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Egyptian Government's Strategies for facing Crisis

A study in analyzing of spokesman's speech

BY

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English Abstract
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**'Crisis Management strategies at the Egyptian government'
A study that analyses the discourse of the Official spokesperson.'**

The problem of the study is concerned with analysing the official spokesperson's communication of messages to the media and the public during the time of crisis. The study focuses on monitoring, analysing, and evaluating the communication strategies used by the official spokesperson in the crisis discourse: official statements issued to express the government's position on the occurring crises.

The study aims to monitor the characteristics of the official spokesperson's media discourse and analyse it during crisis. The discourse analysis involves studying how the spokesperson addresses the crisis, in addition to knowing his adopted ideologies.

Importance:

1. Due to the lack of studies (within the researcher's knowledge) analysing the official spokespersons' discourse, there is a need for further studies to help the media in understanding the relationship between the media outlets and the official spokesperson in the governmental institutions.
2. The recency of the position of the official spokesperson's (or media spokesperson) in the Arab world generally and Egypt in particular urges the need to discuss and identify the mechanisms of this role, in light of its seriousness in crisis or even during normal events.

Objectives:

1. Monitor, analyse, and evaluate the spokesperson's communication messages during crisis.
2. Identify the most frequently used rhetorical strategies in the spokesperson's statements during crisis.
3. Identify the most important strategies by which the Spokesperson will manage the crisis in the talk shows, chosen in the study sample.

Literature review:

After reviewing the available Arabic and foreign studies, related to the topic of the study, the researcher divided these studies into two main pivots:

Pivot I: Studies concerned with managing the crisis.

Pivot II: Studies concerned with the official spokesperson and his strategies in managing the crisis.

Theoretical framework:

This study was based on the image restoration discourse theory as a model to manage crisis.

Research methodology:

In terms of methodology, this study belongs to the descriptive studies aiming to monitor the characteristics of the official spokesperson's media discourse and analyse it during crises: analysing how the spokesperson addresses the crisis, in addition to knowing his adopted ideologies.

Research method (approach):

This study uses survey as a data collecting method: with its descriptive and analytical approaches.

Study Population:

Discourse analysis population:

Analysing the discourse of the official spokesperson during the following two crises: first, the bombings of the churches (in Alexandria and Tanta); second, Tiran and Sanafir. A survey was conducted by means of a direct field interviews with a random sample of 8 political experts and employees within the Council of Ministers.

Analytical study population:

In order to determine the population of the analytical study, a survey was conducted, by means of an e-form, on a random sample of 50 members of the Egyptian audience in order to determine the governmental and private channels with the highest audience viewing rates. Hence, determine the highest audience rating talk shows. The survey results are concluded as the following:

1. In terms of the governmental satellite channels with the highest audience viewing rates, Nile Live channel was the highest, while 'Safha Gadeeda' was the talk show with the highest audience viewing rates.
2. In terms of the private satellite channels with the highest audience viewing rates, 'On' and 'CBC' channels came first, while 'Kol Yom' and 'Hona El Asema' programmes were the talk shows with the highest audience viewing rates.

Therefore, according to this survey, the analytical study is conducted on the following talk shows in the Egyptian satellite channels:

1. 'Safha Gadeeda' talk show on Nile live channel, representing the governmental satellite channels.
2. 'Kol Yom' and 'Hona El Asema' talk shows on ON E and CBC channels respectively, representing the private satellite channels.

Field study population:

The population of the field study from the official spokespersons in the governmental institutions was identified from a sample consisting of 30 members of the former and current spokespersons of the different ministries.

Tools of collecting data:

First, discourse analysis

This study is based on discourse analysis. It seeks to uncover the underlying assumptions behind the words of the official spokespersons. The goal is to decipher words by identifying the underlying assumptions, intellectual strategies, and theoretical issues.

Second, content analysis

A customised content analysis form was designed to analyse the frameworks and the methods of the official spokespersons in the talk shows, chosen as the study sample). The content analysis form helps in qualitatively and quantitatively analyse the sample to achieve the objectives of the study and answer the research questions.

Third, interviews

In this study, the researcher relied on the questionnaire form as a tool for gathering data and information about the official spokesperson. The questionnaire included three pivots: the definition of the official spokesperson; the communication aspects; the strategies used.

Most important result of the study:

1. The official spokesperson's discourse analysis during crisis revealed some differences in the adopted intellectual theses. For instance, during the crisis of bombing the churches, the Egyptian government's official spokesperson mainly adopted the thesis of describing the crisis and proposing solutions. However, during the crisis of Tiran and Sanafir islands, the thesis of defining the crisis surpassed the rest.
2. The results of the study clarified that the appeal of influence and the use of symbols and slogans were the dominant intellectual theses used in the Egyptian government official discourse, during the crisis of bombing the churches. While during the crisis of the two islands, providing numbers and statistics came first.
3. The results of the study showed that the rhetorical style surpassed any other styles, by analysing the intellectual theses adopted in the discourse of the Egyptian government official spokespersons in the mentioned above crises.
4. During the crisis of bombing the churches, religious frameworks were the most important references that framed the official discourse of the Egyptian government, while, the legal frameworks were the references used in the crisis of the two islands.
5. Flows were the active powers involved in the official discourse of the Egyptian government during the crisis of bombing the churches, while the official source came first during the crisis of the two islands.
6. The role of the active powers involved in the official discourse of the Egyptian government during the crisis of bombing the churches was negative. The active powers in this crisis were the extremist Islamic flows. However, during the crisis of the two islands the two forces were equivalent in most of the discourses.
7. There is agreement on the extent to which the active powers were mentioned in the text of the official discourse of the Egyptian government during the crisis of bombing the churches and the crisis of the islands (Tiran and Sanafir); it was implicit.
8. During the crisis of bombing the churches, religious frameworks were the most important references that framed the official discourse of the Egyptian government, while, the legal frameworks were the references used in the crisis of the two islands.
9. The results proved the variety of the crisis management strategies used by the Egyptian government official Spokespersons: where the strategy of clarifying the institution's, position took the lead. This result matched the image restoration discourse theory as a model for crisis management.
10. Most of the crises tackled in the programs' sample, during the period of the analysis, were economic crises. There is no significant difference in tackled

crises in the programs of the study sample: they were all concerned with the economic crises.

11. The results of the study showed accuracy and objectivity were the most prevalent values in presenting information in the studied talk shows.
12. The results of the study showed that there is a significant diversity in the nature and the characteristics of the guests participated in the talk shows of the study sample.
13. The results of the study revealed that the main purpose of the appearance of the official spokespersons in the talk shows is to talk about the nature of the crisis.
14. The results of the study evaluated the appearance of the official spokespersons in the talk shows as appropriate because of the ability to convince the public. However, in just few cases, it was inappropriate in because of the lack of tact while speaking.
15. The results of the study found that, most of the time, the official spokesperson uses the strategy of clarifying the institution's position during managing the crisis in the talk shows. Thus, this matches the strategies used in the official discourse during crisis and the image restoration discourse theory.
16. The researcher did not get a unified (or specific) answer for the strategies used by the official spokespersons. The answers of the official spokespersons were the same: "The strategy varies according to the nature and type of the crisis."
17. The official spokespersons were keen to spread the media messages and issue information via the official sites of the Ministry and its pages on social networking web-sites.
18. The most prominent problems facing the ministry during crisis management are: the attempt of some to attack the ministry; spreading false news via the Internet which in turn leads to confusion; and some negative comments which may negatively impact the process of crisis management.

The indicators of the analytical and field study show the following: the level of performance of the official spokesperson in crisis management is average; there is no specific strategy for crisis management or a model; there is no comprehensive crisis management plan; the spokesman is negative towards most of the invitations to attend talk shows. The results of the discourse analysis proved that there was a conflict in the views of the official spokespersons on the same crisis. For instance, regarding the crisis of the church bombings, the figures were mixed in the statements of the official spokespersons.

Through this study, the researcher sought to benefit from: the indicators of the discourse analysis; interview; literature review studies; and public relations models and strategies in order to propose a model for crisis management, especially crisis related to mental image and reputation.