not investigate why this aspect of influencing the communication process is so difficult. Barrett concludes by recommending the introduction of formal ongoing evaluation of communication over time.

Conceptual framework
According to Figure 1, the conceptual framework is the study's guiding principle. The proposed framework for the present study was developed to accomplish the objective to discover the value of communication management strategies in handling internal communication crisis in Malaysia's financial services sector. The proposed framework emphasises the strategy to improve the uniformity of communication strategies used by employees in the financial services sector during internal communication crises, based on a review of multiple theories and literature.

The central idea of the present study is to demonstrate the significance of the communication management strategies model in crisis management. If effective communication practises are implemented, employees may experience less emotional damage, loss of self-confidence, and low self-esteem (Obermiller et al., 2012). According to Okoro (2012), the expansion of a diverse workforce is accompanied by a variety of communication issues and barriers, such as traditions, skills, experiences, and attitudes towards the workplace and employees, which can negatively impact workplace communication. This study recommends that employees in the Malaysian financial services sector utilise the communication management strategies model during an internal communication crisis.
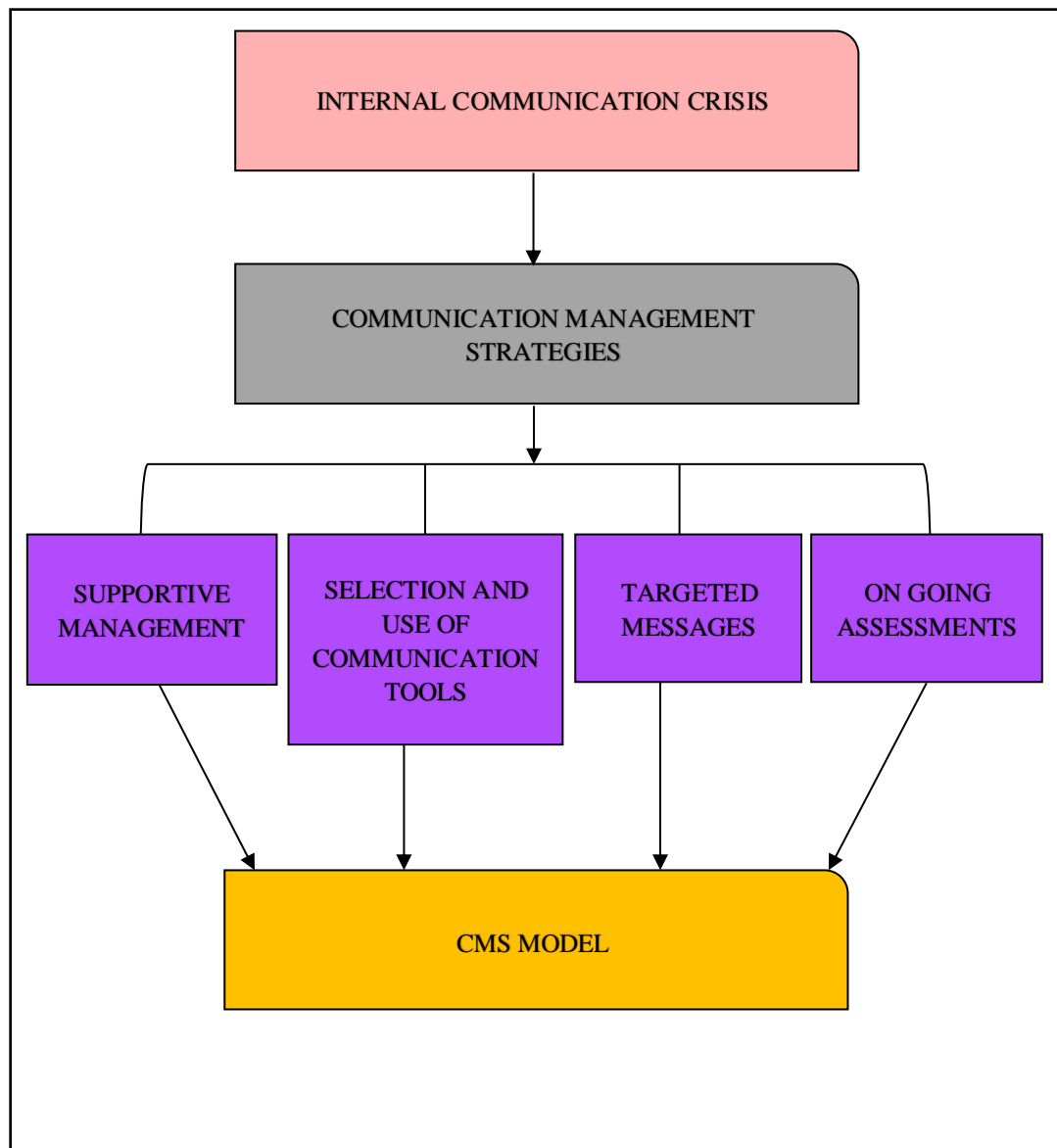
Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Discussion and Conclusion

Communication management strategies play a crucial role in handling internal communication crisis in Malaysia's service sectors. Effective communication helps to mitigate the impact of a crisis on the organization's reputation, customer retention, and the morale of employees. The Malaysia's service sectors are particularly susceptible to negative publicity that arises from internal communication crises. Therefore, the value and importance of communication management strategies in handling such a situation cannot be overlooked for a number of reasons.

Firstly, communication management strategies allow the organizations to take a proactive approach to managing the crisis. By having a well-crafted communication plan, the organizations can anticipate potential issues and prepare for an appropriate response. A clear communication plan helps to ensure that everyone is on the same page and aligns their actions with the company's goals. Secondly, communication management strategies help to build trust in the customers. When a crisis arises, customers may lose trust in the organization and its products or services. Therefore, it is crucial to communicate openly and honestly with the customers. A clear and transparent communication plan helps to build confidence in the customers and reassures them that the organization is taking measures to address the issue. Thirdly, communication management strategies serve to reassure the employees and maintain their morale.

A crisis can create uncertainty among the employees, leading to a decline in their morale and job satisfaction. By providing timely and accurate information, the organization can reassure its employees, maintain their morale, and keep them focused on the tasks at hand. Lastly, communication management strategies help to manage the organization's reputation during and after a crisis. A well-managed communication plan can help to minimize the impact of negative publicity on the company's reputation. It helps to convey a positive image of the organization and its efforts to address the situation. Furthermore, communication management strategies play a crucial role in handling internal communication crises in Malaysia's service sectors. Effective communication allows the organizations to take a proactive approach, build trust in the customers, maintain employee morale, and manage the company's reputation.

As it is essential to have a well-crafted communication plan in place to address any crisis effectively, effective communication management strategies are crucial for handling internal crises in Malaysia's service sector. These strategies involve identifying key stakeholders, understanding their communication needs, and developing and implementing communication strategies that are transparent, tailored, and up-to-date. Through effective communication management, companies can minimize the impact of internal crises, build trust and credibility with stakeholders, and enhance their overall performance. Effective communication management strategies play a crucial role in mitigating the effects of internal crisis situations in the Malaysian service sector. Each sector should have a comprehensive communication plan outlining the roles of stakeholders, potential crisis scenarios, and communication channels. Communication strategies should be proactive, expeditious, accurate, transparent, and ongoing. Consequently, through continuous communication, all sectors in Malaysia can cultivate trust and safeguard their reputations during times of crisis.

Co-Authors' Contribution
The authors affirmed that there is no conflict of interest in this article. Authors 1 and 2 carried out the fieldwork, prepared the literature review, and overlooked the whole article's write-up. Author 3 wrote the research methodology section and will do the data entry. Authors 3, 4, and 5 carried out the analysis and interpretation of the results together, and prepared the conclusions and recommendations based on the results obtained.

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