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Crisis Management Strategies for Sustaining Organizations During a Crisis

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This is to certify that the doctoral study by

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Abstract

Public relations directors often lack crisis management strategies to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. Public relations directors who better understand crisis management strategies may benefit their organizations by improving crisis prevention and recovery while maintaining organizational reputation and profitability. Grounded in situational crisis communication theory, the purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore crisis management strategies that some public relations directors use to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. Data were collected using semistructured interviews with three public relations directors from Upper Manhattan, New York, supporting documents from previous case studies listed on their website, and journal notes. Data analyzed using thematic analysis identified three themes: reactive crisis communications and decision making, sustainability crisis planning and organizational reputation, and precrisis prevention and preparedness. A key recommendation is for public relations directors responsible for handling crises to understand the potential threats, crisis, and organization encounters, thus innovating crisis management strategies to ensure continued profitability. Positive social change implications could include improved crisis preparedness and reduced crisis disruption while reducing damage economically to the organization and surrounding communities. The resulting positive social changes can help leaders and organizations increase profits, create jobs, and support economic development at the local community level.

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Dedication

My study is in honor of my family, friends, colleagues, business associates, and the Philadelphia community. Everyone provided me with support and encouragement throughout my doctoral journey, and my classmates offered ongoing assistance during the doctoral processes. Finally, I want to extend a great appreciation to my former classmate, Dr. Angela Welbaum, for her valuable advice and undying loyalty in this doctoral journey.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

Organizational leaders have different problems, such as internal and external threats, and many public relations directors have yet to master the use of new technology to resolve day-to-day operational crises such as media, political, and framing crises (Therrien et al., 2019). Organizational leaders need to implement ways to reduce the impact of crises for the betterment of the organization. One strategy that organizations can use to minimize these problems is by using crisis management strategies. Organizational environment refers to internal and external environmental factors that affect administrative activities and decision making. Some public relations directors lack business administration knowledge, including crisis management strategies and technology, to survive a crisis (Popov & Aksenova, 2019). Public relations directors can gain insights into successful crisis management strategies for minimizing the impact of organizational disturbances in reputation and profitability due to the findings from this study.

Background of the Problem

Due to the increasing incidence and severe impact of crisis disruption and potential destruction, organizational leaders and public relations directors have begun to focus on crisis management strategies and the need to respond to crisis risks (Kushchyk, 2019). With the increasing complexity and interconnection of crises, public relations professionals are finding it increasingly difficult, if not impossible, to handle the nature and description of any unanticipated events (Ihlen & Heath, 2019). Public relations directors must use relevant information directly to flow from analyzing their organization's environment (Orazalin & Mahmood, 2019). Concordant to Ray (2019), successful leaders agree that all organizations experience crises but know how to apply specific actions to overcome the situation. Without any strategic crisis planning or crisis management strategy, the crisis may not resolve early and remain chaotic (Xie, 2019).

Unexpected circumstances can be damaging to a small firm. According to Faubert (2020), business managers must consider crisis planning and strategic management to manage business environment crises. A crisis can occur in all types of organizations, from the wealthiest empires to *mom-and-pop* stores, and decision makers must be ready to act fast when business issues arise (Marmot, 2019). Crisis management and strategic planning helps public relations directors assess an organization's business environment dynamics and become familiar with similar changes. Hence, crisis management strategy planning is a documented set of activities and actions designed by experts such as public relations directors, referenced when a crisis occurs to save time and maintain order (Therrien et al., 2019). An organizational plan is essential to protect a business from the impact of potential crises.

Problem Statement

The adverse effect of a crisis manifests in wide-reaching negative implications for businesses and their leaders (Finucane et al., 2020, p. 1). Strategic practices are central to achieving organizational resilience following crises. For example, DesJardine et al. (2019) reported that approximately 27% of 963 United States-based publicly listed corporations recovered within 12 months after the 2008 global financial crisis leveraging such measures (pp. 1,425, 1,448). The general problem is that public relations directors cannot project the impact of a crisis and its effect on an organization's business reputation and subsequent profitability. The specific business problem is that some public relations directors lack crisis management strategies to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the crisis management strategies employed by some public relations directors to maintain a company's reputation following a crisis while also ensuring continued profitability. Participants in this study were three public relations directors from three public relations organizations in Upper Manhattan, New York. The public relations directors demonstrated effective crisis management strategies to maintain an organization during a crisis. Findings from the research may contribute to social change by identifying successful crisis management strategies public relations directors could use to sustain their businesses. In addition, positive social change implications could enable public relations directors to extend educational and new crisis management initiatives to organizations to prevent a crisis disruption, resulting in continuing vice gainful employment, economic stability, and stronger communities.

Nature of the Study

I chose qualitative research as the methodology for the study. The qualitative design allows for a thorough examination of the descriptive questions (Yin, 2018). Researchers use the qualitative method to explore and explain the meaning of human and social behavior (Mohajan, 2018). Therefore, the qualitative method was the most practical design for this study. Researchers use the quantitative approach to describe, investigate, and identify the relationship between variables (Taylor et al., 2017) and provide a descriptive mathematical analysis (Lorig et al., 2019). Because I explored strategies rather than examining variables and testing hypotheses, the quantitative approach was inappropriate for the study. When either approach is insufficient on its own, mixed methodology is used to combine qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study (Zhou et al., 2017). Thus, the mixed methodology was not appropriate for this study because it will not need quantitative methods to collect data and analysis.

I examined the following qualitative research designs for this study: (a) narrative design, (b) ethnographic design, (c) phenomenology design, and (d) case study. Researchers use the narrative design to focus on and analyze an individual's life experiences over time (Nigar, 2019). Narrative design is the study of ways humans experience the world through obtaining participants' stories (Squires & Dorsen, 2018), which was not the focus of this study. Researchers use ethnographic design when studying how people interact and how culture affects group members and specific groups (Elsbach & Stigliani, 2018). The ethnographic design was unsuitable for the study. When studying members for their actual human experience in a significant life event, researchers use the phenomenological design (Frechette et al., 2020). The phenomenological design was unsuitable because the study would not include personal understanding and viewpoints from experiencing one or more incidents. To gain an in-depth understanding, researchers employ a case study methodology problem (Taylor et al., 2017) involving complex subjects and few participants (Lorig et al., 2019). Given the complexities of the subject under investigation, a multiple case study was the best study design.

Research Question

What crisis management strategies do public relations directors use to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability?

Interview Questions

1. What crisis management strategies have you used to sustain an organization's operation during the last 5 years?
2. What were the critical implementations in developing crisis management strategies during the last 5 years for public relations organizations?
3. What are crisis management strategies put in place to reduce public relations organization's unexpected operational interruption?
4. How do you measure public relations organization's crisis management strategy's effectiveness?
5. What crisis management strategies do you employ to positively affect public relations organization's brand image on social media platforms?
6. How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your crisis management strategies as a public relations director?
7. What were the challenging barriers to deploying effective crisis management strategies?
8. How did you overcome the challenges of implementing effective crisis management strategies?

9. What changes in crisis management strategies have you seen in the past 5 years?
10. What additional information about effective crisis management strategies might you offer?

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework and the underlying theory for this qualitative multiple case study was situational crisis communication theory (SCCT). Coombs introduced SCCT in 2007 as a theory in crisis communication (Coombs, 2017). SCCT includes strategists for crisis management who should align the strategic crisis response with crisis obligation levels and the reputational challenge presented by a crisis (Coombs, 2017). SCCT components identify crisis outcomes by focusing on a reputational threat, corporate branding, and organizational reputation repair (Coombs, 2017). According to the SCCT, organization survival depends on the public relations director's ability to obtain critical resources from the external environment for the long term (Almarshoodi, 2020). Crisis response strategies seemingly make it easier for an organization to categorize and deal with a crisis.

SCCT encompasses applications that researchers use in various psychosocial domains such as educational achievement, health behaviors, organizational management, and affective reactions (Kim, 2017). Marsen (2020) determined that organizational success depends on an organization's ability to adjust its structure to reduce reliance on others for resources and obtain required external support. Organizational public relations directors use various procedures to reduce uncertainty in resource flow (Sellnow et al., 2017). Consonants to SCCT, establishing interorganizational relationships are an appropriate procedure to attain organizational resources, maintain dependence, and reduce uncertainty (Elliott & Villegas, 2020). Public relations directors seek to increase organizational support by establishing a collaborative relationship with corporate partners (Coombs, 2017). Resource dependency guidance is essential for organizations to understand external dependencies' difficulty (Claeys & Coombs, 2019). When a crisis takes an organization by surprise, the recovery crisis management strategy is necessary to salvage its reputation and financial futures.

SCCT is based on the theory of crisis communication. Public relations directors can use SCCT to match strategic crisis responses to the level of crisis responsibility. SCCT modeling aids in identifying crisis outcomes, including effect, behavioral intentions, and organizational reputation (Coombs & Tachkova, 2019). SCCT suggested guidelines can help public relations directors employ for reputational protection during a crisis disruption. Not only is SCCT based on a business leader's comprehension of organizational crises, it also anticipates how organizational leaders will react to each type of crisis response. Because SCCT is a model for understanding crisis communication at the strategic level, it does not provide detailed crisis management strategies. Coombs (2020) pointed out that the crisis response effectiveness is influenced by how the organization's leaders managed the precrisis phase (prevention and preparation) and the postcrisis stage (learning from mistakes and successes). In contrast, social media dynamics limit developing a crisis response or preparation phase of a crisis (Coombs, 2017). In correlation with SCCT, public relations directors can articulate the variables, assumptions, and relationships in selecting crisis response strategies to protect an organization's reputation and preserve profitability.

Researchers should use SCCT to study and understand the development of interorganizational relationships to decrease uncertainty in resource flow (Coombs, 2017). According to SCCT, the director of public relations attempts to guide organizations to manage their resource dependencies by establishing several interorganizational arrangements (Coombs, 2017). Thus, SSCT was appropriate for this study because public relations directors leverage customer and supplier relationships to reduce operational uncertainty and improve organizational reputation and profitability postcrises.

Operational Definitions

Crisis intervention: A time-sensitive and limited intervention with a specific stabilization approach to managing a crisis (Janáková & Šrobárová, 2020).

Crisis management plan: A reference tool that provides lists of key contact information, an outline of the steps implemented in a crisis, and procedures to document a crisis response (Kuipers et al., 2019).

Emergency action plan (EAP): A written procedure detailing the appropriate response to various emergencies is an essential component of an organization's safety procedures (Lee et al., 2020).

Internal crisis communication: Refers to disseminating information by an organization to address a crisis that impacts customers and the organization's reputation

(Claeys & Coombs, 2019). Internal crisis communication is a set of guidelines to prepare a business for an emergency or unexpected event (Heide & Simonsson, 2019).

Organizational crisis: A threat or damage occurs outside the organization at hand but implicates the organization by attributing responsibility or culpability (Park & Avery, 2019). According to Xu (2019), organizational crises are "specific, unexpected, and non-routine events or series of events that generate high levels of uncertainty and threat or perceived threat to an organization's business goals" (p. 123).

Reputational crisis: Assessment of an unforeseeable occurrence that poses a threat to stakeholders' positive expectations and can have detrimental outcomes that negatively impact a firm's performance (Moon, 2019).

Risk management: A proactive method that organizational managers use to address, analyze, and control risks and uncertainties within an organization (Sharma & Soederberg, 2019).

Situational assessment: A systematic process to gather, analyze, synthesize, and communicate data to inform planning decisions. Information from a situational assessment used to inform the development of program goals, objectives, target audiences, and activities (Xie et al., 2017).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are things accepted as true without proof that a researcher makes when starting a study even though in any given situation, they may or may not be correct (Theofanidis & Fountouki, 2018). First, I assumed that the participants responded to all the interview questions with complete, accurate, and honest answers. Secondly, I assumed that people were frank and offered honest answers to questions from the interview. My third assumption was that the participants’ answers to the interview questions could help answer the research question.

Limitations

A study's limitations represent the potential of the results of future research directions (Aguinis et al., 2018). Limitations also include the types of new venture modeling strategies participants use, which may not represent the entire information technology industry. In addition, limitations are a potential weakness of the study beyond the control of the researcher (Morgado et al., 2017) as well as vulnerabilities in research usually derived from the study of small sample sizes, limited data availability, and one region geographically (Dowling et al., 2018). In this study, there were two limitations. The first limitation was scheduling conflicts for accessing the participants in the study. The second and final limitation was the possibility that some participants may have withheld valuable information due to fear of losing an advantage in the industry, which could limit the study's findings.

Delimitations

Delimitations are the boundaries and scope of the study. The delimitations are the study's frame in context and its lack of transferability from a control area (Daniel, 2018). This study's boundary was three public relations directors from three public relations firms in Upper Manhattan, New York.

Significance of the Study

The study's significance is the potential of discovering crisis management strategies that public relations directors could apply to handle a crisis disruption. The results of this study may present insight into effective crisis management strategies public relations directors employ in the corporate sector to mitigate the effects of a crisis disruption. A crisis can lead to massive losses for organizations and related partners (Bruyaka et al., 2018). Efficient management and policies may improve organizational performance, align profitability goals with protecting the environment, protect the workforce and the stakeholders' interests, and comply with regulations to avoid costly penalties and litigations (Chatzitheodorou et al., 2021). Conversely, ignoring a crisis is an operational risk that may lead to negative results (Kaufman, 2019). This study's outcome may help public relations directors improve crisis preparedness, decrease response time, and reduce recovery costs.

Contribution to Business Practice

In this qualitative multiple case study, I explored crisis management strategies used by public relations directors to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. Public relations directors could use this study's results to find effective crisis management strategies, crisis mitigation protocol, and successful practices fellow public relations directors use for crisis avoidance. The introduction of the crisis management strategies resulting from this study's findings could help public relations directors create innovative ideas to help maintain organizational growth beyond a crisis disruption. Deploying effective crisis management strategies can save organizational resources and improve customer value and satisfaction (Anand et al., 2020). Public relations directors could benefit from this study's result, leading to potential development in creating new effective crisis management strategies for minimizing the negative impacts of a crisis disruption.

Implications for Social Change

Society may benefit from research on the best crisis management strategies to mitigate the negative consequences of crisis damage affecting the organization, employees, and communities. Social changes positively impact social affairs involving individuals, organizations, and communities (He & Harris, 2020). As a result, the study's findings may lead to improved crisis preparedness and reduced community damage.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

In this qualitative multiple case study, I explored crisis management strategies used by public relations directors to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. Public relations directors implement crisis management strategies to avoid unexpected operational interruptions. Crises are events that inherently carry potential damage and catastrophic effects and may result in a negative public perception (Fischbacher-Smith, 2017). Potential crises can negatively affect any organization. The statistics regarding the crisis in American corporate organizations revealed that 89% of responding Fortune 500 organizations agreed that a business crisis is as inevitable as death and taxes; however, 50% of respondents admitted not having a qualified crisis management plan (Gallent, 2019). From 2003 to 2019, developing crisis management strategies for organizations was not a priority (Duradoni &

Di Fabio, 2019). In managing a crisis, an established crisis management strategy provides for an immediate response, along with preparedness to quickly address the potential and unexpected risk of financial loss and closing business operations (Gabrielli et al., 2019). A well-managed crisis can help an organization overcome a crisis and lead it to a better state; however, a poorly managed crisis can harm stakeholders, cause losses for an organization, or even lead to the organization's demise.

Background information for this study included a comprehensive literature review. I structured the literature review by topic and themes using the following keyword searches to identify peer-reviewed sources: *crisis, crisis management, crisis management theory, crisis response, public relations, risk management, crisis communication,* and *SCCT*. A thorough search of the literature revealed strategies used by public relations directors to improve a crisis management strategy. Some sources are from various databases were peer-reviewed journals within the last 3 years. This literature review contains 324 peer-reviewed works. Of the 349 published sources referenced in this study, 100% are within 5 years. The selection of literature developed from public relations directors' primary objective uses crisis management strategy to mitigate operational disruptions. Table 1 shows the types and counts of references.

Table 1

Types and Counts of References

	Recent (within 5 years of 2021)		Total	% of total references				
Seminal books	13		13	4%				
Organizations' websites & other nonpeer reviewed sources	12 276	0	12 276	100% 3%	0	276	276	276
Peer-reviewed articles	324		324	93%				
Total	349		349	100% (> 85%)				

Importance of Role Theory in Public Relations

Ferguson (2018) identified that the role theory concentrates significantly on shaping every aspect of contemporary society; the organization-public dialogue has become a significant area in public relations research and practices. The organization's position in the community is at a certain level, so its conduct should tally its social position. The role theory focuses on the roles of all actors, including organizations in the social system. According to the approach, organizations behave according to different rules, patterns, and individuals (Moss et al., 2017). Myers (2020) stated that the role theory has three factors: the character of an individual or organization, the discernment of the individual or organization, and the organizational structure's anticipations. Organizational structure demands can explain the pressures and expectations of the organization's environment (Tomasello, 2019). The discriminative power of role theory is the organization's sequence of actions (Myers, 2020). Hashim and Yng (2019) categorized peripheral publics to be corporate, nongovernmental, and administrative establishments. Rules of an organization in line with the public can influence an organization's role in society. When positions are hierarchically arranged in an organization, the exercise of authority is effective (Tomasello, 2019). Public relations directors use a crisis management strategy to manage a crisis by responding instantly and immediately to avoid further damage and disruption to an organization, which can inflict loss of profitability.

Public relations directors work on all sides of every economic, social, political, and religious issue. The role theory in public relations provides a practical and informative approach to educating interested parties (Vandyke & Lee, 2020). The role theory is a sociological and psychological ideology based on the notion daily activities are because of social influence (Vandyke & Lee, 2020). Theories will decide the critical components of public relations and the nature of relations (Jang, 2020). Role theory can provide a platform for evaluating public relations standards and policies. Cardwell et al. (2017) described public relations as endless and systematic administrative tasks of acquiring and maintaining the targeted organization's support. Theory helps public relations executives explain and predict human behavior and communications (Tomasello, 2019). Crisis response strategies are also an essential area of practice for public relations directors, which develop the different messages sent to various audiences, providing quick, accurate, and consistent responses.

Public relations managers use position theory to help institutions solve a crisis, according to Ham and Kim (2020), by forecasting the potential actions of an organization or individual. The principle of roles will help decision makers in public relations predict what they can do in a crisis. The forum will help conscientious and decisive choices in position theory for policymakers. Hou (2020) stated that the role theory gauges specific public relations policies' theoretical impacts. Role theory may be a starting point for describing public relations directors' critical activities in an organization and society. Public relations directors enable policymakers to make decisions using best practices to improve society's brand perception (Jang, 2020). When a crisis strikes an organization, the public wants to know what happened and how it may affect them; therefore, effective crisis communication should be transparent, proactive, and notable accountability established to restore the organization's reputation.

The role theory may support politicians in public relations by sharing explicit knowledge regarding how their target audience may behave (Almutairi et al., 2019). Role theory supports long-term decisions to predict future behaviors (Jang, 2020). Public relations practitioners communicate; they acknowledge the existence of a paternalistic culture with the imbalanced distribution of power (Lee & Kim, 2020). Public relations directors must create a consistent platform for focused and efficient messaging to the public during a crisis.

Public Relations Directors

A public relations director's job responsibility is to direct an organization's image and implements crisis management strategies. The public relations director's primary purpose is to serve as the organization's chief ambassador while also overseeing all communication streams to ensure a cohesive message and image (Khan, 2019). Organizations may encompass businesses, government, nonprofit organizations, celebrities, politicians, and other notable people. Public relations directors play a vital role and become heavily involved in crisis communications whenever a significant accident or a natural disaster affects an organization and its community (Men et al., 2017). Public relations directors create well-crafted campaigns often used for engagement. An organization will often choose a public relations director to be a spokesperson to discuss general issues regarding a crisis. In public relations, media relations are a critical component of crisis management (Place, 2019). Public relations directors should provide training and assistance because, during the crisis, they rarely are the spokesperson. Public relations directors are critical to the running of the organization's operations. Hence, the organization's actions, goals, objectives, and policies may result from public relations directors. Some public relations directors can be vibrant and may have a controlling interest in the firm (Schauster & Neill, 2017). Some public relations directors may have an enhanced understanding of the organization's goals and objectives.

Mohammed et al. (2019) defined the idea of public relations. A strategic management function provides a mutually beneficial relationship between the company and the public to develop conditions and policies. Thus, public relations as a management function in the organization also have a significant role and responsibility to achieve an organization's central objectivity. Public relations directors seek to communicate with all the notable publications, internal and external, to handle all crisis disruptions and preserve the organization's positive image in public. The public relations director's objective is to promote mutual understanding with audiences, confidence, strong reasoning, and logic while safeguarding organization interests of the public interest, governments, and other organizations (Pieczka, 2019). Analyzers of public relations recognize that the organization's needs and attitudes and will transfer to managers of an organization. By providing technical consultations to organizational leaders, policymakers can significantly share policy formulating and organizations' executive programs (Kaufman, 2019). A crisis management strategy helps an organization mitigate and contain the adverse effects of a crisis, including damage to reputation, regulatory or legal implications, loss of operations, and profitability.

Public relations are a combination of art and technology to communicate appropriately with people. A successful public relations director should understand the country and culture and understand psychology and psychology (Gregory & Fawkes, 2019). Public relations directors oversee the crisis management strategy in three main stages: diagnosing an impending danger signal, selecting a proper turnaround approach or strategy, and implementing and checking a change process (Kaufman, 2019). The first stage of the crisis management model detects early signals of an imminent crisis. The process entails reviewing the current situation and planning for employees to face challenging problems. The second step is to develop appropriate response strategies to help the organization reduce crises. The public relations director must make administrative choices based on facts and data to formulate potential strategy correctly. The final phase is the implementation and monitoring stage, where an organization puts the selected strategy into action (Kaufman, 2019). An effective crisis management strategy can significantly reduce the amount of disruption and damage an organization could receive because of the crisis.

Public relations directors train to address an immediate crisis to avoid the organization's destructive downfall (Crago, 2020). An organizational crisis happens when a startling issue puts the strength of an organization in danger. These situations can start internally, and external influences can accelerate them. The issue influencing organization processes and the flow of work could be out of its control and resolve. Whenever a crisis is unaddressed, the crisis may harm an organization. The most straightforward approach to recognize an organization's crisis is to evaluate the issue. Crago (2020) posited that public relations directors' limited education regarding managing crises might contribute to a plan's failure. Since 2009, organizations have been implementing a crisis management strategy in the business budget and planning for recovery postcrisis (Pedersen et al., 2020). An organization's inability to provide the public with an accurate response regarding a crisis can delay recovery from a crisis disruption (Arendt et al., 2017). Understanding the components of an organization's crisis can play a key role in identifying and responding to a crisis.

Speaker preparation is a vital element of the training of the public relations staff (Place, 2019). Organizational leaders must be ready to speak during a crisis to news media to convey a sound crisis management strategy. Media Training is often used as a crisis communication tool to publicly address a crisis to the public. Fessmann (2017) focused on the attention to media relations in a crisis. An organization must have a well-trained and experienced public relations director and communications team members

(Singh et al., 2020). Public relations directors gain professional experience by presenting practical and effective crisis management strategies (Singh et al., 2020). The director of public relations relies on implementing and monitoring the crisis phase (Johansen, 2017). The evaluation of the crisis management strategy's effectiveness requires public relations directors, the crisis management strategy.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory

In understanding how to use crisis communication strategies effectively, public relations directors can benefit from protecting reputational and monetary assets during an organizational crisis. SCCT, as conceived by Coombs, is a framework model for understanding, evaluating, and implementing specific communication strategies by leaders to a chosen organizational crisis (Ham & Kim, 2020). Based on SCCT, crisis managers and public relations directors must analyze a given situation first to choose proper crisis response strategies that best match the crisis to mitigate consequences such as loss of resources, reputations, and revenues (Fortunato, 2020). Park (2017) illustrated how SCCT focuses on the situation and environment of an organization along with the basis or cause of the crisis initially. Othman and Yusoff (2020) indicated that SCCT could further the knowledge about variables, assumptions, and relationships in selecting the most effective crisis response strategies to protect an organization's reputation while returning the organization to a more normal operating status during and after such a crisis.

Public relations directors can use SCCT guidelines to tailor their reputation-repair strategies to the reputational risk posed by a crisis. According to previous SCCT research, Wut (2019) discussed how public relations directors use accommodating reputation repair strategies as the reputational threat from the crisis intensifies. Within SCCT research, reputation repair strategies abound, and public relations directors should consider them in advance when selecting effective crisis response strategies to protect an organization's reputation and profitability (Page, 2019). The premise of SCCT is to match the crisis response to the level of crisis responsibility assigned to a crisis in a timely and efficient manner that minimizes losses for an organization (Ham & Kim, 2019). A potential supportive behavior proposition is a strong, positive correlation between organizational reputation and potential supportive behavior, and stakeholders who engage in these acts help an organization navigate a crisis with success (Parker et al., 2019).

Several steps or propositions exist within the SCCT framework, including the severity proposition, crisis history proposition, relationship history proposition, crisis strategy selection, and checking the response as well as limitations (Barkley, 2020). The severity proposition defines the significant intensifying effect of severity on liability in the event of a crisis and, therefore, can further damage organizational reputation (Zhang & Zhou, 2020). Xu (2020) discussed what the crisis history proposition means if an organization has a negative crisis history and a response that causes further damage to the organization's reputation. The relationship history proposition consists of two parts, the unfavorable relationship history in contrast to the second part, known as a favorable history (Kim, 2017). The first is an unfavorable relationship story, and it has an increasingly significant effect on crisis liability and damage to the organization's reputation. On the other, the second part is a historically favorable relationship. A favorable history, on the contrary, has considerably reduced the effect on crisis liability and damage to the organization's reputation (Kim, 2017). The history and the severity of the crisis may determine whether an organization is responsible for the crisis. The crisis response strategy selection proposition indicated that an organization would suffer minor reputational damage from a crisis and experience greater potential supportive behavior if they match the crisis response strategy to the reputational threat of the crisis (Park, 2017). The final step of the SCCT is to test crises against crisis response strategies and limitations to determine results. The SCCT, as a crisis communication framework, has provided leadership roles in crisis liability and the threat of reputational harm (Kim, 2017). Therefore, public relations directors must use crisis response strategies that reflect more significant concern for victims and take more responsibility for the crisis to repair reputations while maintaining profitability.

Furthermore, SCCT research includes attribution theory, divided into crises, response strategies, and recommendations. Public relations directors should use beneficial reputation repair strategies as the reputational threat of the crisis escalates, as proposed by Dulaney and Gunn (2018). To assess the reputational risk posed by a crisis, public relations directors may employ a two-step process. The first step is to determine the immediate crisis type, followed by how respondents evaluate attributions of crisis responsibility for the organization, resulting in a reputational threat assessment (Wut, 2019). The news media and other stakeholders define the crisis, which public relations directors must consider (Smith et al., 2018). In this study, I explored one of the basic assumptions of SCCT by assessing whether the predicted correlation relationship between crisis responsibility and organizational reputation occurred across a range of crisis types and public relations director's use of specific crisis management strategies to restore reputation and profits.

Communication Theory

Communication is vital to good management and a critical factor in the success of an organization. Communications can take the form of one human being and the perceived environment through messages in the form of symbols, thoughts, and signs (Cooren, 2018). It can take the state of one human being and the perceived environment through messages in the form of symbols, thoughts, and signs (Ellis, 2019). Models of communication aim to illustrate these theories with conceptual representations to explain human communication and improve implementation and practice.

Situational Leadership Theory

Rodić and Marić (2021) illustrated how situational leadership theory (SLT) indicates there is no single best leadership style and that the administration of employees must adapt to individual employees' skills and job maturity. Amongst the stakeholder groups, Myers (2020) observed situational theory could find out how the public might communicate passively and actively perform decisions made by the organization. Myers (2020) defined the SLT of public institutions and predicted specific general behaviors of dormancy. Masur (2018) noted three dynamics: constraint knowledge, problem recognition, and involvement level. An organization will endure exacting situations in tough times depending on many factors, internal and external, which are hard to control. Applying SLT might help an organization face challenges and potential crisis circumstances while developing strategies to overcome threats and weaknesses while capitalizing upon opportunities and strengths (Wikström, 2019). To understand the SLT, one must first understand what this theory seeks to measure (Rodić & Marić, 2021). An additional crucial factor is referral criteria, which individuals adopt in new circumstances from initial encounters (Santoso & Negoro, 2019). Finally, leaders minimize strategies to minimize the organization's responsibility and the severity of the crisis.

Gazenko (2018) determined that an active public is more likely to include a high degree of participation and awareness of the problem and less restriction identification. Gazenko wrote on a public desire for facts restrained by limited involvement and challenge acknowledgment or massive restraint recognition levels. The latent public is not conscious of the way a matter concerns them or threatens them. In simple terms, the dormant public is not interested in an issue. Gazenko used theory using problems to create functional and inert publics. Brunner and Smallwood (2019) believed that the active public finds it difficult to prioritize most emergencies. One shortcoming of the situational leadership theory is that it is not evident if the masses support it (Thompson & Glasø, 2018). One tenet of SLT is that a leader's effectiveness is dependent on the ability, readiness, and willingness of the leader's followers to complete a task. This leadership style combines task-oriented and relationship-oriented characteristics that are used depending on the situation and the followers involved. According to the SLT, as followers increase readiness, the leader's style adapts accordingly (Brunner & Smallwood, 2019). When an organization faces a crisis, it must provide information about corrective actions and demonstrate concern.

The situational leadership theory is significant to communication strategies as it prioritizes stakeholders' decision-making and involvement in an organizational setup (Kasanah, 2019). Priority is critical in an organization's decision-making process because the most skilled and active professionals must handle vital decisions to make multiple executive decisions to avoid a crisis (Wisittigars & Siengthai, 2019). Applying the situational leadership theory based on ideology may support identifying individuals' rights to handle the circumstances. Public relations decision-makers can assign decision-making and communication strategies to classify talents and skills (Almutairi et al., 2019). The most crucial aspect of dealing with a crisis is that crisis management strategies must reflect the concerns of victims, accountability, and crisis management responsibilities.

The situational leadership theory of communication strategies in crisis breaks down the problem (Othman & Yusoff, 2020). Faubert (2020) opined the public's division into various groups can help understand the challenges prioritized by the organization. Miller (2020) increased the relationship between the public and connected them with people in crisis to resolve communication strategies crisis. The situational leadership theory of communication strategies can improve how decision-makers inform stakeholders of relevant information. For example, some publics are not concerned by a lack of knowledge; thus, the theory can help policymakers explore how-to information and needs (Othman & Yusoff, 2020). On the other hand, communication with stakeholders is a significant undertaking, especially during a crisis, necessitating proper crisis management strategies.

Adaptive Structuration Theory

Groups and organizations use adaptive structuration theory (AST) to create rules and resources defined as structures (Turner et al., 2019). These structures form social systems that develop a life of their own. The quality of such structures within an organization affects decision-making, and thus, decisions affect the structure of an organization. By looking at communicating structures, it becomes possible to determine how people interact with technology and create actions based on their information. AST is the study of how information technologies can affect organizational change (Jack, 2017). AST is one of the main components of communication theories used to increase an organization's legal improvement opportunities. Public relations directors use AST as a resource outline to develop and address crisis management strategies.

Agenda Setting Theory

The agenda-setting theory focuses on mass media communication. Agenda setting occurs through a cognitive process known as "accessibility." Media provides the most relevant food for thought, portrays society's major issues, and reflects people's opinions (McCombs et al., 2018). Through this theory, technology and Internet capabilities are mass media communication enhancements that improve online communication among shareholders, business representatives, and customers (Duncan & Culver, 2020). Public relations directors should improve the agenda and communication aspects of crises to improve the function of crisis communications.

Communication Accommodation Theory

The communication accommodation theory (CAT) is a general theoretical framework for both interpersonal and intergroup communication. CAT mainly uses a communication guide for public relations directors to understand how people adjust their communication according to situations and people involved. These adjustments are a guide to divergences and convergence. Divergence refers to a group of people through their identity (Holbert & Park, 2019). It is the fusion of individuals with little influence in society. People identify who they are speaking through their communication styles (Williamson et al., 2020). To protect reputations and profits, public relations directors must help the public overcome their fear of the crisis and guide them toward a positive attitude toward organizations.

Cultivation Theory

Cultivation theory is the study of media effects (Weisbuch et al., 2017). The underlying premise of cultivation theory on how people regularly exposed to media over long periods will perceive the world's social realities as presented through media exposure and the emerging influence of the audience's attitudes and behaviors (Graziano & Gauthier, 2018). In addition, cultivation theory influences audiences and altruistic behaviors through contact with the media (Gerbner, 2019). The focus of cultivation theory is long-term cumulative exposure to television and the resulting behaviors due to regular exposure.

Face Negotiation Theory

Ting-Toomey (2017) established a face negotiation theory on how people of different cultural backgrounds communicate and handle conflicts (Rahim & Katz, 2020). The face negotiation theory posited face or self-image when communicating with others as a universal phenomenon that pervades cultures (Azhar et al., 2020). For example, collectivist culture focuses on groups' values; hence, the conflicting collectivist style banks a familiar face (Ye et al., 2019). On the other hand, the individualistic style concentrates on people, and it uses a particular strategy to defend them.

Framing Theory

The framing theory reflects the audience's interpretation of specific media or information (Gosling & Moutier, 2018). The framing theory is the meaning of understanding the perceptions of an audience. The framing theory regards how the media interprets the news and influences the audience. Public relations directors consider framing issues affected by ideology or personal variables (Clark & Nyaupane, 2020). Public relations directors identify the key risks organizations face, their customers' perceptions, and crisis management strategies to protect the business and restore proper perceptions of existing and potential customers.

Hypodermic Needle Theory

The hypodermic needle theory is known as the magic bullet theory (Nwabueze & Okonkwo, 2018). The mass media have direct, instant, and influential information effects, which enter the audience's body, similar to a hypodermic needle entering a patient's body (Anderson, 2021). The hypodermic needle theory means that the media can inject highly influential information into passive and susceptible people.

Social Exchange Theory

The social exchange theory is a prominent theoretical perspective in sociology and management (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Symbolic interactionism, structural-functionalism, and conflict theory include social system theory. The theory of social exchange involves interpersonal relationships between people (Walsh, 2020). In this self-interest, trust is transferable from one person to another. Social exchange theory is analogous to social learning theory, where people learn from observing others and then replicate their techniques and behaviors.

Crisis

Généreux et al. (2019) defined a crisis as a significant threat to operations. When a crisis hits an organization, it dominates the agenda and necessitates immediate action. The way an organization responds to a crisis can vary greatly. A fundamental principle in crisis management planning is vital, and strategic communication methods help deal with events that negatively influence an organization (König et al., 2020). Potential risk to organizations, customers, and sector identifies through crisis management. The danger to public safety, financial damage, and credibility loss could cause a crisis (Généreux et al., 2019). Preparing for crises and responding appropriately to them can mean the difference between survival and closure or even flourishing. After all, crises may present abundant opportunities for learning and change if an organization equips with the right tools to handle them. Crisis response planning helps organizations respond and answer questions before, during, and after a crisis occurs—the plan designed to address the worst-case scenarios. There are many sides to managing any crisis planning and response. The objective goal is to establish procedures and protocols to guide employee action, management decision-making, and client expectations. Organizations that anticipate a crisis will prepare adequately and handle such situations or avoid the crises altogether (Beldad et al., 2017). The crisis response is what public relations directors decide and put into action after the crisis occurs, and the messages distribute to various audiences.

A crisis is inescapable, making it essential for an organization to react to and prepare for operational disruption (Shore, 2020). Therefore, it is critical for a public relations director to effectively anticipate a crisis directive and proactively plan for a crisis (Y. Kim, 2020). The public relations director is the primary administrator in anticipating potential problems and identifying critical options for difficult situations. A crisis can erupt in numerous ways and an assortment of extraordinary circumstances. Public relations directors should prepare the response's scope, and each response method is suitable for other types of crises (Kim & Lim, 2020). Examples of such organizations include financial, natural, technological, and personnel crises (Kim & Lim, 2020). A crisis solution intends to enable the company's leadership and staff to avoid damaging its image or reputation (Diers-Lawson, 2019). The primary function of the crisis solution is to deliver crisis preparedness for organizations to sustain their operations, restore their reputations, and ensure continued profitability.

The crisis management strategy aligns into three stages: (1) before the crisis, (2) after the crisis, and (3) crisis response (Diers-Lawson, 2019). The before the crisis occurs before the onset of the emergency. Then after the crisis will eventually include some form of recovery. The crisis response occurs as a crisis occurs. A dedicated public relations team allows an organization to collectively tackle a crisis or disaster and minimize loss of life, property, or reputation (Diers-Lawson, 2019). Public relations directors are the vessels used to control and manage the spread of information between an organization and the public.

Crisis Management Strategy

A successful crisis management strategy can help avoid a crisis (Alzatari & Ramzani, 2019). Preparation involves creating the crisis management strategy, selecting and training public relations directors, and exercises to test the crisis management strategies by public relations teams (Bhaduri, 2019). Kalkman (2019) studied when a crisis hits an organization; a crucial step is to assemble the most effective team members assigned to manage the situation. An organization should hire a public relations firm as an apparent authority in addressing the cause and effect of a crisis, as a guide throughout the crisis, and continuing support postcrisis. In addition, the organization assigns or appoints a spokesperson to communicate and address the crisis with clarity, purpose and provide operational roles in assessing the crisis. Crisis management strategies are among the core administration policies of an organization. The operating departments throughout an organization must align with the organization's crisis management strategy practices. A company and partners protect from risks and reduce threats through a crisis management approach (Johansen, 2017). Having and practicing a comprehensive crisis plan can ensure the understanding of preparations to mitigate their impact, enable quicker recovery, and minimize potential threats.

Crisis management strategy pertains to this qualitative multiple case study because organizations can use these models to develop a disaster-recovery strategy (Giomboni & Pratt, 2018). Crisis management strategy pertains to several qualitative case studies because an organization benefits from understanding crisis communication strategy to mitigate loss and support the recovery process with transparency and trust (Okoli & Watt, 2018). Crisis management strategy pertains to qualitative multiple case studies because an organization benefits from understanding crisis communication strategy to mitigate loss and support the recovery process with transparency and trust (Okoli & Watt, 2018). In previous studies, when dealing with unexpected crises, corporate social responsibility must reduce the recurrence of situational crises (Park & Kim, 2019). Therefore, developing a crisis plan can save critical time and downplay the natural reactions that could exacerbate the crisis.

A rhetorical perspective considers what influences and what persuades people (Palonen, 2019). A rhetorical perspective focuses on social truth and the facts created and tested by people in groups (Palonen, 2019). These truths influence social and political decisions. The rhetorical perspective builds on the premise that an organization needs quality performance (Zagarella & Annoni, 2019). The absence of adequate crisis management strategies can cause additional damage and leave an organization without a recovery plan. Crisis management strategy itself is a discipline entailing management, communication, and public relations procedures (Park & Kim, 2019). Public relations directors' primary prepares an organization to foresee a crisis and conduct crisis management strategies of well-equipped tactics and resources (Park & Kim, 2019). Organizations are becoming more competitive and take many actions to maintain their competitive advantage (Kellerman, 2019). A crisis management strategy is the foundation of crisis response planning for organizations, which is positioning an organization to withstand a crisis.

International Organization for Standardization (ISO) defines a crisis as "a situation with a high level of uncertainty that disrupts the core activities and credibility of an organization and requires urgent action" (Lukitowati & Ramli, 2020, p. 1442). A significant barrier to implementing a crisis management strategy seems to be the unwillingness of an organization's executive to recognize the new information landscape, which has created a business environment that increases the crisis's frequency and intensity (Gupta & Krishnamurti, 2019). A volatile business environment may set the stage for catastrophic damages to the organization's financial base, reputation, production, or other vital areas of activity (Kim & Lim, 2020). Crises have numerous results and natures, resulting in different responding strategies. Further research might help leaders to define the utilization of SCCT in developing effective crisis management strategies.

Public relations directors need to understand better and adopt crisis principles due to several persistent elements (Kellerman, 2019). These include changing patterns and speed of information flow, changing organizational dynamics, more volatile financial markets caused by greater stakeholder access to information, and societal changes, including a public demand for more details (Kellerman, 2019). Individually and collectively, these elements require public relations directors to adopt a different set of operating principles. Amid a crisis, the stakes of decision-making, increase, nerves of those involved, and costly mistakes. In a crisis, communication must be accurate, timely, targeted at specific audiences, and forensic to be effective, whether the messaging is to an internal audience or one of many external discourse communities (Kellerman, 2019). Public relations directors need to assure the public that all pertinent information deliveries are issued correctly through press releases and intranet sites.

Crisis Communication

Public relations have a subspecialty called crisis communication, designed to protect individuals and organizations whose reputations are under attack (Diers-Lawson, 2017). Crisis communication is essential to ensure consistent communication is a priority during a crisis. Crisis communication is a strategic approach to effectively communicate with people and organizations during a disruptive event (Diers-Lawson, 2017). Several organizations rely heavily on crisis communication during their daily operations. Crisis communication is an essential element for the successful development of enterprises (Diers-Lawson, 2017). Companies can control the news source and have a better way of communicating with employees, stakeholders, and the general public by communicating and using newsletter posts on their website.

Proactive, quick, and thorough communication is essential when a crisis happens (Diers-Lawson, 2017). Businesses should have an emergency communication plan in place that details the protocol for disseminating information in the event of a significant crisis or disaster. To avoid taking a blanket approach to crisis management, it is critical to divide the crisis into different stages. A crisis demonstrates in three stages: precrisis, acute-crisis, and postcrisis (Diers-Lawson, 2017). Crisis management and response strategies fully integrated into the decision-making process improve crisis results for the organization.

Crisis Response

Crisis response is an approach to dealing with an event professionally that addresses the time's critical needs (Ou & Wong, 2020). The emphasis is on surviving the current crisis and mitigating its effects as much as possible. Crisis response refers to crisis management. Several public relations directors recognized the challenge of reputation restoration; an effective crisis management strategy focuses on public safety. Increased destruction from a tragedy results from the inability to resolve public safety (Bjørkdahl & Carlsen, 2018). Crisis response planning assists organizations in answering questions before crises arise— crisis planning is to prepare for the worst-case scenario. The goal is to create protocols and procedures that will guide an organization's decision-making, employee actions, and client expectations (Ou & Wong, 2020). A company must provide regular updates on the recovery process, corrective actions, and crisis investigations.

Public relations directors are essential after a crisis occurs. There is a critical role in responding to the crisis developed through messages sent to various publics (Mg, 2018). The public is more likely to accept defensive, supportive, and evasive crisis responses via traditional media than via social media and word-of-mouth (Anderson-Meli

& Koshy, 2020). Many studies have looked at crisis management, particularly the initial crisis response and credibility restoration. When a crisis impacts an organization, it is critical to have a responsive crisis management strategy to address the circumstances (Reuter & Kaufhold, 2017). The volume of information promised during the crisis and the organization's time to complete the recovery process determine the amount of follow-up information and communication required.

There is a need for sensitive and responsive crisis management strategies to address unforeseeable barriers to a potential crisis. Organization partners, representatives need to make versatile arrangements. In addition, there is a need to prepare for situations like monetary and workforce crises. Implications include the emotions generated by a disaster that may affect crisis management strategies (Benaben et al., 2020). Anxiety, for example, causes a clear desire to adapt content, communications to help stakeholders deal with the situation emotionally. Additional comprehension studies to understand the importance of contributing to stakeholder's emotions in crisis management strategies (Kapucu & Ustun, 2017). Practical crisis response strategies and methods protect and rescue an organization's reputation and enhance the importance of the public.

Initial Crisis Response. In processing a response to a crisis, coordination of decision-making has been a long-standing problem due to a lack of better crisis management strategies (Kusano & Sanada, 2019). Coordination requires authoritative, validated, and accurate information disseminated rapidly (Fuller et al., 2020). A straightforward selection of guidebooks from the tradition of public relations, its practitioner practice, and academy studies (Tao & Song, 2020). Eriksson (2018) postulated first crisis response guidelines focused on three points: quick, accurate, and consistent. A set of first crisis response scenarios represents a broad range of potential crises that an organization could plausibly face, based on significant risks identified during an organization's crisis planning (Eriksson, 2018). Several public relations directors agreed that crisis should be a learning experience. As a result, public relations directors occasionally evaluate the work of the crisis management strategy to discover potential improvements.

A crisis management strategy is a collective framework of decisions and choices made by an organization in response to a crisis or the perception of one (Granåsen et al., 2019). The goal of the crisis management strategy is to position an organization to withstand a crisis. The initial crisis response describes as the warning stage. Crisis management strategy best practices dictate crisis communication during the first phase of a crisis or emergency construct and consistent with the commitment to take the appropriate action to increase readiness as a potential emergency loom. A member of the organization, typically a supervisor or manager, detects an impending critical situation and alerts senior management to it. Organizational leaders must develop procedures to plan for, respond to, and recover from crises (Dirani et al., 2020). An effective crisis management strategy will make it easier for public relations directors and leaders to respond quickly to any crisis (P.S. Kim, 2020). Crisis management strategies are the foundation component of crisis response planning for organizations.

Precrisis Phase. The precrisis phase involves planning and education (Hatani, 2019). The precrisis stage describes a warning stage in which a member of the organization, usually the supervisor or manager, discovers a threatening critical situation (Smith, 2019). At the initial phase of a crisis, mass communication bypass, leaving the crisis limits the organizational hierarchy's higher tiers. Public relations directors' responsibility is to analyze the situation during this stage and determine its potential harm and any necessary action that needs attention. An emergency notification system is essential when managers begin risk assessment. The organization's emergency action plan activates with the communications gear towards assembling the team members, executives, and officials connected to the incident. An organization's public relations director monitors emerging risks, anticipates potential crises, educates interested parties about potential risks, and recommends actions in the event of a crisis (Hatani, 2019). The public relations director is skilled in defining the precrisis phase and precedes any other crisis management strategy planning step. The strategy lays the foundation for further planning.

The precrisis stage describes the warning stage in which a member of the organization, usually the supervisor or manager, discovers a threatening critical situation and warns the senior management (Nakhoda et al., 2018). Finally, the crisis reaction stage involves public relations directors' actions in a crisis. First, the organization's public relations director creates potential messages and communications test systems. Second, the crisis communications team should communicate during the event (Marsen, 2020). Third, the crisis management team, sometimes supported by other departments or external specialists, performs detailed crisis planning.

Acute-Crisis Phase. The acute crisis is the next stage of a crisis, where the crisis becomes visible to people outside the organization (Warnecke, 2020). It is necessary to activate strategies at this stage. In a small business, this usually refers to the business owner and some key staff members. At this point, a crisis communication system is developed to inform the public about the incident. At the acute-crisis stage, effective communication is critical to ensure constituents are aware of the incident and receive the necessary instructions (Banwart, 2020). First-responders called to the scene at this stage. The crisis communication shifts to giving a regular status update to the concerned audiences, modifying previous instructions, controlling rumors, and conferencing leadership and responder teams.

Postcrisis Phase. The company returns to business as usual in the postcrisis era. When a crisis moves from the acute crisis stage to the final stage of the crisis, the crisis becomes the postcrisis (Meyers & Holusha, 2018). At this stage, the organization is attempting to recoup its losses, while also demonstrating to the community, shareholders, and customers the consequences of the crisis via all-clear alerts and reassurance messages (Meyers & Holusha, 2018). In the postcrisis stage, the organization's critical goals are to recoup the losses, evaluate the performance during the crisis, and identify necessary crisis management system changes. Communication at this stage also includes postcrisis counseling. The postcrisis step searches for approaches for the organization to sustain operations during the occurrence of a similar crisis in the future (Meyers & Holusha, 2018). Reputation repair continues or begins at this point. Essential follow-up communication requires during the crisis phase, and the public requires additional information. Reputation repair is the recovery process that entails remedial measures and crisis investigations updated (Ihlen & Heath, 2019). The number of follow-up communications required depends on the crisis and the necessity to complete the recovery process. One of the significant yardsticks in crisis communications is meeting public expectations (Treurniet & Wolbers, 2020). Crisis strategic goals include managing the impact on an organization's finances and protecting important relationships, such as those with customers, regulators, and customers, and safeguarding an organization's reputation and public image.

Crisis Maintenance Phase. During the crisis maintenance phase, organizational leaders will communicate and detail ongoing risks (Teo et al., 2017). In addition, crisis management teams in organizations collect feedback from anyone affected by the crisis. When dealing with a crisis, it is necessary to correct any misinformation (Jin et al., 2020). The crisis maintenance process outlines a concerted attempt to avoid or handle the crisis when an organization foresees a crisis (Clarke, 2017). If an organization manages a crisis well, the organization can emerge with customer trust intact, revenues at precrisis levels, and organizational stability.

Resolution Crisis Phase. When the crisis reaches the resolution stage, the situation is over, but the recovery still exists, and communication continues (Wombacher et al., 2018). Communication is vital to recovery and rebuilding after a crisis has happened. The resolution phase is an excellent time to remind people how to prepare for the next crisis.

Communication Channels

The best way to convey crisis practices is through social media channels. However, if the crisis discusses multiple Internet channels, the crisis news may seem inconsistent (Wang, 2019). Social media is an excellent communication tool during a crisis. Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter are potential sites for effective communications channels. During a disruptive event, an organization should have a specific strategy for social media communications. The social media and website offer an organization, without losing hold of the disaster story, to present its side of the story. In theory, to control an organization's crisis narrative, the organization needs to be where it is unfolding (Wang, 2019). While the goal of crisis management strategies is always full recovery, an organization should also incorporate some survival strategies.

Proactive Crisis Management

The proactive team foresees a potential crisis and attempts to plan for it. For instance, an organization assembles an earthquake-safe office and sharing a plan with the workers for a natural crisis (Al-Khrabsheh, 2018). In dealing with crisis analysis, a mediator or negotiator may be helpful. Although not all crises are avoidable, leaders can enable organizations to mitigate potential crises.

Recuperation Crisis Management

A recuperation crisis management (RCM) design ensures and protects individuals, organizations, or companies confronting public image challenges (Nizamidou & Vouzas, 2020). However, mechanical and faculty crises can frequently catch a business off-guard, causing long-lasting negative impacts (Rasoulian et al., 2017). In these cases, the organization will be unable to decrease the effect of a long-term crisis. At this point, an organization would issue an open apology of remorse and lead an investigation into what caused the crisis.

Failure can bring about severe repercussions and extend investor losses (Bourne, 2019). Managing a crisis is a procedure intended to counteract or diminish the harm a crisis can bring to an organization (Sharma & Lee, 2019). As a procedure, the crisis management strategy is not a one-time event. The crisis managing teams partition into three stages: precrisis, crisis reaction, and postcrisis (Meyers & Holusha, 2018). Strategic crisis management necessitates public relations directors analyzing internal and external threats and vulnerabilities, developing a strategy, putting that strategy into action, and updating the strategy as conditions change.

Risk Management

Risk management is the process of mitigating and identifying risks, as well as assessing an organization's risks and preparing for and dealing with those that are deemed significant in a measured, professional manner (West, 2020). Risk management enables organizations to deal with uncertainty by taking precautions to safeguard their most valuable assets and resources. Risk management is the administration of policies designed to control risk (Hofmann & Scordis, 2018). For investors and financial institutions, such policies can improve insurable risks and reduce insurance costs (Lee, 2017). Risk management controls living with the likelihood of future occasions with unfavorable impacts (Thöns, 2017). Dealing with risk identifies with protecting the flow of profit and system management. A financial organization desires to acquire a satisfying profit for the assets contributed and to keep up an agreeable overflow of advantages past liabilities. Money-related subordinates, as a rule, and choices are seldom new and are instruments to oversee risk (Hofmann & Scordis, 2018). Also, creative thinking is an essential ingredient in crafting survival strategies.

Reputation Repair

There are several reputable repairs for crisis management strategies during a crisis, including the response phase and the postcrisis phase. Crisis management strategies is the essential component as a strong reputation repair effort aligned with the postcrisis stage (Xia et al., 2019). Directors in public affairs do better after the crisis to discuss reputational issues (Meynhardt et al., 2019). If a company has a history of related crises or previously negative fame, the reputable threat has escalated (Lee, 2019). According to Adamu et al. (2018), implementing successful crisis management strategies contributed to positive social change by mitigating financial losses for the organization and, as a result, the surrounding local economies, and communities.

Public relations directors specialized as experts in demonstrating, explaining, and clarifying views and values without being confrontational. Dealing with unexpected negative signals requires preparation. Negative signs can become an interruption to an organization. Strategies to transform a crisis into nonexistence is vital Reputation repair is a fundamental component of a crisis management strategy (Ferguson, Wallace, et al., 2018). There is a process of assessing reputation threats due to a crisis. News media and other stakeholders can define a crisis. Diers-Lawson (2019) had respondents assess the forms of crises based on catastrophe liability allocations.

The First Basel Accord

The first Basel Agreement (Basel I) on bank supervision in 1988 was an essential step towards achieving common capital standards (Ortino, 2019). However, fundamental accentuation is a wellspring of uncertainty in the financial business. The first Basel Accord adopted a strategy, a genuinely coarse and estimated risk in an insufficiently manner (Rehman et al., 2019). In 1996, the significant alteration to Basel I recommended a purported institutionalized model for market risk and yet permitted the greater (increasingly refined) banks to decide on an interior, VaR-based model (for example, a model created in the house (Bowman & Hendy, 2019). As a result, the coarseness issue for credit risk stayed uncertain, and banks continued claiming they did not have enough motivation to expand credit portfolios (Nizam, 2019). Credit risk arises from the potential that a borrower or counterparty will fail to perform on an obligation.

Moreover, the regulatory capital standards presently set up were high-risk obtuse. Cheating on the regulatory capital side of certain credit positions, banks began moving businesses far from individual market sections as offering fewer attractive returns (Bowman & Hendy, 2019). The following are the consequences of not having a crisis management strategy: possibility of making poor decisions, communicating incorrectly or inconsistently, and recovering for a longer period of time than is necessary.

The Second Basel Accord

By 2001, Basel II, a consultative procedure for a further Basel Accord initialized (Berka & Zimmermann, 2018). The central theme was credit risk since banks used their improved operating system to evaluate credit portfolios (Bowman & Hendy, 2019).

Banks picking a more developed, supposed interior appraisals-based methodology permits inner and outside FICO assessment frameworks (Ozdemir, 2018). The industry took part in a few quantitative efforts to check new risk capital outcomes (Stander, 2021). On June 26, 2004, central bank governors and heads of supervision embraced the reconsidered capital framework (Bowman & Hendy, 2019). The Basel II Structure sets out subtleties for financial institutions to have minimum capital requirements to mitigate the risk when they arise for financial institutions in Pillar 1 (Rehman et al., 2019). The capital requirement, which applies to and covers the risks underestimated or not covered by Pillar 1, fortifies risk through supervisory review in Pillar 2 (Berka & Zimmermann, 2018). Basel II is the reason for central standards and endorsement procedures for banking associations to finish their new structure's usage arrangements.

The Three-Pillar Idea

A critical change in the Basel II system is the three-pillar idea (Ali & Bansal, 2019). The Basel Board of Directors organized an overall structure with a three-pillar perspective to deal with risk management. The three-pillar idea flags the current contrast between the distinctive risk classifications and the quantifiable and in-quantifiable dangers (Fa et al., 2019). As a result, the three-pillar conception of (environmental, economic, and social) sustainability, commonly represented by three intersecting circles with the overall sustainability at the center, has become ubiquitous.

Under Pillar 1, banks must compute a base capital charge, called a regulatory capital, to align with aligning the quantification of this minimum capital with the banks' financial risk potential (Kaminski, 2018). Under the Basel II structure was a capital charge for credit risk, advertising risk, and operational risk for the first time (Iftikhar & Iftikhar, 2018). Because of the lack of security, the possibility of international central banks failing grew. To reduce the risk of bankruptcy, the Basel Committee on Banking Supervision, comprised of central banks and supervisory authorities from ten countries, met in Basel, Switzerland, in 1987 (Milano & Zugliani, 2019). In registering the capital charge for credit risk and operational risk, banks may pick between three methodologies. In expanding bankruptcy risk affectability and multifaceted nature, a few subtleties discuss underneath.

Risk management needs inserts into a well-functioning company management structure. Ritchie and Jiang (2019) posited well-developed strategies to effectively plan and manage unexpected crises that occur more commonly in larger organizations. The controller can investigate the different balanced governance established through the first pillar, also known as the supervisory audit process. Pillar 1 perceives the need for a viable diagram of the banks' inward appraisals of their general risk (Rossignolo, 2020). Pillar 2 supports the administration practicing sound judgment and saving sufficient capital for anticipated dangers (De Jonghe et al., 2020). Pillar 3 addresses market discipline through the superior open revelation of risk measures (Lux, 2019). Specifically, banks should offer a more prominent understanding of their capitalization (Myronenko et al., 2018). Along the lines of best practice, risk management outlines precise requirements of the organization, such as the directorate, management, representatives, inward and outer review forms.

Communication Strategies in Public Relations

There is a need to develop and summarize each crisis management strategy based on effective communications (Thorson, 2018). Crises can occur at any level and any size of an organization. With increased globalization, the flattening of the world, and organizational strategic moves to become more competitive, there is a need to anticipate and possibly prevent a crisis. The organization's main force is to deal with crises strategically (Williams et al., 2017). The strategic processes required to manage crises and the decisions and actions of organizational leaders are critical to crisis prevention (Reuter et al., 2018). Chain of events requiring crisis management strategies often results from human error, equipment failures, unexpected economic downturns, and natural disasters (Bradford et al., 2017). Therefore, efficient and effective crisis management strategies can lead to an organization’s stability, renewal, and growth after a crisis.

Any organizational size or type is vulnerable to a crisis. A crisis can strike any organization, from the most powerful empires to the smallest of shops. In the event of a crisis, decision-makers must be prepared to act quickly. Due to the lack of a proper crisis management strategy, organizations may find themselves in situations where they must hurry to expedite a crisis management strategy. An organization may exhibit the dynamic creation of an organizational structure to address a crisis. An organization may face an organization for effective investment planning and quality investment decisions (Renå & Christensen, 2019). Coombs (2020) posited organizations should periodically review crisis management strategies to avoid distress. Crisis management strategy is a very vital part of the growth and wellbeing of an organization.

On the contrary, many organizations continue to face threats and crises from internal and external sources (Reveraert & Sauer, 2020). During postcrisis events, an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) analysis may provide critical strategies. Continuous planning and corporate crisis learning, and contingency planning can apply to a crisis cycle (Alexander, 2017). Public relations directors must be vigilant in their quest to create an effective crisis management strategy before it is too late (Spector, 2019). The public relations director's sole purpose is to manage events and ensure appropriate actions restore an organization’s reputation to restore order and continued operations.

A public relations director develops and summarizes each crisis management strategy to evaluate effective communications management. The crisis management strategy must outline possible risks and foresee the development of a threat to the organization. Crisis management strategies should include social media, advertising, and traditional media outreach (Lambret & Barki, 2017). Applied knowledge from research and case studies can assist an organization in preventing or managing a crisis. It is imperative to be readily available for a potential disaster that threatens an organization (Reveraert & Sauer, 2020). Crisis planning yields better outcomes for preventing crises, restoring the organization to a better place postcrisis, and ensuring positive financial outcomes.

The public's adequate identification is essential for the proper development of a crisis plan (Brynielsson et al., 2018). During a crisis, an organization's public relations team is the first communication means (Boamah, (2019). The creation of a crisis committee may help in assigning responsibilities and functions (Boeke, 2018). Public relations directors must help decision-makers with vital decisions (Spector, 2019). Public relations and social media essentials tools in communication. Social media amplifies a message with its real-time messaging, allowing public relations directors to address a situation through social networks more substantially and impactfully (Galati et al., 2019). A press conference may require a mass media list called when important news needs to communicate with the public (Cardwell et al., 2017). When managing a crisis, trust, proximity, credibility, and security with critical audiences are necessary.

The crisis communication model (Klein & Eckhaus, 2017) included three primary stages: diagnosis of an impending danger signal, the choice of the relevant turnaround strategy, and implementation to resolve and evaluate change. Likewise, Diers-Lawson (2019) reported three stages of crisis management closely resembling a crisis management model. The entire process entails precrisis, crisis, and postcrisis stages. The crisis management strategy planning is ahead of time and effort during an emergency to help organizations through a tough time.

The literature review is to acquire and present previously published knowledge to establish a selected research topic's relevancy. The literature review focuses on crisis management strategies; public relations directors use to avoid unexpected operational interruption. The main objective of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore crisis management strategies that some public relations directors use to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. Nonetheless, the literature entailed discussions of how online platforms have, in the recent past, affected crisis management and communication. The social-mediated crisis communication model and the blog-mediated crisis communication model have grown from the conventional model based on the discussion.

In this regard, such sources as Pappas (2017), peer-reviewed journals were invaluable in providing crucial information regarding blog-mediated crisis communication models. Snyder (2019) recommended peer-reviewed journals supporting the development of a comprehensive literature review. The peer-reviewed journals were case studies investigating how the Red Cross and BP-America responded to given crises, offering practical strategies for both organizations.

Transition

The exploratory purpose of this study was to research crisis management strategies that some public relations directors use to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. In Section 1, I outlined the foundational elements of the study, including (a) Background of the study, (b) Problem and Purpose statements, (c) Nature of the study, (d) Research question, (e) Conceptual framework, (f) Significance of the study, and (g) Literature review. I aligned the research question with the study's purpose. I constructed the interview questions for specific exploration of successful crisis management strategies used by public relations directors to mitigate the losses for an organization and ensure profitability postcrisis.

Also, in Section 1, I explained and supported the conceptual framework of SCCT as the underlying framework for my research. I also included operational definitions, assumptions, limitations, delimitations, and the significance of the study. In the literature review, I investigated and synthesized existing literature and studies on crisis management strategies, current crisis approaches, scholarship of SCCT and adjoining theories, and how crisis managers and public relations directors use crisis management strategies. The literature review included crisis management phases, risk management theories and approaches, communication strategies, channels, and messaging, along with reputation repair techniques to restore the organization to normal operations and profitable status.

In Section 2, I included details of the research methodology with reiterations of the problem and purpose statements, overviews of the role of the researcher, research approach and design decisions, the rationale and sampling strategy for the chosen participants, as well as the data collection and techniques used in the study. I also discussed the data collection strategy as well as data organization, data analysis, reliability, validity, and triangulation approaches for the study. In Section 3, I have included the study's detailed findings along with potential applications of professional practice. Section 3 also includes a discussion of further research, recommendations for action based on the findings, and the study's impact on social change.

Section 2: The Project

Section 2 outlines the purpose statement, the researcher's role, participants, research methods and design, and the study population and sampling. I also introduce data collection tools and techniques, data organization techniques, and data analysis. Finally, I emphasize research ethics, reliability, and validity and end with a transition and a summary.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative multiple case study was to explore the crisis management strategies employed by some public relations directors to maintain a company's reputation following a crisis while also ensuring continued profitability. Participants in this study were three public relations directors from three public relations organizations in Upper Manhattan, New York. The public relations directors demonstrated effective crisis management strategies to maintain an organization during a crisis. Findings from the research may contribute to social change by identifying successful crisis management strategies that public relations directors could use to sustain their businesses. In addition, positive social change implications could enable public relations directors to extend educational and new crisis management initiatives to organizations to prevent a crisis disruption, resulting in continuing vice gainful employment, economic stability, and stronger communities.

Role of the Researcher

To prevent unforeseen organizational interruptions, I researched case studies and techniques for crisis management. My role as the researcher was to design the case study, review the literature, set up an interview framework, conduct the interviews, collect data, analyze the data, and verify and report the findings. In qualitative research, the researcher is a vital instrument for the study and must remain unbiased (Taylor et al., 2017). Young et al. (2018) stated that quantitative research analyzes, validates, qualitatively, and collects data. According to Elfarmawi (2019), researchers familiar with organizational research, institutional policies gain an advantage, research approaches, and access to interviewing research participants. In this study, I was the primary data collection instrument. Once I received consent from the participants, I scheduled the interviews and then conducted the semistructured interviews to begin my research. I conducted semistructured interviews and gathered organization data from public relations directors from three public relations firms specializing in crisis organizations in Upper Manhattan, New York, to collect data from the participants. I designed the study in accordance with the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines.

I began each interview with approximately 10 open-ended questions. I used an interview protocol, following the same steps with each participant, to gather quality data that aligns with the research question. Saxena (2017) explained that researchers use interview protocols to increase the reliability of the study instrument and attain conformity. I selected three public relations directors as participants who previously and successfully demonstrated crisis management strategies to restore and maintain the organization’s reputations and profitability. The public relations directors demonstrated effective crisis management strategies to maintain an organization during a crisis. As a researcher, I used the same interview framework to direct the participants to share their knowledge of crisis management strategies and avoid influencing their responses. Edwards (2017) stated that a researcher should avoid changing the participant's responses using an interview protocol. Taylor et al. (2017) asserted that researchers should use an interview protocol to remain within the same 10 open-ended questions for consistency of the research.

Additionally, researchers create an interview protocol for reliability and validity (Brown & Danaher, 2017). Researchers also use an interview protocol to ensure the interview questions align with the research questions (Fadzli et al., 2019). I followed an interview protocol throughout each interview to ensure alignment with my research question (see Appendix).

To ensure an ethical framework for my research, I followed *The Belmont Report.* Researchers use *The Belmont Report* as a guideline to maximize positive results and fairness for all participants and to prevent harm for all participants (Adashi et al., 2018). Researchers need to treat all research participants with the same ethical considerations regarding their requirements, rights, privileges, and benefits (Lee & Saunders, 2017). Researchers need to respect participants' requests and views and protect their privacy (Taylor et al., 2017). Researchers also need to create trust to increase the quality of the research and transparency, which benefits society and practitioners (Friesen et al., 2017). Researchers follow *The Belmont Report* rules by respecting the participant's views, maintaining the participants' confidentiality during the research, and using consent forms with all participants (Friesen et al., 2017). I also used ethical guidelines to ensure the confidentiality and protection of all participants in my study.

When researchers interpret and collect data, they need to ensure their personal experiences do not bias the process (Constantinou et al., 2017). Biases result from a researcher's involvement with the subject under investigation (Dror, 2017). Recording the collected information in a journal and frequently reviewing it with a peer will help researchers mitigate and identify biases (Banihashemi et al., 2017). Member checking is another method to identify possible deviations in results and interpretations (Madill & Sullivan, 2018). I did not possess any current, past personal, or professional relationships with the participants. I have never worked in public relations. Identifying opinions and personal experience help researchers identify personal biases (Skarbek, 2020). Additionally, researchers need to show transparency and trust to increase the research quality, which benefits practitioners and society (Hull & Wilson, 2017). There were no personal relationships between me, the participants, or the chosen industries in my study, thus minimizing bias.

Participants

I selected participants with a targeted sample strategy for this analysis. Researchers use purposive sampling to ensure they choose participants with the most appropriate knowledge and information (Denieffe, 2020). The study's suitability measure was public relations directors who had successfully developed crisis management strategies to mitigate crisis disruption's negative results. After receiving IRB approval, I contacted each participant directly through a public relations director search through LinkedIn. LinkedIn is a website designed specifically for professionals all over the world to network. People can use the LinkedIn to find business contacts, manage their professional identity, research firms, join industry groups, and find desired career opportunities (Cho & Lam, 2021). Each participant accepted my LinkedIn connection invite.

I sent an email to each participant and request a brief telephone call to inquire about my interest as a professional who participates in the study. Strategies for establishing a working relationship with participants included a phone call explaining the study's purpose and how they might participate. Then, I sent a Zoom virtual audio meeting with each participant due to the global pandemic, COVID-19. Finally, I followed the recruitment and qualification steps to set up a personal connection with each participant. The potential participants were public relations directors with at least 5 years' experience and employed at a public relations firm that utilizes successful crisis management strategies. All potential participants received information on the study's confidentiality, risks, and benefits via an email consent form.

To achieve and provide successful qualitative research, researchers need to establish a relationship with participants (Farooq & Villiers, 2017). Researchers develop a relationship with participants to encourage them to participate and complete the study (Alase, 2017). As a part of the interview protocol, researchers need to develop an appropriate environment for the interview, including location and time (Edwards, 2017). Summers (2020) indicated that interview location and time are essential to a successful interview when tailored to the participant's choices. Researchers must provide comfortable and flexible interviews to express their experience and knowledge freely. Participants should be aware that they have the right to withdraw from the study (Saxena, 2017). After the interview, I secured the participant's answers to the interview questions and saved the complete interview on a file hosting service, Dropbox. Dropbox is an online popular cloud storage system (Chisega-Negrilă & Kraft, 2020). The participants' interviews will remain secure for 5 years, and then I will delete them from Dropbox.

Research Method and Design

To this end, I conducted a qualitative multiple case study to research crisis management strategies public relations executives use to maintain the organization's reputation during a crisis. Researchers use the qualitative method to observe and understand an experience (Vindrola-Padros & Johnson, 2020). Qualitative research merges observations, documentation, and interviews to gather data (Maher et al., 2018). I used semistructured interview responses, journal field notes, and correlating company documentation to support the participant's responses in this qualitative multiple case study.

Research Method

I employed a qualitative method approach for this study. Researchers use the qualitative design to provide an in-depth analysis of the descriptive questions (Lorig et al., 2019). In addition, researchers use the qualitative methodology to explore and explain the meaning of decisions, human and social behavior (Mohajan, 2018; Sovacool et al., 2018). Therefore, a qualitative methodology was a suitable methodology for the study. The quantitative method was not appropriate for the analysis because the theory or variable was not applicable for testing. Researchers use the quantitative approach to investigate the relationship between theories, describe, and identify (Taylor et al., 2017).

In this study, I chose not to use a quantitative approach because I did not study relationships between variables. When neither method is sufficient, the hybrid method combines qualitative and quantitative methods (Creamer, 2019). Further, according to Yin (2018), researchers should never use mixed methods with case study research. Thus, a mixed-method approach was not appropriate for this study.

Qualitative methodology alone was the most desirable for this study because there were no variations to compare or examine, such as those in a quantitative or mixed-method approach. Qualitative research merges interviews to gather data, documentation, and observation (Fusch et al., 2018). Conducting qualitative research merges interviews to collect data, documentation, and observation (Vindrola-Padros & Johnson, 2020). Researchers use the qualitative method to allow participants to describe their understanding of their experiences in their own words (Lee et al., 2017). The qualitative research method is more appropriate for focusing on organizational and human activities and reflects the human experience (Shekhar et al., 2018). Researchers use qualitative research to better understand problems because of its comprehension and deeper discovery level (Palaganas et al., 2017). Mohajan (2018) stated that the qualitative method is an efficient methodology for studying a business problem based on observing people in their natural locations and human experiences.

Research Design

For this study, I reviewed the following qualitative research designs: (a) narrative design, (b) ethnographic design, (c) phenomenological design, and (d) case study. A multiple case study was the best design for this study, given the few participants and the complex complexity of the topic under investigation. Researchers use multiple case studies to gain insight into issues involving a small number of participants and complex topics (Young et al., 2018).

Although researchers have many choices in terms of study design, including narrative design, ethnography, phenomenology, and case study design, I chose a case study as the most appropriate for my study. The narrative design is when a researcher addresses the life experiences of individuals over time or analyzes their experiences from a participant's narrative perspective (Nigar, 2019). In other words, a participant's narrative is the basis on which narrative researchers assess concrete social, cultural, and personal realities (Chakraborty, 2017). Because of the time required to record and analyze the experiences of the participants, I did not use a narrative design. The narrative design was also not appropriate because understanding a participant’s story was not the goal to identify successful crisis management strategies used by public relations directors to restore organizational reputations and profits.

The ethnographic design focuses on the cultures of specific groups, how people interact, and how culture impacts them (Ladner, 2017). Researchers using ethnography have immersed themselves in participants' environments over a long period to gain in-depth cultural knowledge (Cappellaro, 2017). An ethnographic design was unsuitable for the study because my goal was not to study the culture or a culture of a community but to understand what effective crisis management strategies directors of public relations firms used to restore organizational reputations and profitability postcrisis. Furthermore, it was not necessary to immerse myself in the community or culture of a public relations director to obtain answers to the research question.

Researchers use a phenomenological design when the research involves the research member’s actual human experience during significant life events (Frechette et al., 2020). Using phenomenology, researchers recount real-life experiences with the phenomenon under study from the participants' perceptions and interpretations (Yılmaz et al., 2020). Because I did not include individual understanding and perspectives of having lived through one or more incidents, the phenomenological design was inappropriate for my study. Moreover, I did not choose a phenomenological design because the nature of the participants' lived experiences were not central to the research question or the exploration of crisis management strategies. I selected a multiple case study design because it focused on the current phenomenon, provided flexibility, and aligned with my time and budget constraints.

Researchers use a case study method to gain an in-depth understanding of a problem or current phenomenon (Runfola et al., 2017). Case studies often involve complex subjects and few participants (Lorig et al., 2019). Researchers choose a case study to provide a comprehensive and general explanation of a phenomenon in its real situation (Cooksey, 2020). Consequently, the most important concept in my research was a multiple case study. I decided on a case study for my study. A multiple case study is an in-depth investigation of experiments or subjects in their natural environment without restricting more than one individual or group (Skarbek, 2020). Researchers use several case studies to broaden their understanding of a topic and understand its individuality

(Bashir & Marudhar, 2018). Young et al. (2018) indicated that case study designs are appropriate for business research. The case study provides a comprehensive and general explanation of the location of the phenomenon (Prabhu, 2020). As such, the most appropriate design for the study was a multiple case study.

In qualitative research, researchers ask participants the same questions in all interviews while focusing on one subject (Saxena, 2017). Data saturation is the point in the research process when no new information appears in data analysis, and this redundancy alerts researchers that data collection may be discontinued (Richards et al., 2019). For example, while exploring the experiences of public relations directors and crisis management strategies, I conducted interviews until participants no longer provided data.

Data saturation is an essential component for ensuring the quality of research and illustrates the dependability, credibility, and transferability of a study (Saunders et al., 2018). Scholars consider data saturation achieved once no new information or themes emerge from the research process and data (Hennink et al., 2017). The data gathered from semistructured interviews, document analyses, and member checking are the components I used to achieve data saturation. While exploring the crisis management strategies of three public relations directors, I conducted semistructured interviews until participants did not provide any new information. Researchers use member checking to ensure consistent communication through the confirmation of data by the participant (Anderson, 2017). Member checking is a one-page summary of the interview response sent to each participant following the interview (FitzPatrick, 2019). I used member checking to help participants confirm my understanding of their interview responses and interpretation, an approach suggested by McGrath et al. (2018) to ensure the accuracy of the information obtained during the interviews to improve the credibility and reliability of the study. I also conducted a document review of the participants' websites to confirm and support the responses provided during the interviews. I selected three public relations directors from three public relations firms in Upper Manhattan, New York, with proven and successful crisis management strategies in public affairs for organizations for my research.

Population and Sampling

The target audience was public relations directors in various industries who specialize in crisis management strategies. I purposefully chose public relations directors based on their experience and knowledge of crisis management strategies and how they successfully implemented strategies to mitigate the effect of a crisis disruption. Researchers must determine the appropriate number of participants, the specific requirements for these participants, and the study's correct interview protocol (Arsel, 2017). Lê and Schmid (2020) explained that sampling determines the appropriate sample that matches the study design. To choose the participants, I used the purposive sampling method. Using purposive sampling, I assumed the participants had an in-depth understanding of the study phenomenon. Liao and Hitchcock (2018) noted researchers use purposive sampling to effectively target participants to gain a more detailed insight into the study's phenomena. Madill and Sullivan (2018) positioned the researcher to choose the sample size, which has the best prospect for reaching data saturation. For this multiple case study, my targeted population consisted of three different public relations directors in three various organizations with proven experience in developing a successful crisis management strategy.

Researchers use purposeful sampling to identify the most appropriate participants with the required experience and knowledge to answer all the interview questions about the subject under examination (Chandra & Shang, 2017). In purposeful sampling, researchers select specific participants who meet specific criteria to complete and deliver the study (Arsel, 2017). Andrade (2020) defined purposive sampling as a nonprobability method to select individuals who can provide valuable insights specific to the subject investigated in a study. Participants with a purposive sample give more data about the subject under investigation (Taylor et al., 2017). A purposive sampling includes participants with unique and independent experiences and knowledge. Therefore, participants from the purposive sample add more value and richness to the study (Ames et al., 2019). Klar and Leeper (2019) considered purposive sampling a good sampling for special situations. Purposive sampling employs an expert's judgment in selecting cases or selecting cases with a specific purpose in mind—purposive sampling is used when measuring a difficult-to-reach population (Denieffe, 2020). Purposive sampling classifies as evaluative, selective, and subjective samples (Klar & Leeper, 2019). Purposeful sampling was most appropriate for my study in selecting a small number of public relations directors with proficient and proven crisis management strategies to answer the overarching research question.

I researched public relations directors who successfully used crisis management strategies to maintain the organization's reputation. When searching, the purpose of discovering information is to locate three public relations directions in three organizations for participation in the study. Due to COVID-19, financial, and time constraints, I only conducted this study with three public relations directors from three public relations firms. Therefore, this study's sample size was three public relations directors from three public relations firms specializing in crisis management strategy. The second approach is triangulation, in combination with company records, to check the interviews. Triangulation is a process; researchers deploy to validate the study findings through multiple sources of information, entities, theories, or a different data collection method (Moon, 2019). Member checking and methodological triangulation reduce the need for multiple interviews to achieve the same completeness (Thomas, 2017). Thus, triangulation fosters a better understanding of research data (Richards et al., 2019). Methodological triangulation uses more than one way to collect data to ensure study validity (Yin, 2018). I used methodological triangulation in conjunction with member checking to improve the study's reliability and validity.

Ethical Research

Upon receiving IRB approval (12-24-20-0540187) from the Walden University IRB to conduct research, I sent the participants meeting the study criteria an email to explain the study's details and intent. I did follow the procedures and processes of ethical research to ensure the ethical implementation of the study. The researcher has a reasonable duty to protect the research participants (Edwards, 2017). I used the minor ethical risk requirements to satisfy the IRB. The IRB of any institution reviews, approves, disapproves, and provides modifications of all research activities involving study participants (Sabati, 2018). Houghton et al. (2017) stated informed consent is a method of obtaining an individual participating in a research study. The informed consent form included the study questions, data collection methods, information about the research, and the participant's voluntary choice. Informed consent is a means of protecting a participant's welfare and rights while contributing to the advancement of knowledge. Douglas et al. (2021) further recommended that the consent form includes information that potential research participants can extract from the research. The participants had the option to withdraw either by telephone or email. There were no incentives or monetary exchanges for the participant's participation in the study.

Upon receiving IRB approval, I contacted each participant by email and telephone to confirm and schedule participant interviews. Integrity is central to ethical research and maintaining participant confidentiality is vital in research studies (Fuller et al., 2017). Therefore, researchers strive to protect the confidentiality and privacy of participants (Kirilova & Karcher, 2017). To ensure the participant's ethical privacy and protection, I did not identify the participants involved by name or any other descriptive information of the individuals or their organizations. Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants required identifying the participants as P1, P2, and P3. I informed participants of the risks of sharing proprietary data and individual opinions needed for my research questions. Also, I provided a summary of the responses via member checking with each study participant. Once my study receives approval for a final review and published via

ProQuest, I will send a copy of my study to each participant. Also, I collected publicly available documents on crisis management strategies. I will retain the interview data and any other collected data privately for 5 years in adherence to Walden University's requirements.

Data Collection Instruments

In a qualitative study, the researcher is the primary data collection tool (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). For this study, I was the primary data collection tool. Researchers gathered qualitative information using open-ended questions and combining it with secondary information (Yin, 2018). Data collection is a method that researchers utilize to get information from interviewees about the research. The sources used for data collection included previous case studies from the three public relations director's firms' websites. According to Holmes (2020), the unbiased attribute of the qualitative researcher is setting aside personal views of the phenomenon and focusing only on the opinions of the participants in their own words. The data collection process by a qualitative interview allows researchers to explore, collect, and reconfigure events from the participant's perspectives that an individual could not obtain from a quantitative research method (Snodgrass, 2019). Once data collected; thereafter, the data analyzed and organized.

I conducted the semistructured interviews via an individual Zoom virtual audio meeting to interview participants. Zoom Video Communications is a web conferencing platform commonly used for audio and video conferencing (Hurst, 2020). While conducting a virtual audio meeting semistructured interview, I secured the Zoom virtual audio meeting with an individual meeting password. For maximum safety, I ensured to secure the virtual audio meeting interviews as private. Researchers need to observe the participants' trust and personal biases during the research process. Researchers use an interview protocol to improve their studies by ensuring the alignment between process, interview, and research questions (Tavory, 2020). Interview protocols cover the study information, details for information collection, and the interview process.

Researchers use interview protocols to ensure the interview process's reliability, consistency, and transparency (Edwards, 2017). Researchers need to ensure consistency during the interview and data collection phases and clearly understand the research purpose (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Using an interview protocol (see Appendix A), I conducted individual virtual audio meeting semistructured interviews to maintain the research's elements and ensure the participant's privacy. Semistructured interviews are significant in the qualitative study (Farooq & Villiers, 2017). In the semistructured structured interviews, I asked open-ended questions to allow participants to share and explain their knowledge, experience in their own words and perspectives.

Researchers depend on member checking to enhance the credibility of the interview data (Galdas, 2017). Researchers use member checking to increase the collected data's reliability and validity (Anderson, 2017). After conducting individual virtual audio meeting semistructured interviews, the researcher will give each participant an explanatory summary of the interview transcript for review and send it back to the researcher, who summarizes the member checking inspections (Madill & Sullivan, 2018). After receiving IRB approval for this study, I contacted the study participants, explained the study's purpose, and ensured they understood their rights and the requirements. Each participant then signed an informed consent form. After receiving consent, I scheduled and then began the interviewing process. I recorded the virtual audio meeting interviews and took notes in a journal throughout the interviews.

The data collection process by a qualitative interview allows researchers to collect, explore, and reconfigure events from the participant's perspectives that an individual could not obtain from a quantitative research method (Thurairajah, 2019). The recording of the interviews occurred as a virtual audio meeting via Zoom Video Communications. Before the commencement of the interviews, each participant signed the informed consent form. Upon IRB approval, the collection of the interview data was in accordance with the interview protocol. Providing abridged interview protocol (see Appendix) was to help with planning the process of research and structure (Arsel, 2017). Interviews with participants did not exceed 30 minutes. The interviews conducted with participants on specific days, dates, times, and places most convenient for participants through an agreed-upon schedule. In addition, the participants reviewed their responses for clarification as a part of the member checking process.

Data Collection Technique

According to Young et al. (2018), the primary data collection tool in qualitative studies is the researcher. During COVID-19, the research plan included using virtual audio meeting semistructured interviews to collect research data, member checking of synthesized answers to verify the interview responses' reliability, and finally, analyzing supporting corporate websites formed the datasets for this study. Advantages of using telephone or virtual audio meetings included privacy and comfort for the participants, but a disadvantage to the researcher in picking up observational facial clues to support responses without a face-to-face interaction (Heath et al., 2018).

With each interview's completion, the research plan included generating an interview transcript and then synthesizing each participant's answer. Each participant received a member checking summary after each interview and verified by email to assess the accuracy or inaccuracy of their responses. Novice researchers have a disadvantage in all three components of qualitative data collection: interviewing, member checking, and document analysis (Kalman, 2019). Attention to detail, following an interview protocol, software training, implementation, and analysis to align with the research question improved qualitative researchers as the primary data collection tool (Kalman, 2019). Three public relations directors from three different public relations firms located in Upper Manhattan, New York, participated in semistructured interviews in this study.

The technique used to collect data included reviewing previous successful case studies developed from the three public relations director’s firm websites relative to successful crisis management strategies. The sources used for data collection are archival records and documentation (see Yin, 2018). The data collected from the organizations’ websites considered as external sources of company documents (Fusch et al., 2018). Previous case studies describe the reputational repair and viability of an organization's profitability after a crisis. Advantages of using company documents such as published case studies and improved results for client organizations include transparency and accountability for the participants and improving the validity of the research (Natow, 2020). The advantage of using previous case studies enhances the credibility of the PR Manager in the implementation of crisis management strategies. Disadvantages of collecting this type of external data source included confidentiality issues, prone to bias, and difficulty to generalize from a small number of cases (Queirós et al., 2017). The disadvantages of data collection were the high confidentiality of the names of the organizations in the previous case studies. The high confidentiality, names of the organizations, were not a hindrance because the organization's name was not relevant to this study; only the cause and effect of the previous case studies about the success of a crisis management strategy to manage crisis disruption.

Researchers create and utilize an interview protocol to guide the interviews to ensure consistent structure, process, and data handling throughout the research (Yeong et al., 2018). I followed an interview protocol in each semistructured interview of the participants (see Appendix). Before beginning the interviews, the interview process explained to participants the informed consent form and confirmed that every participant understood their rights to participate in the research. The participants received an explanation that the interview would be audio recorded, and manual journal transcripts would remain available for review for accuracy. Once I received consent from each participant, I emailed and scheduled the semistructured interview via Zoom Video Communications. Participant's identities remained confidential throughout the audio recording (Peterson, 2019). Interviewing participants occurred until data saturation satisfied. Data saturation occurred when the data became redundant (Saunders et al., 2018). The intent was to make the participants feel comfortable during the data collection process (Arsel, 2017). The disadvantage of using Zoom virtual audio meetings was that the participants might not provide accurate information, and time constraints could make information scarce. Interviews conducted in the virtual audio meeting via Zoom Video Communications manually transcribed, and afterward, a member checking summary sent to each participant following the interview.

Throughout the data collection process, researchers record the semistructured interviews, take field notes in a journal, and ask clarifying questions to improve the reliability of the data and data analysis phase (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). I used Zoom Video Communications software post-interviews to aid in transcribing the interview responses. I transcribed the recordings as well as any field notes into a Word document immediately after the interviews for accuracy and preparation of data analysis using NVivo 12 software after data collection. McGrath et al. (2018) recommended that novice researchers transcribe interviews immediately following each interview to improve member checking accuracy. An advantage of recording and transcribing is a researcher can immediately check the quality of the data collected, and thus, make plans accordingly if another interview needs scheduling (McGrath et al., 2018). Varpio et al. (2017) cautioned that researchers recognize that any discrepancies from the transcriptions to the member checking summary indicated by the participants are part of the data collection process. Attention to the verbatim transcriptions of participants' responses is essential to a credible member checking and data analysis in improving the validity of qualitative research (DeCino & Waalkes, 2019). I immediately transcribed the interview recordings, then wrote a member checking summary and sent it to each participant for review and feedback.

Member checking is a step in the data collection process to validate a researcher's translations of the participants' responses from the interview recordings for credibility and accuracy (Candela, 2019). Once all member checking received confirmation, I proceeded to data analysis using NVivo12 software and proper and confidential data organization. The advantage of using member checking is that participants allowed to be more participatory in the data collection after the interviews (Iivari, 2018). One disadvantage associated with emailing member checking summaries to each participant is that I was uncertain if the public relations director was the one who personally reviewed the summary since all member checking confirms with no new information offered. Also, I requested and reviewed the documented websites and case studies associated with the crisis management strategies provided by each public relations director in support of their responses and used them to achieve triangulation (Moon, 2019). My interpretation and alignment of these company websites and case studies to participant responses were part of the data collection in exploring crisis management strategies for restoring organizational reputations and ensure continued profitability.

Data Organization Technique

Qualitative study information includes audio, transcripts, notes, video, or any documents gathered (Peterson, 2019). Researchers use computer-aided qualitative data analysis software to help organize the unstructured qualitative data (Schmieder, 2019). Researchers enhance the research trustworthiness when they are transparent during the research process (Cypress, 2017). Researchers depend on member checking to strengthen the interview data's credibility (Candela, 2019). Member checking enhances the validity of a study (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). Participants view the integrated part of the record. During the member checking, the participant may review, correct, and expand their answers. The member checking process repeats until the participant has no corrections or additions. Member checking allows participants to verify their responses in follow-up interviews (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). To confirm data saturation in the research, I used member checking after conducting the semistructured interviews and preliminary analysis and interpretation of the participant's responses.

An excellent qualitative research project includes maintaining a research log or journal of the project (Bashir & Marudhar, 2018). The journal for this project contains project insights and notes. A journal might collect confidential information about participants, such as the PIC and interview notes. The journal will not include participant names and company names to protect the confidentiality of the participants. The journal covers several volumes. I encrypted a complete photographic record of the journal, storing it with the other electronic files for 5 years.

The use of technology is essential to this study. In this study, I used email to communicate with participants, recorded participant interviews using digital voice recorders and photograph documents. The research plan included encryption of the interview recordings. Furthermore, to protect the participants' identities, I completed data cleansing to remove irrelevant data and other information that may identify the company or participants in the study.

When conducting a virtual audio meeting interview, it is necessary to use Zoom Video Communications to conduct a synchronized online service for an interview (Hurst, 2020). The software service will provide an option to record interview sessions. I recorded the interviews and saved them privately on Google Drive. Google Drive is a cloud-based file storage and synchronization service developed by Google (Moreno-Guerrero et al., 2020). After performing the interviews, I provided each participant an interpreted summary of the interview to review and provide me with comments or suggested changes.

Researchers use different devices to record the interviews (Gray et al., 2020). Researchers use computer-aided qualitative data analysis software Computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software to help organize the unstructured qualitative data (Schmieder, 2019). Qualitative study information includes audio, transcripts, notes, video, or any documents gathered (FitzPatrick, 2019). When researchers remain transparent in the research process, they can improve research reliability (Korstjens & Moser, 2017). I used Zoom Video Communications to record the online interviews and NVivo 12 as a data analysis tool to assist in thematic analysis.

In the study, I used NVivo12 to code the interview transcripts. Robins and Eisen (2017) explained that NVivo12 achieves the exact purpose of qualitative data analysis. Therefore, researchers recommend using NVivo12 for qualitative analysis. NVivo12 stores and organizes the collected data for easy referencing (Robins & Eisen, 2017). My choice of a virtual audio meeting via Zoom Video Communications to record the interview. When using Zoom Video Communications, I used one electronic file for each recording, representing one interview. There are specific code names for each participant to ensure privacy and confidentiality and track the data. All collected data stored in the file hosting service Dropbox and is password protected for 5 years.

Data Analysis

Researchers use computer software as a tool to assist them in the analysis process. The data analysis interprets the implicit, explicit information collected and the classification process through the observation, interview, and the review of visual and written documents (Assarroudi et al., 2018). Researchers use NVivo12 software to enhance data analysis through data entry, data management, reporting, and visual forms (Wilk et al., 2019). For this study, I used software NVivo12 to create a coding system to support data analyses. Researchers perform data analysis by assessing and recognizing all the collected information (Young et al., 2018). The data analysis process includes organizing, coding, searching, and modeling the data interpretation to evaluate its significance (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). To enhance research data's reliability and validity, I used NVivo12 to organize, validate, and code the data to identify the subthemes and themes.

I collected data from open-ended questions in semistructured interviews, organizational documents, and research notes for this study. I utilized methodological triangulation as part of the data analysis of two sources: semistructured interviews with public relations directors and documentation associated with crisis management strategies. Methodological triangulation is a tool used by researchers to improve the internal credibility of the study’s findings (Renz et al., 2018). For example, researchers use the methodological triangulation procedure to assess case study data (Young et al., 2018). Researchers validate the data collection process results from multiple data sources involving personal notes, member checking, organizational materials, and interview responses, which increase the study's validity (Niraula, 2019). In addition, researchers use methodological triangulation in qualitative research because it enables a researcher to verify the study data from a different source (Edwards, 2017). I also collected public company documentation to support the interview responses in utilizing methodological triangulation.

Walton et al. (2020) acknowledged that researchers use methodological triangulation to obtain a complete picture of the topic and then use a single type of data. For methodological triangulation, I used the within-method. Within-method is the use of two or more data collection techniques for the same study. In addition, researchers can enhance the study results by triangulation obtained from confirming the results using different sources (Shekhar et al., 2018). All of the sources I used in the study were interview responses, member checking, and company documents.

Researchers can use triangulation to enhance the reliability and consistency of data using different sources (Yin, 2018). According to Yin (2018), the 5-phase cycle of data analysis included compiling, disassembling, reassembling, interpreting, and concluding data. Compiling is organizing primary data in a meaningful way and is the first step in data analysis (Watkins, 2017). Next, researchers label and group phrases and words into themes to find meaning before reassembling them. Reassembling is the third phase, which includes placing the data in related coding categories. Finally, reassembling in the final stage of the analysis phase includes identifying the data in related coding categories (Raskind et al., 2019). Though Yin’s 5-phase cycle was a consideration for data analysis, I used thematic analysis aided by NVivo12 software to generate and encode themes that appear during the coding process.

Young et al. (2018) identified that researchers need to group the data in order of significance to answer the research question. Researchers can reach data saturation when no new topics or themes obtain from the data (Rijnsoever, 2017). The fourth step is interpreting. After I reassembled the data into themes, I offered a detailed interpretation of the pattern’s differences and similarities. Young et al. (2018) explained that the interpreting step is the basis of the qualitative study. I used NVivo12 software to interpret the data according to themes. I conducted a member checking technique to ensure interpretation accuracy following each interview. The final step is concluding data. Researchers in the conclusion step can communicate and display their findings and draw conclusions (Young et al., 2018). I made conclusions and organized similarities in the data to address the study’s research question.

In the study, I used the NVivo12 software to code the interview transcripts. In using NVivo12 to arrange, analyze, and attain themes of the collected data. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) stated that researchers have successfully used NVivo12 to identify the relations in the data and obtain new understandings and address mutual patterns by examining consistencies, convergences, and differences in data. Castleberry and Nolen (2018) also discussed how researchers utilize NVivo12 for its ability to evaluate nodes within a complex matrix. Establishing a study data database is one of the study's essential aspects (O’Kane et al., 2019).

Additionally, Deterding and Waters (2021) discussed a need to use an interview procedure to code each interview separately and identify a standard coding framework for all the data. Researchers combine the study data to understand the topic better, which is more appropriate than using each source separately (Davidson et al., 2017). I correlated the data according to patterns and differences in the data to identify and discuss the themes.

Reliability and Validity

Reliability and validity are conventional research stringency tests (Mohajan, 2017). There are four aspects to qualitative research: reliability, credibility, confirmability, and credibility. In a qualitative study, researchers use reliability and validity to ensure the accuracy, exactness, and trustworthiness of a study (Assarroudi et al., 2018). Kaivo-oja (2017) stressed that researchers link a study’s findings to reality or multiple organizational realities of establishing the credibility of the research. In addition, reliability techniques guarantee that other researchers assess the same functions and circumstances of the database (Young et al., 2018).

Reliability

Yin (2018) expanded on reliability for the case study by recommending a research protocol and database collection. I included the creation of a research database in my study using NVivo12 software produced by QSR International. Researchers use the software to synthesize interview and organizational data. This study's reliability enhances the study's dependability, including transcription of the interviews and member checking. These actions taken by me ensured accurate capture of the interview and the meaning gleaned from those interviews. The tables, charts, graphs, and maps are seen visually in the results and patterns (Anderson, 2017).

The reliability mechanism would include member checking. Membership monitoring improves the sample's reliability, lending, and transferability (Smith & Mcgannon, 2017). This member review guarantees that researchers understand thoroughly the responses provided by the interviewees (Caretta & Pérez, 2019). An added benefit of member checking is the subject's opportunity to participate in the quality control process by checking and evaluating the interview question’s synthesized answers (Iivari, 2018). The interview participants can then review, correct, or expand the integrated solutions. (Santos et al., 2017) suggested that synthesized members are better than transcript assessment alone. After each interview, I utilized member checking to ensure the participant’s responses accurately represented what I gathered throughout the interviews. Also, I examined public documents indicated as support from each participant regarding crisis management strategies to help support the credibility and dependability of the study.

Validity

A study's validity and credibility are related to the research's trustworthiness in qualitative studies (Friedel et al., 2020). Yin (2018) took a crucial step in the data collection process to hire members to check. Researchers use member checking to verify with each participant the researcher’s interpretation of interview responses. The participants shall check, correct, and extend the summary of their responses, if appropriate. Participants reviewed a subsequent iteration of an extended response report until no new information emerged.

I used methodological triangulation to verify or refute the information provided in the face-to-face interviews. In certain circumstances, participants obtain a greater insight into the perspectives of the subject by triangulation. In addition, triangulation establishes the sample's integrity through participant authentication, validation of the respondent, precision, and confidence in the information collected during each interview (Solano, 2020). Triangulation requires the use of three methods (Solano, 2020). In this study, the data set's triangulation included interviews, comprehensive records of interviews, and documents containing plans and improved crisis management strategies.

The transferability of study results may extrapolate and applied to other organizations, contexts, and circumstances (Maxwell, 2020). A detailed description is a detailed description of the participant’s experience, and the level of detail is sufficient to assess the applicability of the study to other organizations (Maxwell, 2020). Confirmability refers to the study's objectivity, procedures, and findings. Confirmability also comes with reputation, transfers, and continuity satisfaction (Maxwell, 2020). One approach to confirmability is the discussion of study data collection, data organization, and data analysis methods. A detailed discussion of the study's qualitative data analysis and findings supports the research (Lester et al., 2020). This research involved the use of thick definitions to ensure that the results of the study are transferable.

To achieve data saturation, the researcher must interview a large number of participants with the same set of questions (Lowe et al., 2018). Hence, I asked the same set of questions to the three public relations directors participating in my study. In addition, I collected pertinent company documentation regarding crisis management strategies in the public forum from the public relations director and social media substantiation. Also, I collected data from three public relations directors using semistructured interviews until I reached data saturation. Antonio et al. (2019) stated a researcher reaches data saturation when there are no new data or new codes and no new themes collected. In addition, to ensure an appropriate audit trail, I documented the data collection instructions and asked each study participant to confirm their responses during the interview and member-checking phase.

Transition and Summary

In Section 2, I discussed my plan to conduct a qualitative multiple case study on the crisis management strategies that some public relations directors use to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. The target population was three public relations directors from Upper Manhattan, New York, employed at a public relations firm, and had at least 5 years of experience in the industry with successful crisis management strategies. I used semistructured interviews, company case study documents, company websites, my field notes, and member checking to ensure triangulation and data saturation in my study. Also, I used member checking to ensure the reliability and validity of the study along with mitigating researcher bias. I then used NVivo 12 software to categorize and code the collected data from the interviews, notes, and company documents. I will securely store the collected data for 5 years in accordance with Walden's guidelines and then destroy the data after 5 years. In Section 2, I discussed data organization, data analytics, and data collection processes and protocols. Finally, in Section 3, I gave an overview of the study findings, applications of the findings to professional practice, implications for social change, recommendations for future research, and a reflection on my research experiences.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Introduction

This qualitative multiple case study was created to learn more about crisis management strategies that some public relations directors use to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. The study included interviews and analysis of the data from three different participants from three public relations firms. The participants provided information regarding crisis management strategies used by their organizations to maintain reputations postcrisis and ensure profitability. Data included public relations directors' semistructured interview responses, my field notes, and each organization's public information about their public relations firm's previous case studies illustrated on their websites. The study outcomes revealed what the participants individually shared during each interview that the new crisis management strategies were valuable and practical for maintaining organizational reputations following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. Section 3 includes the presentation of the findings, recommendations for action, application of the findings to professional practice, social change implications, recommendations for further actions, reflections, and the study's conclusion. Three themes identified during thematic analysis aided by NVivo 12 included reactive crisis communications and decision making, sustainability crisis planning and organizational reputation, and precrisis prevention and preparedness.

Presentation of the Findings

This study's main research question was the following: What crisis management strategies do public relations directors use to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability? I conducted interviews with three participants from three public relations firms using semistructured interviews. I recorded the interviews with participants using a virtual audio meeting conference via Zoom Video Communications. During the interviews, journal notes were taken, which included additional notes in NVivo12 for this study's data analysis portion. Each participant served as a public relations director specializing in creating, implementing, and developing crisis management strategies for midsize to large organizations. All participants conveyed that their businesses' success started with an operational crisis, which led to venturing into innovative crisis management strategies to help organizations sustain their businesses after a crisis disruption.

The three participants answered 10 questions relating to crisis management strategies associated with maintaining an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. Participants' answers and themes derived from the data analysis align with the crisis management strategies in the literature review and the conceptual framework. Three themes emerged from the data collected from the semistructured interviews, public information about their public relations firm’s previous case studies illustrated on their website, and journal notes I compiled during the interview process, which I validated using methodological triangulation. Table 2 shows participants responses by themes using NVivo12.

Table 2

Participants' Responses by Theme using NVivo 12.

Participant	Theme Reactive crisis communications and decision-making	Sustainability crisis planning and organizational reputation	Prevention and preparedness
Participant 1	11	3	4
Participant 2	5	2	4
Participant 3	5	5	3

Theme 1: Reactive Crisis Communications and Decision-Making

P1, P2, and P3's responses aligned inadequate crisis preparation, planning, and preparedness with serious operational, legal, and public relations consequences. P2 and P3 shared their public relations firm's specialty to make difficult decisions with uncertainty when solving and handling a crisis disruption. P1 explained that their public relations firm's primary approach to managing a crisis focuses on the first crisis response to solve a crisis disruption effectively. P1, P2, and P3 individually elaborated on developmental implementation crisis management strategies to incorporate a recovery action plan. P1, P2, and P3 gave compelling answers to effectively manage a digital age crisis to reduce corporate reputation damage. Public relations directors must also have an extensive understanding of crisis management planning.

P1 noted that no matter how their public relations directors prepare, the nature of the crisis means they will not resolve everything with just one or two social media posts. People want, need, and expect to hear from the organizations they represent, and the organizations need to acknowledge all problems, issues, and crises right away. P1 further stated their public relations firm spectrum reactive stage is a communication plan with structured crisis management strategies to address and acknowledge a crisis. P1's public relations firm provides informative updates across their organization's social media platforms as a start to address the public. According to P1, the overall approach in decision making is transparent with a reactive crisis communication response. With this as a standard, P1 stated, rather, as a public relations director, "I manage the situation by acting immediately and instantly responding to feedback." P1 emphasized that one of the public relations codes of ethics is to avoid arguing publicly; if applicable, first apologize, then act, acknowledge other people's concerns and questions.

P1 offered a plan to quickly communicate a response to the right conversations with a follow-up written as a press release. Also, P1 emphasized sharing the organization's response directly with media outlets, the local community, and direct postings on social media to effectively control the situation and make the message visible to the public. P2 explained that in overcoming a crisis, a director must recognize and use appropriate crisis management strategies specific to the occurrence. P2 elaborated that as a lead public relations director, its public relations firm represents the best-in-class strategic and unparalleled depth and breadth of experience in handling complex crises. P2 emphasized how challenging it is to implement a crisis-ready culture, creating an effective crisis management strategic plan for any public relations team.

P3 stated that its public relations firm's main objective is to develop a crisis management strategy and keep the objectives aligned with the organization's overall objectives. Upon further examining P3's business website, the example of their public relations firm's well-used action plan as a roadmap for handling previous business crises confirmed how they helped client organizations endure through and post crises. The roadmap is a crisis management strategy, which includes a step-by-step process for identifying, communicating, and solving any crisis problem and disruption. P3 provided insight into their public relations firm, specifically dedicated public relations director teams for specific crises. P3's public relations firm is well equipped, highly trained public relations directors known as crisis management strategy experts who can immediately identify a crisis before it impacts. Crisis management encompasses the prediction, planning, and forecasting of a crisis as well as the organization's response to it. P3 focused on its public relations firm to implement an effective crisis management strategy, ensuring the correct information, the critical component delivered to the right people appropriately. P3 stated, "We must control the flow of information between an organization, our stakeholders, and the public. The most accurate information is defined in the organization's tone to identify ways to improve the way information is shared." The examples of public crisis strategies and proven experience in helping organizations were part of their P3's information-sharing strategies via their website.

P3 also provided additional insight for overcoming the challenges of implementing effective crisis management strategies with complete visibility directives. This visibility is dependent on a proactive approach that involves deploying communication techniques before and after a crisis. Nohrstedt et al. (2018) conferred with the P3's statement that a crisis management strategic plan should be a standard part of the overall strategic planning process and part of an overall safety and emergency preparedness plan. When a crisis hits, P3 felt a timely response is far more critical. Without visibility, an organization employs misinformed crisis strategies at the wrong time, worsening the situation. The emphasis throughout the P3 firm's website emphasized transparency and visibility as proven strategies in their approach to handling organizational crisis, reviving organizational reputations, and returning to conducting business for profitable returns.

Theme 2: Sustainability Crisis Planning and Organizational Reputation

One of the leading crisis management strategies used by P1's public relations firm was to guarantee stability and continued success in business in assisting organizations by implementing a crisis preparedness plan. P1 explained that their crisis preparedness included three main components: strategy formation, strategy implementation, and strategy evaluation. PI continued to break down the element of strategy formation into six steps, including setting the organization's objectives, evaluating the organizational environment, setting a quantitative target, aiming in context with the divisional plans, performance analysis, and choice of strategy. P1 believed that these steps are very intense in choosing the most appropriate course of action to realize the organizational goals. P2 agreed on the same spectrum of sustainability crisis planning and organizational reputation; as the crisis progresses towards resolution, the focus of communication shifts to giving regular status updates to the concerned public, modifying previous instructions, controlling rumors, and conferencing with leadership and responder teams. P2 expertise focus is a crisis preparedness can be a useful tool for working through, or even averting, future crises.

P3 shared similarities to the other participants in actual performances of developing crisis management strategies. In the previous 5 years, P3's firm focused on creating sustainability crisis planning to detect an early indication of any issue and manage it before becoming a major crisis. P3's firm also sustained early detection and mitigation as an essential part of crisis management strategy implementation. P3 continued, "We measure our crisis management strategy in building a solid collective framework on decisions and choices to position our organization to withstand a crisis." P3's stance in measurement postcrisis was to evaluate continuing the crisis management strategy by monitoring and assessing its effectiveness through improved profits and perceived reputation by the customers. When asked for further elaboration, P3 responded, "We want to stay aware and connected with providing updated information, and to distribute the correct, accurate narrative of the organizational reputation, and resourceful messaging." P3 emphasized that the firm's goal was to engage potential customers and clients and generate profitable outcomes while minimizing all damaging crisis impacts.

According to Fragouli (2020), a strong relationship between organizational size and crisis management is a foundational formula to improving crisis planning and organization reputation. In other words, some organizations will more likely encounter various crises due to economic or political issues, including embargo and government change,and thus need to be agile in crisis planning and communications (Janssen & van der Voort, 2020). Jabeen (2020) gave some insights on the role of internal substantiality crisis planning and organization reputation before, during, and after an organizational and societal crisis that results in downsizing or significant changes within organizations. The results have indicated that it is essential to create a set of crisis scenarios to guide crisis planning. P1, P2, and P3 have shared their professional experience in crisis management strategy implementation with detailed crisis plans capable of turning a crisis into a positive consequence.

Social media plays an important part in crisis management strategies of public relations directors, as emphasized in the literature and the data from this study (see Cheng, 2018). During the interviews, P1 and P3 had similar thought processes using social media as part of their organization's reputation technique within their crisis management strategy. Both P1 and P3 emphasized the importance of social media in maintaining their firm’s impact on an organization's reputation and positive financial outcomes. Triantafillidou and Yannas (2020) stated that social networks are mostly used in the reconstruction of the image of an organization's crisis response policy. In interviewing P1 and P3, the variable component in substantial crisis planning that one of the main tools for distributing accurate information to the public is on social media platforms. The social media platforms such as Twitter and Instagram result in fewer adverse crisis reactions than traditional press conferences, press releases, and newspapers. The key to both firms was using social media appropriately to address the crisis, response time, emphasis on responsible handling, and mitigate further damages. The common denominator between P1 and P3 public relations firms prioritized implementing the correct social media strategy during a crisis.

P1 shared that their public relations team had developed a social media policy regarding responding to any inquiries about the organization's business operations: “We have secure accounts and use social listening to identify potential issues. And since every post or comment does not warrant a response, we must ensure to define what counts as a crisis via the organization's social media platforms.” In creating the organization's social media platforms, P1’s firm had institutionalized a crisis communication plan: “We act fast on potential issues, which is essential; however, we do so very cautiously.” P1’s firm takes immediate action and prevents things from getting out of control. Some of the factors to P1’s crisis management strategy for the organization's brand image and social media platform included the following: (a) specific guidelines for identifying the type and magnitude of a crisis; (b) roles and responsibilities for every department within the organization, including the president, vice president, chief executive offier, and chief financial officer leadership; (c) a communication plan for internal organization updates; (d) up-to-date contact information; (e) approval processes for messaging posted on social media; (f) preapproved external messages, images, or information; and (g) a link to the organization's social media policy. P1 understood how well their public relations directors prepare, and the nature of a crisis means directors will not resolve everything with just one or two social media posts. However, people expect to hear from the organization, and the organization needs to acknowledge all problems, issues, and crises right away. Therefore, in P1’s crisis communication plan, they recognize a problem immediately and provide informative updates across their social media platforms.

P3 explained that their brand image on social media platforms was quite simple. P3 felt that social media was a major compulsory component of their firm's crisis management strategy. P3's use of social media improved the organization's potential and connectivity to develop and enhance its brand image, especially during a crisis. The indication was to stay aware and connected in providing updates to the information and distribute the correct, accurate narrative of the organization's resourceful messaging and reputation. P3 and the team's goal was to engage potential customers, clients and to generate profitable outcomes.

P3 offered a different approach to substantial crisis planning and organization reputation while still implementing social media as a vehicle to address the public on a crisis disruption. P3 shared its public relations directors use an emergency action plan (EAP), which included the procedures that an organization needs to follow to respond to a crisis. An EAP is an integral element of the safety procedures of a company (Jabeen, 2020). P3 described the following: "We do ensure display an aggressive directive EAP on all our organization's social media platforms. We must keep the organization's brand relevant in a positive form and dispel any rumors, allegations, and false or, as they say, *fake news*." Kantabutra (2020) postulated that it is vital to identify all the potential emergencies that can affect an organization and design effective EAP accordingly. P3's EAP is a well-written plan that details their organization's steps to ensure the safety of all stakeholders and property during a crisis operational disruption.

P3 shared that an EAP is a focal point of their public relations director's substantial crisis planning and organization reputation to combat crisis disruption efficiency. P3 continued with more insight, “We work diligently in building an informative, engaging social media presence. Our EAP outlines the actions we force to take in all the possible emergencies that can affect our organization.” P3 mentioned its crisis management strategy's fundamental component is social media platforms, which managed to sustain their client’s organization branding by reducing the damage of a crisis disruption. Loock and Phillips (2020) aligned with the participant's statements. The domino effect of inaccurate, sparse, or confusing information disseminated in a crisis disruption is a damaged reputation to the organization's business and corporate image. A damaged reputation to some organizations can result in continued problems, including financial losses.

Theme 3: Precrisis Prevention and Preparedness

The study participants communicated that precrisis prevention and preparedness are the main objectives to understand and minimize a crisis disruption in an organization. P1 shared, "one of our organization's most effective crisis management strategies are the preparation that is vital for taking accountability. Our public relations firm assures us to be proactive and transparent when handling a crisis.” P1 insisted that their public relations firm does not cover up a crisis since this can only worsen the situation. P1’s public relations directors, who are crisis management experts, manage a crisis by communicating immediately and instantly responding to feedback. P1 provided information on the public relations code of ethics to avoid arguing publicly; if applicable, first apologize, act, and acknowledge other people's concerns and questions. According to P1, their firm orchestrates precrisis prevention and preparedness to monitor, plan, and communicate a response only to the right conversations. P1 stated, “We tend to act immediately with a press release, if applicable, and distribute a communication blast to all social media spectrums, all while placing a crisis update announcement on our organization's website to the community.” P1 discussed how their practices effectively control the crisis from spiraling out of control and ensuring their crisis management strategy message is visible.

In interviewing P2, the emphasis continued an effective crisis management strategy anchored in a set of fundamental principles. P2 discussed certain phases of crisis management within the organization. Norris et al. (2020) stated a crisis response plan should outline roles and responsibilities and prescribe a command structure as decentralized as necessary and as centralized as possible. P2 added that the firm ensures everyone is on the same page about their crisis management strategy in public relations training and keeping updated modules while enforcing crisis management policies when responding to a crisis disruption. These basic tenets presented were similar to Norris et al. (2020) to ensure those mandated communicate effectively with all stakeholders in all four phases of emergency management — mitigation, crisis prevention, preparedness, response, and recovery. In addition, these principles provided a framework for communicating with stakeholders. P2 explained that public relations directors should classify and prepare stakeholders during each phase, evaluate vulnerabilities, draft a response plan, and implement the strategies quickly with all leaders and response teams. Once again, P2 firmly illustrated the importance of precrisis prevention and preparedness throughout the organization to reduce any losses from a crisis.

P3 concluded that a public relations director’s main objective is to develop a crisis management strategy that sustains the business and operational objectives aligned with the organization's overall profitability goals. Monitoring crisis approaches long before an occurrence can improve a firm’s response time while sustaining best practices to preserve reputation and profits (Avery & Park, 2019). P3 firm's responsibility is to be skillful in technical knowledge and utilize as much information as necessary to promptly relay resulting crisis prevention and preparedness methods. P3 shared that one of the best practices in handling a crisis is forward-thinking planning and mapping preventative control measures to reduce adverse results from a crisis disruption in an organization.

All study participants provided effective crisis management strategies to manage and mitigate a crisis disruption's negative result while maintaining organizational reputation to ensure probability. Every organization is vulnerable to crises. When used effectively, public relations directors can save a company's reputation and goodwill from irreparable harm. As a result, effective communication is a critical component of attempting to control any crisis. With valuable data, public relations directors provide information about what is happening, its effects on the general public, and what the organization plans to do to resolve the situation. My justification is public relations directors obtain academic education and a body of knowledge of crisis management strategies for practical actions to resolve a crisis disruption, restore organizational reputation, and contribute to continued profitability.

Correlation to the Literature Review

A crisis is a series of unanticipated events that send a group, team, or organization into a rapid downward spiral with long-term consequences for reputation and profits. A crisis defines as a difficult time when disasters are happening coupled with a loss of resources, and the ability to make difficult decisions with thoughtfulness and objectivity is challenging (Bacq et al., 2020). According to According to Williams et al. (2017), a crisis is defined as a situation that includes three conditions: (a) a surprise, (b) a threat to high-priority goals, and (c) a limited amount of time for response. Because crises can occur in all types of organizations, from the wealthiest empires to the smallest of stores, they are not limited to any organizational size or type. As a result, public relations directors must be prepared to act quickly in the event of a crisis.

The realization is that global crises occur daily (Harvey, 2018). Such crises provide public relations directors a plethora of information for examining internal and external factors responsible for crisis disruption. Public relations directors identify organizational strategies for preventing crises and effectively and efficiently managing crises when they occur to mitigate the outcomes on business performance (Alrawabdeh et al., 2020). The study’s themes correlated with my literature review and provided insights into crisis management strategies necessary to manage crises along with decisions and actions of three public relations directors to prevent crises and reduce losses for their organizations.

Correlation to the Conceptual Framework

Coombs, a communication theorist, created the SCCT strategy to understand better how an organization should communicate in response to a crisis (Barkley, 2020). Researchers use the underlying conceptual framework of SCCT to guide the exploration of crisis management strategies and the resulting impact of crisis disruption. Effective communication is essential to developing and implementing successful crisis management strategies by leaders to overcome crises in organizations (Barbe & Pennington-Gray, 2018). Public relations directors utilize crisis management strategies by establishing several interorganizational crisis communication responses to direct organizations during a crisis (Coombs et al., 2020). Throughout the previous 5 years in each participant's organization, all three participants emphasized the importance of reactive crisis communications and decision-making as part of a successful crisis management strategy correlating directly with SCCT by Coombs.

Public relations directors utilize different crisis procedures to reduce uncertainty in the flow of crisis uncertainty (Poroli & Huang, 2018). SCCT is the means to establish interorganizational relationships is an appropriate procedure to attain organizational resources, maintain dependence, and reduce uncertainty (Coombs, 2020). Lussak (2017) stated that applying different crisis management strategies can control and reduce the possible effects during and after a crisis disruption, particularly on organizational reputation and potential financial outcome. Lussak's attention to sustainability crisis planning and organizational reputation correlated to SCCT's foundation and was prevalent in the findings of my study, specifically in theme two. All three participants in this study supported crisis preparedness and prevention, known as theme three, which correlates with Coombs' SCCT strategy in a crisis. The study's participants provided practical crisis management strategies to mitigate the negative results of a crisis disruption on both reputation and profitability, emphasizing effective communications throughout any crisis.

Applications to Professional Practice

The study's findings may contribute to a greater understanding of crisis management strategies that public relations directors use to improve organizational reputation and maintain profitability. Crisis management strategy topics collected from public relations directors can help in the future. Current public relations directors can avoid operational obstacles and adjust for lack of normalcy due to crisis interruptions (Ansell & Boin, 2017). The themes derived from this study were (a) reactive crisis communications and decision making, (b) sustainability crisis planning and organizational reputation, and (c) precrisis prevention and preparedness may be helpful for public relations directors in their efforts to restore organizational reputation while ensuring profitability. The emergent themes provide further research and success for public relations directors to establish an in-depth knowledge of strategic planning and align with the research question and conceptual framework of the SCCT.

According to Money et al. (2017), there is a collaborative relationship between corporate reputation and strategic crisis communication. Generally, a crisis is a component of significant damage to an organization's brand and business reputation, which becomes a risk of asset loss and profitability (Kim & Woo, 2019). The SCCT included an invaluable perspective on the link between reactive crisis communications and decision-making, aligning sustainability crisis planning with organizational reputation and crisis prevention and preparedness (Coombs, 2020). This study can assist public relations directors in exploring the in-depth relationship between SCCT and crisis management strategy; therefore, define the close connection between SCCT, crisis communication, and corporate reputation to implement effective crisis communication education. Crisis management leaders and public relations directors might benefit from the study results by improving crisis communication strategies to maintain organizational reputations prior, during, and postcrisis while ensuring a return to profitability. Public relations directors can educate, create, and implement crisis communication strategies in collaboration with customers, stakeholders, existing management, and other shareholders to curtail damages when a crisis occurs (Wong et al., 2021). Public relations directors who have created and implemented strategic crisis communication and education guidelines within organizations have quickly restored reputation and protected a company's profits.

In this study, information from public relations directors could reveal that some organizations do not have critical crisis management strategies, especially reputation repair, to ensure profitability. Public relations directors can protect the reputation and longevity of an organization's brand through proactive and well-executed reputational remediation strategies (Park, 2017). The emphasis on education and reputation repair using traditional media and social media platforms must be part of organizational practice, communications, and strategies (Claeys & Coombs, 2019; Coombs, 2020).

There should be a minimum of avoidance and tolerance to anticipate crisis disruption and well-structured reputation strategies to deal with any losses (Page, 2019). A crisis recovery process is developing or updating appropriate processes and procedures, resulting in strategic crisis planning and preventive measures that are accurate and aligned with leadership and financial goals (Sisson & Bowen, 2017). Such processes entail no responsibility for errors or omissions in a crisis management strategy for crisis preparedness and prevention, including denunciation or lack of planning. By proactively implementing a crisis management strategy, restoring profitability during a crisis will become evident, as indicated by the study participants.

My intention in exploring this research problem was to create a social change in society and communities through the most effective crisis management strategies to avoid crisis disruption, enabling more efficient utilization of resources and reducing organizations' costs. Loss of market share increased regulatory scrutiny and control, stockholder dissatisfaction, decreased employee morale, bankruptcy, and organizational failure–these are just a few of the potential consequences of organizational crisis disruption (Herbane, 2019). All study participants identified the need for coherent crisis management strategies to ensure that organizations use effective crisis avoidance techniques to maintain an organization implementing a crisis disruption.

An analysis of an organization's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT) concerning crisis management strategies might provide a practical perspective on education, guidelines, and accountability in crisis management needed by the organization (John-Eke & Eke, 2020). The SWOT analysis should provide a strategic complement to current strategies in place but deliver clear objectives that require public relations directors to detail all relationships in the event of a crisis while moving quickly forward towards restoring business performance (Coombs, 2020). The directives constitute a public relations team specialized in implementing crisis management strategies. The study's findings emphasize the importance of having a dedicated public relations team within an organization. The public relations team is responsible for the implementation of a crisis management strategy. A committed public relations team is the first step towards restoring an organization's reputation and profitability. In conjunction with the SWOT analysis, public relations directors might consider using the Improvisation Readiness Index Score (IRIS) to assess needed communication crisis strategies (Hughes et al., 2020). Therefore, to ensure consistent communications, public relations directors deal with a crisis using accountability, swift and proven communication techniques, avenues that need assessment, and alignment with financial goals (Dubey et al., 2019). As part of their cutting-edge efforts, public relations directors must immediately plan for the reconstruction and renewal of a damaged reputation, focusing on the profitability of an organization.

The results of this study can enhance the body of knowledge of a public relations director in the use of various crisis management strategies for crisis disruption. This study contributes to business practices by providing information to individuals contemplating a career as a public relations director to improve business practices and training on crisis management strategies. The results of this study encompass elements for public relations directors to include in their crisis management strategies. The crisis management strategies could enable public relations directors of public relations firms to understand the importance of developing a crisis management strategy to avoid and mitigate any impact of a crisis disruption. An organization should aim to improve crisis prevention, preparedness, and response. The SCCT framework referred to before and during a crisis can increase the efficiency of crisis communication by an organization.

Implications for Social Change

The implications for social change on crisis management strategies could provide insight for public relations directors and their organizations. Information derived from the study for new crisis management strategies may increase public relations directors' knowledge and satisfaction with crisis management strategies beyond 5 years. The discovery of new crisis management strategies may help public relations executives understand the processes necessary to prevent crisis destruction successfully. New crisis management strategies that lead to crisis avoidance create a new organizational environment (Lambret & Barki, 2017). A leader’s preparation of crisis management strategies improves crisis preparedness and reduces damage to the community.

This study's outcome may help influence positive social change that could impact new business modular crisis management strategies, leading to increased stakes and reduced time for decision-making, especially when information has become public. Positive social change will allow public relations directors to expand educational and current crisis management programs in organizations, leading to profitable jobs, economic prosperity, and stable societies to deter disruption of crises. Crisis management strategies include forming public relations teams, determining the probability of crisis events, establishing crisis communication plans, and, most importantly, promoting long-term relationships with stakeholders (Adim & Ekpa, 2020). Crisis management strategies play an essential role in both short- and long-term organization's strategies for both crisis and non-crisis modes of operation (Max, 2020). Crisis management strategies could prescribe specific organizational communication actions to prevent a crisis from reoccurring or manage communication when a crisis occurs (Ferguson, Schmidt, et al., 2018). Ensuring continued profitability serves to boost a local community in resources, livelihoods, and overall economic outcomes.

Recommendations for Action

The recommendations for action for public relations directors to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability crisis management strategy could help maintain organizational reputation to ensure profitability. Public relations directors should use this study's findings to create innovative and newly developed crisis management strategies to achieve crisis preparedness and avoidance. The recommendation for action is that public relations directors' innovative initiatives should create heightened crisis avoidance and an exceptional impact on crisis planning and preparedness. I recommend that public relations directors invest in additional educational resources and training to increase skill sets to develop a modular system that generates new trends and innovative crisis management strategies. I recommend that the study's findings are accessible to public relations directors specializing in crisis management strategies. Public relations directors can use strategies for further assessments for reactive crisis communications, decision making, sustainability crisis planning, organizational reputation, and precrisis prevention and preparedness. These applications of crisis management strategies stemming from the findings of this study can aid public relations directors in restoring an organization’s reputation following a crisis, thus, ensuring the continued profitability of that organization.

The study’s findings will be made available to public relations professionals who want to improve their crisis management strategies. The recommendation for action is preparedness. Precrisis prevention and preparedness are good planning to facilitate a rapid, coordinated, effective response when a crisis occurs (Hewett & Lemon, 2019). Also, the recommendation for action by public relations directors to create crisis management strategies relative to sustainability crisis planning and organizational reputation. Many segments of society are increasingly agreeing on the growing importance of both sustainability and crisis management strategy in the creation and maintenance of economically, politically, and environmentally sustainable communities at all social scales (Gatto, 2020). The improved crisis management strategies help the organization's reputation stay favorable for both its consumers and shareholders to improve the image and profitability.

Finally, I will share the recommendations for action and practice of this study via publishing and sharing with participants and public relations directors. I plan to share my research findings after graduating by publishing on several social media sites, including LinkedIn and Google Scholar, Twitter, Facebook, ScienceDirect, and some international research sites. Once this resume, one of my goals is to present the findings of my study at various public relations conferences and seminars in the United States. One last goal is to pursue having my study put into book form for future acceptance into a peer-reviewed journal. Radford et al. (2020) cited the importance of being a published researcher to one's career, other professionals, and the future of scientific research. I want to be a scholar published to contribute further to business research and the public relations community. The results will integrate crisis management strategies to ensure the continuous need in developing crisis management strategies that could help maintain organizational reputation to ensure profitability.

Recommendations for Further Research

A researcher could expand to a broader demographic that could yield results that consider views of public relations directors and communication professionals statewide, nationwide, and internationally in further research. Future research may involve communications professionals from a wide geographic area who can prove that the new crisis management strategy that could extend communications lasts for many years. Established findings from this study may provide further research of new crisis management strategies of public relations directors that could help build the validity of past and current research and add to the existing body of information. Public relations directors have an essential role in the global economy; further research to support crisis management strategy in this study is of great benefit to business globally. A future researcher could yield modification of the questions asked in further research for valuable information.

In this study, I used a qualitative method; a quantitative analysis could produce valuable research results for future researchers seeking different data for the various public relation segments. In addition, the study limited to three participants who were public relations directors exploring their perspective in implementing crisis management strategies to sustain an organization for years after a crisis. This study's results include that crisis is inevitable, and preparedness is fundamental in planning for the unexpected, getting ready for a crisis as it happens, and how best to respond when it strikes.

The results from this multiple case study indicate recommendations for future research. For example, participants in the current study discussed crisis management strategies to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. However, there is little research on crisis management strategies used by public relations directors to create innovative and newly developed crisis management strategies to achieve crisis preparedness and avoidance. Also, the linking of continued profitability directly to innovative crisis management strategies postcrisis is scarce in the current literature. Future researchers might explore specific crisis management strategies and specific crisis preparedness and avoidance within companies that rapidly restore an organization’s reputation without damaging profits. In addition, researchers might want to focus on specifically tailored crisis management strategies. The innovative initiatives that public relations directors apply should create heightened crisis avoidance and an exceptional impact on crisis planning and preparedness.

Study participants also discussed the importance of implementing crisis management strategies to assess crisis disruption further. In addition, I recommend the study's findings made accessible to public relations directors who specialize in crisis management strategies. Finally, future researchers could examine how public relations directors collaborate with other organizational leaders to utilize effective crisis management strategies to ensure continued profitability.

One limitation of this multiple case study was that only a few public relations directors from various organizations in a limited geographical area were part of this case study. Thus, future researchers might want to repeat or expand this study with other organizations, public relations directors, and geographical locations to assess differences in crisis management strategies utilized to ensure continued profitability. Also, public relations directors might replicate this study by looking at smaller firms to evaluate similarities and differences in crisis management strategies and smaller public relations firms with varying crisis management strategies. Likewise, future researchers might recreate this study with similar industries in other markets to explore how public relations directors develop and create crisis management strategies to ensure continued profitability.

One formidable barrier is the lack of resources and not knowing the unknown but still needing to prepare for the unexpected. One main limitation is the challenging barrier to foresee crisis avoidance and crisis mitigation. A crisis is a circumstance that could and will demolish the effects of an organizational ability to sustain a crisis's survival. The limitations include the types of crisis management strategies participants use, which can benefit all industries. The study was limited to Upper Manhattan, New York. Further analysis of public relations directors in other United States regions could advance valuable research information to include the study's findings and provide additional insight into crisis management strategies for reputation restoration and continued profitability.

Reflections

During this Walden University DBA study, my learning has evolved from the interaction with participants. While working in every section of my study and interviewing the participants, I developed an advanced comprehension level in crisis management strategies. While conducting the participants' interviews, I enhanced my researching skills. Maintaining up-to-date crisis management strategies is a significant undertaking but is the only way a leader can assure an efficient emergency response and manage a crisis disruption. During this study, I obtained a detailed and in-depth understanding of the research problem. Organizational leaders should review their crisis management strategies regularly to ensure that they are prepared to deal with a crisis. Organizations must assimilate digital capabilities as part of their crisis management strategy to ensure that "change" is value-enhancing rather than destructive. In order to thrive and survive in an uncertain world, businesses must innovate quickly, keep up with technological and industry change, and cultivate greater resilience. Initial information simplified and, when handled well, can limit the negative press that an organization could face in the long run. The participant, public relations directors, shared their depth of knowledge and experience in public relations and crisis management.

My study's reflection was imperative in understanding that an effective crisis management strategy plan prioritizes as a "crisis focus" technique explicitly designed by public relations directors who specialize in identifying and clarifying a crisis successfully. In overcoming the challenges of implementing effective crisis management strategies is having complete directives on visibility. The visibility is dependent on a proactive approach that involves deploying communication technologies before the crises. Without visibility, an organization employs misinformed crisis strategies at the wrong time, worsening the situation. Effective crisis management strategies are forever and instantly changing. Once a crisis management strategy develops, an innovation review ensures that the procedures are clear and understandable. A well-prepared crisis management strategy with a dominant "action plan" is no good if not tested. It is not enough to have a plan. Public relations directors who specialize in crisis management must confirm a crisis management strategy is viable.

In a public relations news online survey conducted in 2015, 467 organizations from 67 countries, 47% of organizations cited a lack of understanding of the main reason behind an organization's communications failure, which results in crisis disruption (Arenstein, 2020). This pitfall of a failed crisis management strategy avoids by regular review and testing. The crisis management strategy needs to update as required and evaluated overtime regularly. A recent public relations news online survey, www.prnewsonline.com*,* noted about 62% of companies have crisis plans, though it is uncertain how many regularly update them (Arenstein, 2020). Though many organizations consistently practice crisis scenarios, there is a continued need to update crisis management strategies because of significant changes such as business expansion, introducing newer technology, or new high-level staff recruitments. Revising a crisis response plan starts with integration and elimination with the company's inefficiency of emerging technology and procedures. Due to our economy, the urge to stay abroad for the many crises that arise requires adjusting business continuity and crisis management strategic plans. The necessity to have a public relations team will become standard. As crises become more prevalent, public relations directors who are specialists in crisis management strategies to restore organizational reputation while ensuring profitability.

Conclusion

Qualitative multiple case studies were the basis for discovering what crisis management strategies the director of public relations to restore organizational reputation while ensuring profitability. Three public relations directors from Upper Manhattan, New York, who have sustained their businesses for over 5 years, were interviewed for this study. Researchers should use this study's findings to further the knowledge base of those who desire to create innovative and newly developed crisis management strategies. Public relations directors must comprehend knowledge and expertise on crisis management strategies to have the most updated educational resources, the process, and technology while leveraging to execute the best effective crisis management strategy practices. The attained themes from this study were (a) reactive crisis communications and decision making, (b) sustainability crisis planning and organizational reputation, and (c) precrisis prevention and preparedness. The themes could prove to be useful for public relations directors to sustain their businesses beyond 5 years. Researchers could apply SCCT theory from this study's findings and use it in a new venture business to create modeling crisis management strategies leading to innovative crisis preparedness that causes crisis avoidance or sustain operations before, after, and during a crisis disruption. A critical finding of this study is an in-depth analysis of identifying effective crisis management strategies to prioritize postcrisis reputation and profitability restoration. Public relations director specializing in crisis management strategy could determine and clarify long-range crisis management, strategic plans to support intervention strategies that plan for unexpected events. Creating a successful crisis management strategy that applies engagement, professionalism, and expertise is key to maintaining an organization's reputation following a crisis disruption and ensuring continued profitability.

In this multiple case study, considered a minor, qualitative investigation, future researchers might want to build upon the findings by expanding into a mixed-method or qualitative approach to examine a more extensive study group. In addition, researchers conducting future more extensive empirical studies might utilize anonymous surveys or questionnaires to apply additional knowledge limited by semistructured interviews used in this multiple case study. Finally, future researchers might compare the current crisis management strategies used by public relations directors in this study to those employed in other sectors, such as healthcare, sports, and entertainment. Such research may elucidate how crisis management strategies differ in failure or success and whether public relations directors in different sectors may learn from one another.

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Appendix: Interview Protocol

This is a study to examine and explore crisis management strategies that some public relations directors use to maintain an organization's reputation following a crisis to ensure continued profitability. The Interview Protocol for this study is set forth herein. The researcher utilizes the Interview Protocol to provide information to the participants concerning the steps of the interview process.

Prior to the interview, the researcher will:

- Send an invitation by email to potential participants to take part in the study.
- Provide the interview protocol, consent form, and the interview questions of the study to the potential participants.
- Request the potential participants confirm receipt of the interview documents via email and confirm understanding of the interview protocol.
- Schedule the time and date for the telephone interview.
- Provide answers to any questions or concerns the potential participants have.

During the interview sessions, the researcher will:

- Secure the signed consent form by email.
- Confirm the participant agrees with the recording of the interview.
- Confirm the participant is aware of their right to voluntarily withdraw, at any time from the interview without having to provide any reason for doing so.

- Inform the participant that any reference to their identity or the identity of any company will be confidential. Any responses, themes, and quotes derived from the interview will not specify participant's identity or company name.

Each participant will have all their concerns and questions answered. After the interview, the researcher will:

- Thank the participants for their participation and contribution to the study.
- Answer any concerns, comments, and questions from the participants.
- Transcribe the responses from the interview into a written MS word document.
- Perform a transcription review and provide a member-checking summary.
    - ✓ Then follow through with sending the member-checking summary via email to the participants.

I will telephone each participant after sending via email the member-checking summary to confirm that all the information from the interview accurately recorded.

- Attain confirmation of accuracy of the interpretation of participant's responses by telephone call or email.
- Save all collected data of the virtual audio meeting interviews and store in the file hosting service Dropbox and password protect for 5 years.

After the publication, the researcher will:

- Forward the summary of findings and electronic copy of the study in its completion to all participants upon request from the participants.
- Inform the participants by email of the publication of the study if a copy not requested by the participants.
- Send electronic copies of the completed study and summary of findings to selected public relations directors in the United States.