

Product Crisis Management Through Continuous Communication: A Content Analysis Approach Using The Case of Honda Astra Indonesia

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the crisis communication strategies employed by Honda Astra Indonesia in response to the eSAF (Enhanced Smart Architecture Frame) issue, which posed significant challenges to the company's reputation and customer trust due to product quality concerns. The urgency of this research lies in understanding how effective crisis communication can mitigate reputational damage and restore public confidence in the automotive industry. A content analysis method was employed to analyze various data sources, including official press releases, media reports, and public responses on social media platforms Instagram. Findings indicate that the company's consistent and transparent communication through regular press releases, which outlined the steps taken to address the eSAF issue, played a crucial role in mitigating the negative impact. Media reports reflected mixed perspectives, with some criticism of product quality and appreciation of the company's corrective actions. Social media analysis revealed diverse public responses, ranging from concerns about safety to praise for the company's prompt response and transparency. The study's novelty lies in its comprehensive examination of how different communication channels and strategies contribute to crisis management in the automotive industry. These findings offer practical implications for other companies facing similar challenges, emphasizing the need for structured and proactive communication plans to restore and maintain public trust during crises.

Keywords: crisis communication, Honda Astra Indonesia, product, content analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Crisis communication is an important part of crisis management, especially in restoring a company's trust and reputation. The case of Honda Astra Indonesia's eSAF (enhanced smart architecture framework) framework reflects the significant challenges faced in maintaining a company's reputation under product quality issues. The purpose of this study is to examine the

crisis communication strategies adopted by Honda Astra Indonesia to deal with this problem through content analysis method.

In the modern business world, crises can have many sources, such as product failures, management errors, or natural disasters (Ramzy Hasibuan & Irwansyah, 2020). Effective crisis communication can not only provide information but also rebuild lost trust (Erdogan, 2023). Coombs (2021) believes that successful crisis communication must include transparency, consistency, and rapid responsiveness (Tkalac Verčič et al., 2019). In this context, Honda Astra Indonesia faces major challenges in maintaining its reputation and customer loyalty after the eSAF framework issues were exposed.

Previous studies show that a company's response to a crisis is crucial in influencing public and media perceptions. Kim, Avery, and Lariscy (2020) revealed that companies that show responsibility and offer concrete solutions tend to restore their reputation more quickly (Kiambi & Shafer, 2016) (Primasari, 2018). Conversely, a lack of transparency and slow response can exacerbate the situation and prolong negative impacts (Schoofs et al., 2019). This research seeks to examine how Honda Astra Indonesia implemented these principles in their response to the eSAF crisis.

A clear example of the importance of crisis communication can be seen in the case of the Volkswagen emissions scandal. When this scandal came to light in 2015, Volkswagen faced major challenges in restoring its reputation. A study conducted by Wagner, Lutz, and Weitz (2019) showed that transparency and continuous improvement efforts helped Volkswagen improve their image despite initial harsh criticism. This research will see whether a similar strategy is used by Honda Astra Indonesia in the eSAF case.

A content analysis approach was used in this research to identify the main themes in Honda Astra Indonesia's crisis communication. Krippendorff (2018) states that content analysis allows researchers to systematically evaluate text data and identify effective communication patterns. By analyzing press releases, media reports and public responses on social media, this research aims to provide in-depth insight into how crisis communication is managed by Honda Astra Indonesia.

A review of the literature shows that social media plays an important role in modern crisis communications. According to a study conducted by Lachlan, Spence, and Lin (2019), social media allows companies to communicate directly with customers and respond to

complaints in real-time. In the case of eSAF, analysis of public comments on platforms such as Instagram will provide insight into public sentiment and the effectiveness of the communication strategies implemented.

One important aspect of crisis communications is how companies manage public expectations. A study conducted by Claeys, Cauberghe, and Vyncke (2017) shows that when companies provide clear and realistic information regarding the steps taken to overcome the crisis, they tend to regain public trust more quickly. This research will evaluate whether Honda Astra Indonesia is successful in managing public expectations through its communication.

This research will also explore the role of transparency in crisis communication. According to Heath (2020), transparency is not only about conveying information, but also about building dialogue with stakeholders. In the context of the eSAF case, transparency can include technical explanations of frame problems, corrective steps taken, and assurances to customers that the resulting product is safe and of high quality.

Using a content analysis approach, this research aims to contribute to the crisis communication literature by providing insight into best practices in managing product crises. It is hoped that the results of this research will provide practical guidance for other companies facing similar situations, as well as enrich academic understanding of the importance of effective communication in crisis management.

This study integrates the perspectives of the media and the public and provides a deeper understanding of how crisis information is received and perceived by different stakeholders. This enriches the literature on crisis communication by demonstrating the importance of considering both perspectives when managing a crisis. This study also updates the literature on crisis communication and reputation recovery in the context of today's digital world. This shows how social media and other digital platforms can play an important role in shaping crisis narratives and corporate responses. Integrating the perspectives of the media and the public provides a deeper understanding of how crisis information is received and perceived by different stakeholders. This enriches the literature on crisis communication by demonstrating the importance of considering both perspectives when managing a crisis.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research uses a content analysis approach to examine the crisis communication strategy implemented by Honda Astra Indonesia in the case of the eSAF framework. Data is collected from various sources, including official company press releases, media reports, and public responses on social media. The analysis process includes data collection, coding, and identification of main themes in corporate crisis communication.

The data source in this research is the official Honda Astra Indonesia press release, both through online media articles and public comments on social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram). Data from the official press release is a statement issued by Honda Astra Indonesia regarding the issue of the eSAF frame. This press release usually includes information about the actions the company is taking to address the problem, a technical explanation, and assurances to customers about the steps it will take to correct the situation. Then data was also obtained through online media articles including news, analysis and opinions published by various news outlets regarding the eSAF frame case. This article can come from local or international news sources. And the latest data taken from public comments includes responses, complaints, support and discussions that occur on social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. These comments may come from customers, vehicle owners, or the general public providing their opinions regarding eSAF framework issues.

Data was collected since the issue of the eSAF frame began to emerge on public social media through various comments and reports in the automotive media. Data analysis starts from carrying out coding procedures, namely data is categorized based on emerging themes such as transparency, responsibility and improvement efforts. Next, the analysis continues by identifying themes. This is done to identify the main themes in the crisis communication strategy used by the company.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Official Press Release

Honda Astra Indonesia periodically issues press releases explaining the steps taken to address eSAF frame issues. The main message in this press release is a commitment to product quality and safety as well as efforts to replace or repair affected products. Honda Astra Indonesia has made several systematic efforts by collaborating with relevant parties who are

authorized to check the quality and safety of its vehicle products, in this case with the Ministry of Transportation (Kementerian Perhubungan RI) and the National Transportation Safety Committee (KNKT) to research and analyze the eSAF frame problem. Through GM Corporate Communication AHM Ahmad Muhibbudin explained that the rust problem on the eSAF frame is not true and functions to coat the frame from rust/corrosion which is called the Silicate layer.

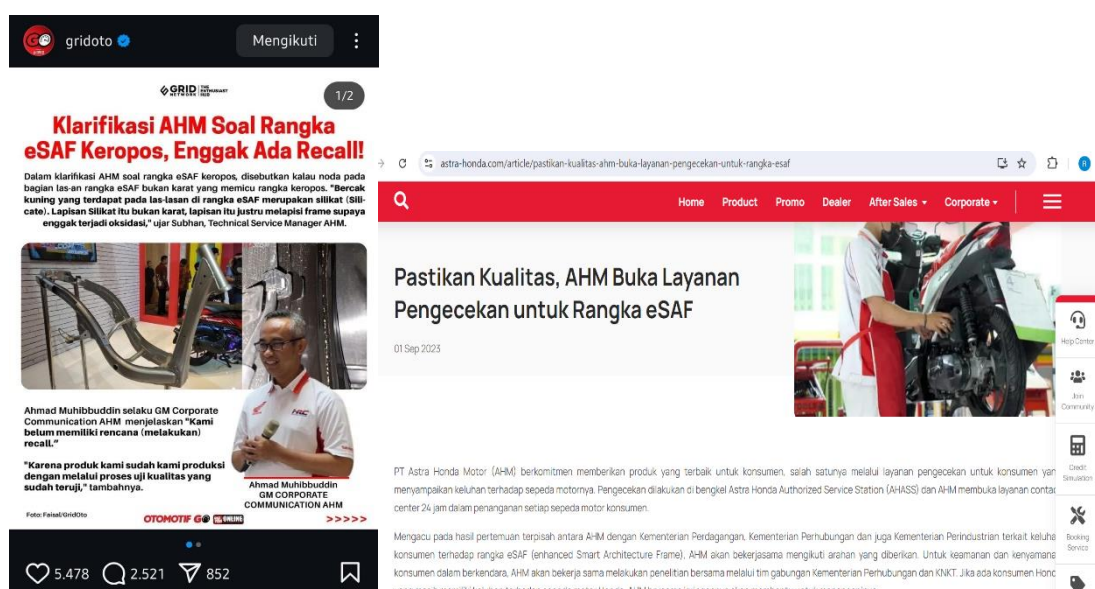


Figure 1. Official Communication conducted by Astra Honda Motor Indonesia

Source: Instagram, astra-honda.com (2024)

Astra Honda Motor Indonesia monitors the development of the eSAF frame issue which is said to be easily damaged by netizens who are not fully involved and even become victims in this case, but also provide "negative voices" on social media platforms such as Instagram. However, Astra Honda Motor Indonesia understands that this crisis situation must be given an appropriate and measured response so that the actual situation can be known. Therefore, Astra Honda Motor Indonesia in a press release on its official website has created a checking service for all motorcycle users who use eSAF frames to be rechecked for free to ensure the quality of safety and comfort of its users. This approach aims to mitigate the negative impact on the company's reputation and demonstrate its responsibility towards customers.

Media Reports

Media coverage of the eSAF framework case reflects a variety of viewpoints, ranging from sharp criticism of the product quality to appreciation of the corrective steps taken by the company. The media often highlights customer complaints regarding safety and product performance issues, which can negatively impact public perception. However, several reports also appreciated the proactive actions taken by Honda Astra Indonesia, including transparency in conveying information and quick improvement efforts. For example, an article in an automotive magazine in February 2023 praised the company for its quick response and effective handling of the crisis. Analysis shows that media coverage can significantly influence public perceptions, and positive reporting helps reduce distrust and criticism.

Public Response on Social Media

Public responses on social media varied, ranging from serious complaints to support. Analysis of comments on platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram reveals several key themes. Many comments focused on concerns over vehicle safety, and customers expressed dissatisfaction regarding potential risks they may be exposed to. There were also calls for more transparency regarding corrective actions taken and assurances that similar problems would not recur. On the other hand, several comments showed support for the company because it was quick to respond and provide solutions. For example, on Twitter, several users praised Honda Astra Indonesia for its quick response and efforts to fix existing problems. The public's response on social media shows that companies need to continue to communicate actively and transparently to maintain customer trust.

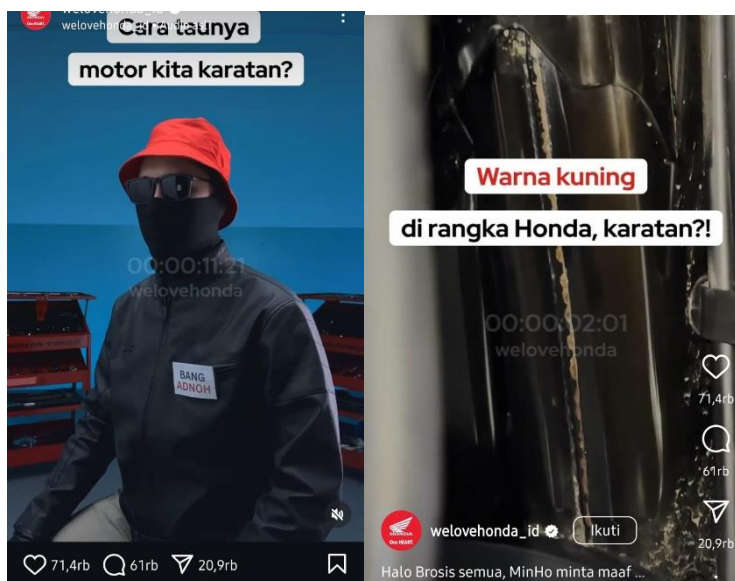


Figure 2. Official Clarification by Astra Honda Motor Indonesia

Source: Instagram (2024)

Figure.2 Klarifikasi Astra Honda Motor Indonesia di Instagram

Astra Honda Motor Indonesia through its Instagram post provided clarification and as an effort to explain the commotion regarding its vehicle products that use eSAF frames that are easily broken due to rust through a short video played by BANG ADNOH (pseudonym) who was wearing a mask, glasses, and a black jacket. In his explanation, the actor explained that the yellow color on the Honda vehicle's eSAF frame was not rust as alleged but a Silicate layer which actually functions to coat rust.

The public response in this case was obtained from the comments column on the video, namely that the negative image actually supports the crisis situation, where many responses questioned why in delivering the clarification, the perpetrators wore masks and all black clothes. The impression of the extras in the video was considered as "criminals" or "fraudsters" even though the public wanted the impression of openness and transparency from the company's responsible attitude through the content conveyed by the extras in the video. However, in the video, the information needed by the public regarding the "yellow stains"

which were considered rust has been explained that it is not rust but a layer to protect the frame from corrosion.

The Influence of Media on Public Perception

Data analysis shows that media coverage has a significant influence on public perceptions of the eSAF framework crisis. The media has an important role in shaping public opinion through reporting that disseminates information about the crisis and company responses (Andhriany, 2021). News reports that highlight prompt action and effective corrective action can improve a company's image in the eyes of the public. On the other hand, negative news about product quality problems can worsen public perception and prolong the impact of the crisis (Magno et al., 2010). For example, an investigative report noted how media criticism of quality issues could impact consumer confidence and increase attention to the crisis (Raithel et al., 2024). This shows that the media has the power to shape the crisis narrative and influence people's views of companies.

Astra Honda Motor as the most responsible party also made an official statement on Instagram showing its commitment to resolving the commotion over the issue of the eSAF frame that is easily broken. A convincing form of communication to serve and be responsible for the possibility of victims from customers who feel disadvantaged by damage to the products they buy is to create a customer service at number 1-500-989. Of course this is the answer and seriousness taken and Astra Honda Motor does not run away from responsibility for several cases of broken frames experienced by its consumers.



Figure 3. Astra Honda Motor Communication Content in times of crisis

Source: Instagram (2024)

In today's social media era, the relationship between customer complaints and social media posts has the potential to damage a company's reputation, so it is important for Astra Honda Motor Indonesia to handle these complaints properly, which can damage customer trust. Complaints that are not handled properly can quickly spread on social media. Negative posts from customers can be accessed by many people, influencing public opinion, and damaging the Company's reputation. Astra Honda Motor Indonesia's fairly quick and effective response by cooperating with relevant authorities regarding complaints shows that the company values customer input and is committed to improving its services. A company that acts ethically will prioritize resolving customer problems and prevent negative reviews by providing good and responsive service.

Lessons and Implications for Effective Crisis Communication Management

The crisis communication implemented by Honda Astra Indonesia shows effectiveness in several aspects, especially in terms of transparency and quick response. Frequent press releases help maintain open communication with the public and reduce uncertainty regarding the steps the company is taking (Seo & Jang, 2021). The public's mixed response on social media shows that customers appreciate the transparency and speed in dealing with issues, although there are still some concerns that have not been fully resolved. This research shows that the success of crisis communications depends not only on how quickly a company responds, but also on how clearly and consistently the information is delivered.

The case of the eSAF framework provides some important lessons regarding crisis management and communication. First, the importance of having a clear and consistent communication strategy in handling a crisis. Regular press releases and quick responses can help reduce the negative impact of a crisis and improve a company's image. Second, the importance of monitoring and responding to public comments on social media. Although people's responses vary, listening to and addressing customer concerns can increase their trust and loyalty. Finally, media analysis shows that positive news can help improve public perception, while negative news requires careful handling to reduce negative impacts.

The results of this analysis provide practical guidance for other companies in managing crisis communications. Companies are advised to adopt a structured and planned approach to communicating information during the crisis, emphasizing transparency and responsibility.

Additionally, it is important to leverage social media as a channel to communicate directly with customers and respond quickly to their concerns. Managing community expectations through clear and consistent communication can help speed up the reputation restoration process. This research also highlights the importance of conducting regular media analysis to assess the impact of news coverage on public perception and adjust communication strategies as needed.

CONCLUSION

Effective crisis communication is key to restoring a company's trust and reputation. The Honda Astra Indonesia case study shows that a combination of transparency, responsibility and continuous communication can help the company manage the crisis and improve its public image. A content analysis approach provides valuable insight into how crisis communication strategies can be implemented effectively. This research uses a comprehensive content analysis approach to examine various data sources, including official press releases, online media articles, and public comments on social media. This provides a holistic perspective on crisis communication strategies and public response, which is rarely done in previous crisis communication studies

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