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ระหว่างช่วยเหลือผู้ประสบภัยสึนามิ

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CRISIS COMMUNICATION: ANXIETY ENCOUNTERED BY  
SCANDINAVIAN AIRLINES EMPLOYEES IN BANGKOK  
DURING THE EVACUATION OF TSUNAMI VICTIMS

MASTER'S PROJECT

BY

SASIWIMON CHAMPATHONG

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication  
at Srinakharinwirot University

May 2009

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การบินสแกนดิเนเวียณประจำสำนักงานกรุงเทพระหว่างช่วยเหลือผู้ประสบภัยสึนามิ.

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สารนิพนธ์ฉบับนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาภาวะความวิตกกังวล และผลกระทบต่อสื่อสาร  
ในภาวะวิกฤตของพนักงานสายการบินสแกนดิเนเวียในกรุงเทพระหว่างช่วยเหลือผู้ประสบภัยสึนามิ  
มิ โดยใช้แบบสอบถามเป็นเครื่องมือในการวิจัยและกลุ่มตัวอย่างในการศึกษาคือพนักงานสายการ  
บินสแกนดิเนเวียณประจำสำนักงานกรุงเทพทั้งหมดที่ได้เข้าร่วมการช่วยเหลือผู้ประสบภัยสึนามิ  
พ.ศ. 2547 จำนวน 20 คน และวิเคราะห์ข้อมูลโดยใช้ค่าร้อยละ และค่าเฉลี่ย

ผลการศึกษาพบว่าพนักงานสายการบินสแกนดิเนเวียณประจำสำนักงานกรุงเทพประสบ  
ภาวะความวิตกกังวลระหว่างช่วยเหลือผู้ประสบภัยสึนามิ และภาวะความวิตกกังวลนี้ส่งผลกระทบต่อ  
ด้านลบต่อการรวบรวมและส่งต่อข้อมูลที่เกี่ยวข้องกับความช่วยเหลือผู้ประสบภัยสึนามิ กระบวนการ  
สื่อสาร รวมถึงการตอบสนองสภาวะวิกฤติ อย่างไรก็ตามพนักงานสายการบินสแกนดิเนเวียณพยายาม  
ควบคุมอารมณ์ให้สงบเพื่อจัดการกับความวิตกกังวล

CRISIS COMMUNICATION: ANXIETY ENCOUNTERED BY  
SCANDINAVIAN AIRLINES EMPLOYEES IN BANGKOK  
DURING THE EVACUATION OF TSUNAMI VICTIMS

AN ABSTRACT

BY

SASIWIMON CHAMPATHONG

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the  
Master of Arts Degree in Business English for International Communication  
at Srinakharinwirot University

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Sasiwimon Champathong. (2009). *Crisis Communication: Anxiety Encountered by Scandinavian Airlines Employees in Bangkok during the Evacuation of Tsunami Victims*. Master's Project, M.A. (Business English For International Communication). Bangkok: Graduate School, Srinakharinwirot University.  
Project Advisor: Dr. Saengchan Hemchua.

The objective of this study was to examine anxiety and its effects on communication of Scandinavian Airlines employees in Bangkok during the evacuation of tsunami victims. Questionnaires were used in the survey to collect data from all employees who participated in evacuation of tsunami victims (with the total number of 20). The data were analyzed using percentage and mean.

The findings of the study revealed that Scandinavian Airlines employees in Bangkok encountered anxiety during the evacuation of tsunami victims. The findings also revealed that anxiety was a negative influence on messages that SAS employees sent and received. In addition, anxiety obstructed the communication process and crisis response. However, SAS employees tried to maintain emotional control and stay calm in order to manage anxiety.

This Master's Project Advisor, Chair of Business English for International Communication and Oral Defense Committee have approved this Master's Project *Crisis Communication: Anxiety Encountered by Scandinavian Airlines Employees in Bangkok during the Evacuation of Tsunami Victims* by Ms. Sasiwimon Champathong as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakarinwirot University.

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This master's project has been approved as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Business English for International Communication of Srinakharinwirot University.

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(Associate Professor Chaleosri Pibulchol)  
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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
1 INTRODUCTION	
Background.....	1
Objective of the study.....	4
Research questions.....	4
Significance of the study.....	4
Scope of the study.....	4
Definition of terms.....	5
2 LITERATURE REVIEW	
Crisis management.....	6
Crisis communication.....	11
Role of communication during crisis.....	12
Communication barrier.....	15
Previous related studies.....	20
3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	
Participants.....	23
Research instrument.....	24
Procedure.....	26

## TABLE OF CONTENTS (Continued)

Chapter	Page
4 FINDINGS	
Personal information of respondents.....	28
How anxiety affected communication and actions during the Evacuation of tsunami.....	29
SAS employees' anxiety management.....	36
5 CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION	
Conclusion and discussion.....	39
Limitations of the study.....	41
Recommendations for further studies.....	41
REFERENCES.....	42
APPENDIX.....	48
VITAE.....	55

## LIST OF TABLE

<b>Table</b>	<b>Page</b>
1 Gender and Sex.....	29
2 Causes of participants' anxiety during the evacuation of tsunami victims ...	30
3 The major cause of anxiety.....	31
4 SAS employees' feelings regarding communication during the evacuation of tsunami victims .....	33
5 How anxiety was a negative influence on the message that SAS employees had sent and received.....	34
6 How anxiety obstructed the communication process.....	35
7 How anxiety affected the crisis response.....	36

# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION

### **Background**

Crises may happen anywhere, at anytime, and often unexpectedly. Crises can take the form of legal disputes, theft, accident, fire, flood and human errors that could be attributed to a company or an organization. A crisis may occur either naturally or as a result of human error.

An unavoidable crisis like a tsunami might be familiar to the people living by the coast of Hawaii, Japan or Indonesia because such countries experienced tsunami before. However, until recently, not many people in Thailand were aware of the impact of such events. On 26 December 2004, for the first time in Thai history, the west coast of Thailand was hit by tidal waves. The waves, caused by one of the most powerful earthquakes the planet has experienced, reached amplitudes of up to 13.8 meters high at Khao Lak, Phang-nga province (Tsunami Relief Information, 2006). The quake started from west coast of Sumatra measured over 9 on the Richter (United Nations Thailand, 2008). In Thailand, nearly 9,000 people were killed and the livelihoods of some 35,000 families were destroyed (Unicef, 2009). In Thailand, this tsunami claimed the life's of many tourists from all over the globe. Scandinavian holiday makers were greatly affected. According to Ashyagachat (2008), Sweden, with a population of 9 million, was one of the countries with the highest per capita death toll from the tsunami. A total of 544 Swedes died, while more than 20,000 were holidaying in Thailand when the disaster struck.

Scandinavian Airlines (SAS) had to work closely with the Scandinavian embassies (i.e. Denmark, Norway and Sweden), local hospitals and several shelters in the affected area. Scandinavian Airlines (SAS), based in Bangkok, was an important group

involved in communication during evacuation of Scandinavian victims both dead and alive from the affected areas to their home countries. Extra flights were operated by Scandinavian Airlines in cooperation with many shelters for the purpose of evacuation. During the crisis, it was hard to figure out the exact number and location of victims. The timeframe for the victims to be transferred to SAS was also unclear. SAS employees could only retrieve the required information through effective communication with the relevant stakeholders.

Despite coordination with all stakeholders, effective communication during the crisis became one of the most complex obstacles for SAS employees to overcome. Not only were multi-cultural issues involved, but also SAS employees confronted highly emotional situations while communicating with stakeholders. Weisinger (1998, p. 85) states, "When we face a crisis, we often lose our sense of perspective and our ability to solve problems." This emotional situation may have a negative influence on communication process.

In an emergency or crisis situation like the example of evacuation of tsunami victims case, prompt reactions with an effective response are in high demand. Communication helps SAS employees to complete the objective because communication controls member behavior (Camp & Satterwhite, 1998, p. 310). It is necessary to minimize losses and death as well as to retain the organization's image and reputation. To do so, sharing information is important because information facilitates decision making and action. Communication; therefore, plays an important role in achieving effective response. Stakeholders must communicate to exchange information. Communication barriers hinder the communication efficiency. In general, the actions are delayed because of breakdowns in communication. The misunderstandings of a few vital words can mean the difference between life and death, especially in the airline business.

Failure to successfully communicate in a crisis can lead to a disaster. The following are three examples (Camp & Satterwhite, 1998). The worst aviation disaster in history occurred in 1977 at foggy Tenerife in the Canary Islands. The captain of a KLM flight thought the air traffic controller had cleared him to take off. However, the controller intended only to give departure instructions. Although the language spoken between the Dutch KLM captain and the Spanish controller was English, confusion was created by heavy accents and improper terminology between the captain and the controller. The KLM Boeing 747 hit Pan Am 747 at full throttle on the runway, killed 583 people.

In 1980, another Spanish controller at Tenerife gave a holding pattern clearance to a Dan Air flight from Manchester, England. The controller said “Turn to the left” when he should have said “Turn to the left-making circles.” The jet banked into a mountain, killed 146 passengers.

In 1990, Colombia Avianca pilots, after several holding patterns due to bad weather, told controllers as they were near New York Kennedy Airport that their Boeing 707 was “running low on fuel.” Airport Controllers heard those words but took no special action. While the pilots knew there was a serious problem, they failed to use a key phrase “fuel emergency” which indicated that they would have obligated clearance to land as soon as possible. The people at Kennedy airport never understood the true nature of the pilots' problem. They ran out of fuel and crashed 16 miles from Kennedy. Seventy three people died (Camp & Satterwhite, 1998, p. 309).

As mentioned above, miscommunication may lead to losses and death. Therefore, communication in crisis is challenging, as the situation involves life, image and credibility. Without effective communication, effective action can be delayed or never happen. Failure to respond to a critical situation and communicate in the ways that meet community standards and expectations results in a series of negative outcomes. In order

to prevent such events, it is essential to explore and minimize potential barriers to communication during a crisis.

### **Objective of the Study**

This study aims to examine crisis communication barriers and determine their effects on SAS employees in Thailand during the evacuation of tsunami victims in 2004.

### **Research Questions**

1. How did anxiety affect communication and actions during the evacuation of tsunami victims in 2004?
2. How did SAS employees manage anxiety during the crisis?

### **Significance of the Study**

This study would serve to minimize anxiety during crisis. The findings could be used to create the utmost success in crisis communication. The findings could be used as a guideline to create positive results for crisis communication plan. SAS airlines might develop crisis communication plan, simulation and counseling plans for future in order to handle the unexpected crises that can happen anytime.

### **Scope of the Study**

Twenty Scandinavian Airlines employees were studied. This group of people was chosen because they participated in the evacuation of tsunami victims in Bangkok in 2004. Therefore, they were able to present their opinions and experience about communication during the evacuation of tsunami victims. They could also clarify how

they encountered anxiety and how anxiety affected communication and actions during the crisis.

### **Definition of Terms**

Terminologies in this study are defined as follows:

**1. Crisis communication** refers to communication during the evacuation of tsunami victims. In this study, crisis communication means verbal communication among SAS employees and stakeholders during the evacuation of tsunami victims.

**2. Crisis communication barrier** refers to anxiety that SAS employees encountered during the evacuation of tsunami victims.

**3. Anxiety** refers to an unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, and worry.

**4. SAS employees** refer to Thai employees who worked for SAS or Scandinavian Airlines in Bangkok and participated in the evacuation of tsunami victims.

**5. Stakeholders** refer to tsunami victims, Scandinavian Embassy staff, and hospital staff that cooperated with Scandinavian Airlines employees during the evacuation of tsunami victims.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This chapter includes an overview of related literature about three issues: 1) crisis management, 2) communication barrier and 3) previous related studies.

#### **Crisis Management**

A crisis is any situation that threatens people and can happen anywhere and anytime. Crisis is defined as a significant threat to operations that can have negative consequences if not handled properly (Coombs, 2007). Coombs continued by explaining that a crisis can create three related threats: 1) public safety, 2) financial loss and 3) reputation loss. Crisis also implies a lack of control by the involved organization in the timing of the crisis event. Some crises, such as industrial accidents and product harm, can result in injuries and even loss of lives.

Crisis comes from many sources, some of which are common to all organizations. Others are specific to certain industries. For example, the event of September 11, was a devastating reminder of the need to be prepared for airlines industry. The hijackers intentionally crashed two planes into the World Trade Center in New York City. Crises can be defined into three types. These are operational crises, sudden crises and potential crises (Crisis Management for Director, 2008).

Operational crises are the day-to-day, minor crises of running the organization and serving individual customers. With good management, these can be avoided or promptly resolved.

Sudden crises are events that occurred unexpectedly and have a major effect on the organization. These include natural disaster, terrorism, sabotage and outage of vital services such as power, water or computer. Coombs (2007) defined natural disasters as weather damage or acts of nature. Examples of natural disaster are earthquake, hurricane, tornado, tsunami, volcanoes and wildfire.

Potential crises are serious problems that grow larger over time and become critical if they are not addressed. They include declining sales, profits and share prices, failure to respond to new competition, investigations by regulators, and financial difficulties. These problems result the long-term viability of the entire organization and should be addressed by the CEO through the strategic planning and risk management processes.

The world has witnessed unexpected increases in major crises that occurred during the past decade. These included Anthrax disease and September 11, 2001, SARS disease in 2003, Asian tsunami in 2004, Hurricane Katrina in 2005, Virginia Tech massacre in 2007, the Burma Cyclone, Nargis and the magnitude 7.9 earthquake in China in 2008. The majority of these crises were due to natural disasters all of which occurred when society were unprepared. These crises resulted in financial losses, deaths and threatened people not only in the nation immediately concerned but also had far reaching implications across the globe.

The increase in the frequency of crises has made crisis management become more important to organization and airline industry. Since crises happen at anytime, it is necessary to have contingency plans ready to cope quickly and effectively in order to minimize their impact. When a crisis occurs, events unfold rapidly and there is little time for planning. Using the above examples, it is evident that crises can result in massive losses and deaths. Therefore, immediate actions are required and expected during that

time in order to minimize such loss and death. Organizations without clear and well defined plans to deal with crisis cannot respond effectively until the plans are developed. Such organizations not only miss the opportunity to mitigate losses quickly but also the organizations cannot know if their crisis management plans will produce the most effective outcome as the simulation is never taken. Having a well defined crisis management plan as a guideline facilitates accurate operations and generates prompt actions in time of stress.

To reduce the toll of crises requires a more comprehensive approach that encompasses pre-crisis, during crisis and post-crisis recovery. Crisis management is an action plan that is implemented quickly when a negative situation occurs. According to Coombs (2007), crisis management is a process designed to prevent or lessen the damage a crisis can inflict on an organization and its stakeholder. Crisis management generates a plan before a crisis, action during a crisis and recovery after a crisis (Coombs, 2007). Crisis management before crisis includes planning, identifying crisis team and doing simulation. The simulation is important as employees have opportunity to practice the plans and situations. Crisis management during crisis concerns crisis acknowledgement, communication and cooperation with stakeholders leading to crisis response. Crisis management after a crisis concerns recovery. In addition, crisis management also includes strong focus on public relations. Public and media have expectations when crises strike. Failure to respond appropriately also can destroy an organization's image and credibility. Although it is not possible to avoid some crises such as tsunami, losses and deaths can be mitigated by crisis management.

For instance, Baworn (2008, p. 2) indicated that effective crisis management minimized damages and losses. Baworn explained that in the case of Burma cyclone, Nargis and the 2008 major earthquake in China caused massive loss and death because of

ineffective warning and evacuation systems. Approximately one week after the cyclone Nargis struck, 133,000 victims were reported missing or death. In comparison to Hurricane Katrina (occurred in the U.S.), the relative powers of the hurricane and the cyclone were very similar. The geography where the Katrina and Nargis hit was also similar. However, Hurricane Katrina killed only 1,500 victims even though the population density would be considered greater in New Orleans. This highlighted the power of crisis management and demonstrated how early warning system and the evacuation plans were effective in the U.S. After Hurricane Katrina had abated, the U.S. government prepared food, medication and shelters for victims. This reflected a typical effective crisis management plans; before, during and after a crisis.

As mentioned above, crisis management takes place before, during, and after a crisis. This study focuses on crisis management during crisis known as crisis response. The crisis response in this research refers to “during” aspect of crisis management because this is a crucial time where communication can have a major impact on the outcome.

Crisis response theories are created by many academics. This research adopts some concept from Coombs (2007) and emphasizes the following areas:

Notify stakeholders to exchange accurate information. Accuracy is important anytime an organization communicates. People want accurate information. Because of the time pressure in a crisis, there is a risk of inaccurate information that leads to inaccurate actions.

Act fast to acknowledge the situation and try to have initial response. Quickness and accuracy are important in public safety. A slow or inaccurate response can increase the risk of injuries and possible death. Quick actions can also save money by preventing further damage and protecting reputations by showing that the organization is in control.

Provide stress and trauma counseling to victims of crisis and their families, including employees. Crisis stress might affect the employees, victims, and their families. When the crisis results in serious injuries or deaths, crisis management must include stress and trauma counseling for employees and other victims. It is necessary to know how to comfort victims and stakeholders. When stakeholders and victims are calm down, proper communication happens. This is because the emotions of communication partners influence each other.

Since the Asian tsunami hit in 2004, organizations and government have a better awareness of crisis management. This is due to research into crisis management which has investigated in various areas for improvement and lessons that could be learnt from the Asian tsunami in order to prepare, mitigate and manage future tsunami events.

Srinivas and Nakagawa (2007) conducted research entitled Environmental implications for disaster preparedness: Lesson learnt from the Indian Ocean. The researchers mentioned “disaster management has become a critical priority, requiring the sound management of natural resources as a tool to prevent disasters and lessen their impacts on people, their homes, and livelihoods.” The research focused on findings and lessons learnt in order to create better disaster preparedness plans for future disaster.

Ghobarah, Saatcioglu and Nistor (2005) conducted research on The impact of the 26 December 2004 earthquake and tsunami on structures and infrastructure. The study investigated the effects of the tsunami on structures. The researchers pointed out that well-designed and constructed building survived the earthquake and the resulting tsunami with minimum damage.

However, the operations and reactions can never happen effectively without effective communication. Crisis management plan does not work if stakeholders cannot

communicate or transform information. Therefore, communication is one of the most important tools in crisis management.

### **Crisis Communication**

Communication during crisis is the sending and receiving of messages in an effort to generate a response and improve the negative outcomes of a crisis that has already occurred. Crisis communication concerns communicators (participants), time pressure (urgent and unexpected), and message purpose (explain and persuade). Crisis communicators contact internal and external receivers (participants or stakeholders) who must receive information during times of crisis. A stakeholder is an individual group who has a stake in the information that an organization needs to communicate during a crisis or someone whom the organization wishes to receive information.

Crisis communication is categorized by its goals of reducing harm, providing specific information to stakeholders, initiating and enhancing recovery, managing perceptions of blame, repairing legitimacy, generating support and justifying actions (online).

Crisis communication is defined in similar ways. For example, Neher (1997) explains that crisis communication deals with situations in which a risk has been transformed into an actual disaster (p. 308). Neher (1997) adds that crisis communicators must operate, as implied by the designation, under the pressures of stress, emergencies and unexpected public scrutiny (p. 310). In other words, crisis communication is a part of larger process referred to as a crisis management, though it may be a major tool of handling a crisis situation in organization. The underlying thread in crisis communication

is that the communicating organization is experiencing an unexpected crisis and the organization must respond.

### **The Role of Communication during Crisis**

Crisis communication takes place before crisis, during crisis, and after a crisis. This research focuses on crisis communication during a crisis. The effect of not communicating effectively during a crisis leads to an intensification of the crisis. To communicate well, organization should create communication plan and simulation for employees in order to become familiarized. Having simulation can also help employees as well as external stakeholders gaining confidence in dealing with crises.

Communication is a component of crisis management because communication is the fundamental to organizing. Communication is important at each stage of crisis management. Communication plays a role in either propagating the spread information or stopping it. Communication can also distribute or destroy both operation and reputation. This is because communication has functions. Camp and Setterwhite (1998) stated that communication served four major functions within a group organization: control, motivation, emotional expression and information. They clarified that communication acted to control employees' behavior in several ways. Communication fostered motivation by clarifying to employees what was to be done. Communication provided a release for the emotional expression of feelings and for fulfillment of social needs. The final function that communication can perform was its role in facilitating decision making (p. 310).

There are studies of crisis communication. The results indicated that communication can impact the outcome and the exact role of communication has been highlighted. Ulmer and Sellnow (2002) conducted research on crisis management and the

discourse of renewal: understanding the potential for positive outcomes of crisis. Ulmer, Seeger and Sellnow (2007) also made another study of crisis communication titled post-crisis communication and renewal: Expanding the parameters of post-crisis discourse. The researchers pointed out that communication is particularly challenging during crises, because of the looming threat, and because these situations are inherently uncertain. This paper explained that renewal, along with image restoration, was important genre of post-crisis discourse. As a result, efforts to understand post-crisis communication should be expanded to include both image restoration and the discourse of renewal.

Additionally, Bouckaert, Gelders and Colsoul (2007) examined Analysis of crisis communication (2006-2007). The researchers explained that good crisis communication became more important due to a number of developments in society such as world risky society, mediatization and emotionalization. The research focused on communication strategy, communication tools, organization of the communication and the organisation structure.

The following examples support how communication plays an important role during crisis (Johnson,1990):

In October 1982, Johnson and Johnson was faced with a crisis when seven people died as a result of consuming cyanide-tainted Tylenol products. The company took immediate responsibility for protecting consumers. All Tylenol products were removed from stores. Johnson and Johnson warned customers of the potential danger.

In March 1989, Exxon was faced with a crisis when it accidentally spilled 11 million gallons of crude oil into in Alaska's Prince William Sound from the Exxon Valdez tanker. Some species were affected slightly by the oil spill like the brown bears. However, others such as the harbor seals suffered great losses to their population. Furthermore, Alaska's fisheries, national parks, beaches and forest were greatly affected,

which affected tourism. Exxon waited a long time before responding to the oil spill and sending aid to Alaska. For example, an advertisement ran in the newspaper 10 days after the spill and Exxon chairman did not fly to Alaska until two weeks after the spill.

Johnson (2007) conducted research on Crisis Communication: Time, tone and communication, a relationship of variables. He examined the relationship between crisis communication, the length of time an organization's crisis is portrayed in the media and tone of resulting media coverage. The researcher compared the Exxon case with Johnson and Johnson case. The findings indicated that ineffective crisis communication by Exxon was related to significantly more coverage than the Tylenol crisis and the resulting coverage were significantly more negative in tone for the Exxon oil spill. The findings suggested that there was a relationship between crisis communication, the length of time and organization's crisis is portrayed in the media and the tone of the resulting media coverage.

Johnson and Johnson had a good crisis management plan. The company adopted the power of communication through various media outlets to restore image, credibility and gained the confidence from consumers. In contrast, Exxon completely failed in terms of crisis management and took away confidence from customers.

Communication during the evacuation of tsunami victims was a difficult work for SAS employees because the situation itself was unfamiliar as never happened in Thailand. A plan for the tsunami evacuation was never discussed. The evacuation also involved the tsunami victims (dead and alive), time limitation, and expectation. In addition, SAS employees did not know how to do counseling. Working with unfold situation and under pressure caused high levels of emotional arousal; including fear, anger, sadness, and loss, accompany the event (Ulmer, Seeger & Sellnow, 2003, p. 125).

## **Communication Barrier**

During evacuation of tsunami victims, SAS employees not only dealt with difficult situation but also communicated with multi-national stakeholders such as Danish embassy, Norwegian embassy, Swedish embassy, hotel representative and tsunami victims' relative. This means SAS employees had international communication. These made conversation during the tsunami victim's evacuation was more complex. According to Jandt (1995, p. 40), a general level the barriers to international communication are anxiety, assuming similarity instead of difference, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice, nonverbal misinterpretations, and language.

The language used among SAS employees and stakeholders was English. However, English was not a barrier as SAS employees were required 700 scores in English for International communication (TOEIC) to be able to work for every jobs based in Bangkok and to prove that they have English efficiency. In addition, SAS employees daily corresponded with international clients around the world via an e-mail, letters and telephone. Documents and all circulars were in English. This indicated that these SAS had acquaintance in dealing with multi-national communication as well as English efficiency.

Among the above barriers, SAS employees seemed to encounter anxiety the most during the evacuation of tsunami victims. Sellers and Stacks (as cited in Booth-Butterfield, 1991, p. viii) states "we develop trait fear or anxiety when brain modules are not functioning normally in the environment." In addition, SAS employees have already experienced other barriers (assuming similarity instead of difference, ethnocentrism, stereotypes and prejudice and nonverbal misinterpretations) before in daily work but not anxiety because these employees never work under stressful and emergency situation like the tsunami victims evacuation.

It is important to learn to recognize the barriers that are known to disrupt the communication process. Crisis communicators must anticipate possible barriers to communication during crises and create strategies to minimize the barriers in order to get message across among stakeholders and victims. Reynolds (2002) mentions that people have psychological barriers when crisis occurs. One of the mentioned barriers is anxiety.

The communication barrier emphasized in this research is anxiety because anxiety can affect other categories of communication process. Guffey (1994) mentions that communication suffers when emotions cloud the mind. Shaping an intelligent message is difficult when you are feeling joy, fear, resentment, hostility, sadness, or some other strong emotions (p. 12). Bell and Sigband (1994, p. 15) explain that we have all been in situations in which the atmosphere becomes so emotionally charged that reasonable discussion broke down. When communicators have anxiety, people easily lose control of communication abilities resulting inappropriate actions. Jandt (1995, p. 40) states that when you are anxious because of not knowing what you are expected to do, it is only natural to focus on that feeling and not to be totally present in the communication transaction. Gudykunst and Kim (1997, p. 270) add, "If anxiety is too high, we will be too preoccupied with managing our anxiety to communicate effectively."

There are various definitions of anxiety. Booth-Butterfield (1991, p. 1)) states that anxiety is unpleasant emotional state or condition marked by apprehension. Anxiety is also defined as an unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, and worry (Spielberger, 1972, as cited in Booth-Butterfield, 1991, p. 1). Rycroft (1968) explains that anxiety is that form of vigilance which occurs after one has encountered a danger, problem or opportunity but before one has become aware of its precise nature and thus before one knows whether one is still on familiar territory (p. 16). Rycroft defines anxiety in different forms as follows:

Anxiety and apprehensiveness occur when people feel apprehensive and try to avoid and when people suspect something is more dangerous than the realistic danger. For example, when people say that crowds, heights or spiders make them anxious, they try to convey two things. First, they feel apprehensive in crowds and want to escape. Second, they suspect that spiders are dangerous than their realistic danger. This kind of anxiety is a form of fear and can also be called as phobia. This fear is exaggerated and imaginary.

Anxiety and concern resemble apprehensiveness in including fear but differs from it in that the fear is not directly on one's own behalf but on behalf of someone. Anxiety concern is similar to apprehensiveness in three ways. It includes an element of fear. It provokes a wish to take action and it contains an uncertain element. For example, if someone says that he is anxious about his wife's health, he wishes to convey to two things. First, he is concerned about his wife's health and wishes to do something about it. Second, he concerns that there is something uncertain about either the nature or the outcome of her illness.

Anxiety and alertness is a state of alertness or preparedness to perform some action. The emotion of fear is not included. People who have anxiety and alertness are keen to do something. For instance, someone who says that he is anxious to go to a concert is not frightened at the prospect of going into a concert.

Anxiety and vigilance is an alertness of the possibility of change in the environment. This change reveals something strange and unfamiliar. It is a stage of mind and body that develops after a possible danger has been perceived but before any action can be taken. For example, the state of emotion that SAS employees encountered during evacuation of tsunami victims.

Anxiety can be distinguished into state anxiety and trait anxiety. According to Lazarus as cited in Schwarzer (1997), state anxiety is defined as an unpleasant emotional arousal in face of threatening demands or dangers. In contrast, trait anxiety reflects the existence of stable individual differences in the tendency to respond with state anxiety in the anticipation of threatening situations.

To be able to measure state and trait anxiety, this study applies form state and form trait developed by Booth-Butterfield and Gould (as cited in Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 1994, p. 109). They explain that form state assesses anxieties people have about communicating at a specific point in time. On the other hand, on the form trait, respondents indicate their level of communication anxiety. The form state asks respondents to reference how they felt during a specific communication experience they had just completed. Form state can be used to measure anxiety responses at any point in time. Whereas the instruction on the form of trait ask respondents to indicate how they generally feel about communicating in the various contexts specified (p. 109).

Booth-Butterfield (1991) adds that there are four cognitive events that often occur in anxiety-provoking situations. These include the situation is seen as difficult, challenging, and threatening. The individual sees himself or herself as ineffective, or inadequate, in handling the task at hand. The individual focuses on undesirable consequences of personal inadequacy. Self-deprecatory preoccupations are strong and interfere or complete with task-relevant cognitive activity. The individual expects and anticipates failure and loss of regard by others (p. 2). Therefore, communicators lose confidence to communicate and do not get important information. Booth-Butterfield (1991) states that several authors have pointed out that anxiety and fear influence information processing. She also mentions that when we experience the aversive state of anxiety, it leads to negative thought and attributions about subject and situation (p. 8).

Studies on anxiety were conducted. For instance, Beatty and Clair (as cited in Booth-Butterfield, 1991, p. 114) study on Decision Rule Orientation and Public Speaking Apprehension. This study examines the relationship between rule orientation and communication apprehension in a public speaking context. The researchers employ six Likert-type items as an instrument of this study. They report that trait anxiety is systematically related to style of decision making.

Melchior and Cheek (as cited in Booth-Butterfield, 1991, p. 124) investigated Shyness and Anxious Self-Preoccupation During a Social Interaction. This study examines the relationship between shyness and the extent and the content of self-focus during an interaction with strangers. The instrument of this study is questionnaire. The researchers state that that anxious pre-occupation interferes not only with internal, cognitive task, but also can be debilitating in interpersonal encounter.

Seller and Stacks (as cited in Booth-Butterfield, 1991, p. 45) conduct a research on Toward a Hemispheric Processing Approach To Communication Competence. They explain that the way in which people process communication is viewed as one avenue for understanding why some people are competent communicators at times, yet incompetent at other times. Seller and Stacks add that as communicators cognitively identify and then ruminate about difficult or evaluate situations, anticipating negative consequences and heightened anxiety. The researchers suggest that people develop trait fear or anxiety when brain modules are not function normally in the environment. Hence, communication apprehension could be either cognitively-induced or affectively driven depending upon which brain hemispheres dominate.

Preiss, Wheelless, and Allen (as cited in Booth-Buttterfield, 1991, p. 155) study on Potential Cognitive Process and Consequence of Receiver Apprehension: A Meta-analytic Review. The analysis indicates that the receiver apprehension can be related to

listening effectiveness, information processing anxiety, information processing complexity, information processing efficiency, and education level. The Likert-scale is also used in this research instrument.

No matter how good the crisis management and crisis communication are developed, employees can never follow the plans when lose control. Coombs and Holladay (2005: Online) mention that there was connection between emotions and crisis responsibility. It is necessary to study on anxiety because in time of crisis, a level of anxiety tends to increase more than other barriers because of uncertainty, ambiguous, risky and undefined situations.

### **Previous Related Studies**

There were studies conducted to explore crisis communication. A study conducted by Morey (2005) entitled, "The Tsunami of December 2004: The Role of The Public Relations Industry Analysis of Communication during a Disaster" had a relevant objective to the current study. One of the objectives was to examine ways in which communications could be used to help prevent or lessen the impact of future natural disasters.

Henderson (2002) conducted a study on Singapore Airlines and Flight SQ006: Managing an Airline Crisis. The researcher reviewed company responses with an emphasis on the communication strategies adopted and media reporting. The objectives were to demonstrate some of the strengths and weakness of management of the crisis and effect of the earlier experience of the crash of a subsidiary company plane. In addition, the research aims to highlight the role of communication in crisis management.

Although the role of communication was explored in the research, it concerned media and crisis management. Studies on crisis communication during crises have not been found.

“Crisis communication put to the test: The case of two airlines on 9/11” researched by Strother (2004) showed the power of communication in crisis. The research demonstrated how crucial each word of message could be and allows organization to reach concrete decisions about why a crisis-response plan, along with the accompanying crisis-response strategies and the resulting communication products were essential for any corporation.

Various studies about crises management revealed that communication was one of important parts of crisis management and had strong power in dealing with crises. Many researchers studied in crisis communication. However, most of subjects concerned about public relations and image. Additional examples were Issues advertising as crisis communication: Northwest Airlines’ use of image restoration strategies during the 1998 pilot’s strike (Cowden, 2002) and the case study of Johnson and Johnson and Exxon.

The study on Northwest Airline explored the use of issues advertising as a form of organizational crisis communication during the 1998 pilots’ strike. The study analyzed Northwest Airline’s use of image restoration strategies. The study suggested that the airlines was able to retain passenger volume but failed to maintain investor confidence. As for the case of Johnson and Johnson and the Exxon, the research indicated that Johnson and Johnson regained the image and consumers confidence by using communication strategy.

Bloomgarden (2008) studied on Crisis communications and American Airlines. The finding indicated that the communication during a crisis was to communicate right away, do it sincerely, and do it from the top.

Coombs and Holladay (2005) conducted a study on An Exploratory Study of Stakeholder Emotions: Affect and Crises Research on Emotion in Organizations. The study examined sympathy, anger, and schadenfreude generated by a variety of crisis types. The focus was on the connection between these three emotions and crisis responsibility. The research reported investigation to integrate emotions into the study of post-crisis communication. The results suggested how emotion can be integrated into post-crisis communication and supported the value of including emotion in future research.

Many studies investigated crisis communication in the area of public relations and image restoration. The research suggested that communication had an influence on the process and how to deal with the crises.

This study, however, examined anxiety encountered by SAS employees during the evacuation of tsunami victims. From the mentioned previous studies, communication plays an important role in every stage of crisis management. Therefore, it is necessary to explore barriers that obstruct communication during the crisis. Since evacuation means life and death, effective communication during the time can minimize and relief the loss when communicators eliminate barriers to communication and can achieve communication plans.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter illustrates the methodology of this study. It includes the participants, research instrument of the study, and procedure.

#### **Participants**

According to Rubin, Rubin and Piele (1993), there are standard methods of selecting a valid sample of participants. They are probability and nonprobability techniques. Probability uses random sampling techniques and assures researchers that the sample is representative of the population (p. 192). Nonprobability sampling is valuable for studying a particular group of people. Its techniques include purposive, quota and accidental sampling. The sample chosen in this study is a purposive sample. The purposive sample represents known groups of respondents that researchers may want to compare in the future, for example, conservative student leaders and reticent communicators (p. 193).

By using a purposive sampling technique, SAS employees who participated in the evacuation of tsunami victims were chosen as participants of this study. As it was a long holiday when the tsunami hit the west coasts of Thailand, some SAS employees were on a holiday both in Thailand and overseas. Hence, there were only 20 SAS employees, as an intact group, who participated in the evacuation of tsunami victims.

## **Research instrument**

The instrument for this study was a questionnaire. The researcher employed a survey method because is the most widely used method of communication research (Rubin, Rubin, & Piele, 1993, p. 191). According to Rubin, Rubin and Piele (1993), survey research seeks to describe or to explain people's attitudes, opinions, thoughts and behavior reports surrounding an issue or events. Survey can be used to measure attitudes and report behaviors linked to experimental (p. 191). A questionnaire was constructed based on certain areas illustrated in the review of literature which focused on crisis communication, anxiety and how anxiety affected crisis communication. Therefore, the answers gave particular ideas to the areas of this research.

Because the official language in communication among SAS employees was English, the questionnaire used in this study was in English. All the staff gained at least a score of 700 test of English for International Communication (TOEIC) as a requirement for recruitment. In addition, SAS employees daily corresponded with international clients around the world via an e-mail, letters and telephone. Documents and all circulars also were in English.

## **Questionnaire development**

The first set of questionnaire was designed and distributed to five people who work for Bangkok Airways as ground staff. The researcher chose these people because they were similar to the participants in terms of working industry and job description, for example, working in airline industry and dealing with multi-cultural passengers. These five people work in different positions comprising junior staff, senior staff, supervisors, duty managers and managers.

The results of the first try-out were used to develop an effective questionnaire by reorganizing the patterns and wordings so that the questions were clear, unambiguous, and precise. Then, the questionnaire was revised by three specialist researchers and the final draft was used in the study. There were three parts in the questionnaire (see Appendix).

### **Part 1: Personal Information of Respondents**

The first part focused on personal information about respondents: sex and age to gather general information of the respondents.

### **Part 2: Opinions on How Anxiety Affected Communication and Action during the Evacuation of Tsunami Victims**

There were two sections in this part. The first section included a surveyed of the anxiety that SAS employees encountered during crisis communication. Open-ended and closed questions were used. This section measured the state of anxiety. Participants were asked to describe how they felt about communication during the evacuation of tsunami victims. To rate the degree of the state of anxiety, a scale was applied based on Communication Anxiety Inventory by Booth-Butterfeld & Gould (as cited in Rubin, Palmgreen, & Sypher, 1994, p. 111-113). The interpretation for the scales were as follows: 5 (extremely), 4 (very much), 3 (moderately), 2 (somewhat), and 1 (not at all).

The second section was designed to provide information about SAS employees' opinions on how anxiety affected communication and actions during the evacuation of tsunami victims. The participants were also asked to rate how anxiety affected communication. To rate the level of agreement, the Likert-scale type was applied to this questionnaire. The interpretations for the scales were as follows: 5 (strongly agree), 4 (agree), 3 (neutral), 2 (disagree), and 1 (strongly disagree).

### **Part 3: SAS Employees' Anxiety Management**

The last part surveyed how SAS employees managed an anxiety during the evacuation of tsunami victims. The respondents were asked to give their opinions on how to get through anxiety during crisis communication. Open-ended questions were included.

#### **Procedures**

The procedure of the study consisted of data collection and data analysis.

##### **Data Collection**

The revised questionnaire was sent to SAS employees who participated in the evacuation of tsunami victims via an e-mail with a letter identifying the purpose of this study. The respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire within two weeks and returned the completed questionnaire by mail or e-mail. The respondents had two weeks because they could complete the questionnaire at their convenient time. After two weeks, the questionnaire was collected. Each item in the questionnaires was checked in order to verify the information. After all data were verified, the questionnaire was assigned the codes for data analysis.

##### **Data Analysis**

The collected data were analyzed to evaluate the effects of anxiety in actions and communication during crisis. The analysis of data was as follows:

1. The general information of the respondents was collected.
2. The information regarding state of anxiety and how anxiety affected communication and actions during the evacuation of tsunami victims was analyzed using mean from statistical package for the social science or SPSS program (Field, 2000, p. 39).

The open-ended questions were summarized. The researcher ran a frequency analysis on each measure. According to Wanichbancha (as cited in Yippruckthong, 2006), the criteria for rating scale are as follows: 4.21-5.00 (highest), 3.41-4.20 (high), 2.61-3.40 (moderate), 1.81-2.60 (low), and 1.00-1.80 (lowest).

3. The information on how SAS employees managed anxiety was gathered and summarized.

In conclusion, this chapter describes the methodology of this study. The participants, research instrument and procedure of the study are included. A questionnaire was used as the instrument to collect data of personal information of participants, how anxiety affected communication and actions during the evacuation of tsunami victims and how SAS employees managed anxiety during the evacuation of tsunami victims. Frequency, percentage and mean were used to analyze the results of this study.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **FINDINGS**

This chapter presents the findings of this study answering two research questions. The first question explored how anxiety affected communications and actions among stakeholders in Bangkok during the evacuation of tsunami victims in 2004. The second question examined how SAS employees overcame anxiety. The data were collected from SAS employees who participated in the evacuation of tsunami victims. The data gathered were analyzed using Statistic Package for the Social Science (SPSS), presented in terms of frequency (F), percentage (%), and mean ( $\bar{x}$ ), followed by a descriptive analysis. The results are divided into three parts: personal information of the respondents; how anxiety affected communications and actions during the evacuation of tsunami victims; and how SAS employees handled anxiety during the evacuation of tsunami victims.

#### **Personal Information of Respondents**

This section presents personal information of 20 respondents concerning age and sex. The data are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1 Personal Information of the Respondents

<b>Profile</b>	<b>Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Sex	Male	3	15
	Female	17	85
Age	20-25	0	0
	26-30	7	35
	Over 30	13	65

The findings show that 85% of the participants were female and 15% were male. The majority of the respondents (65%) were over 30 while 35% of the respondents were 26-30 years old.

The following section demonstrates the results of the second part of the questionnaire focusing on how anxiety affected communications and actions during the evacuation of tsunami victims.

### **How Anxiety Affected Communications and Actions during the Evacuation of Tsunami Victims**

This section presents respondents' opinions concerning how anxiety affected communications and actions during the evacuation of tsunami victims. There were six questions in this part that explored general ideas about the crisis, the causes of anxiety, feelings while communicating during the evacuation of tsunami victims and the influence of anxiety on communication and response.

Respondents were asked to express their general opinions about the crisis. The results revealed that 50% of the respondents had heard about the tsunami from documentary programs on television. When asked if they had anxiety during the evacuation, 90% of the participants suffered from anxiety.

### **Causes of Participants' Anxiety during the Evacuation of Tsunami Victims**

The respondents were asked to rate their agreement on five issues regarding the causes of their anxiety as presented in Table 2.

Table 2 Causes of Participants' Anxiety during the Evacuation Tsunami Victims

Causes of Anxiety	Yes		No	
	F	%	F	%
Uncertain situation	19	95	1	5
Threatening situation	14	70	6	30
Loss and death of tsunami victims	19	95	1	5
Lack of contingency plan	18	90	2	10
Lack of simulation	17	85	3	15

The findings show that the majority of the respondents (95%) agreed that the uncertainty of the situation and the loss and death of victims were the two primary factors that generated anxiety during the evacuation. 90% of the respondents agreed that lack of a contingency plan was another cause of anxiety. 85 % felt that the lack of simulation

training and exercises was cause for anxiety and 70% were concerned with the threatening nature of the crisis.

### **The Major Cause of Anxiety**

SAS employees were asked to identify the single cause that generated the most intense anxiety during the evacuation. The results are outlined in Table 3.

Table 3 The Major Cause of Anxiety

<b>Causes of Anxiety</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Loss and death of tsunami victims	50
Uncertainty of the situation	25
Lack of a contingency plan	15
Lack of simulation training	10
Threatening nature of the situation	0

The most frequent response (50%) concerned the loss and death of victims, compounded by frequent reports of loss and death in the news. SAS employees explained that it was so difficult to deal with the feelings of the victims who had lost family members. The suddenness of the incident also contributed to the shock.

Twenty-five percent of respondents revealed that the uncertainty of the situation was the major cause of anxiety. One person related that it was difficult to make decisions and provide passengers and victims with helpful information. Gathering and confirming information was difficult. Lack of information and communication between onsite staff

and office staff intensified the uncertainty of the situation. Finally, no one could know how the situation would end or be resolved.

Fifteen percent of respondents identified the lack of a contingency plan as the major cause of anxiety. Without a contingency plan, it was difficult to manage effectively even though information was available. One respondent stated that since they had never been trained for a disaster of that magnitude, they did not know how to handle it. 10% of respondents identified this as the primary cause of anxiety. Nevertheless, they did everything possible to serve victims as quickly as possible.

#### **SAS Employees' Feelings Regarding Communications during the Evacuation of Tsunami Victims**

The respondents were asked to rate their feelings concerning 24 statements. The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 SAS Employees' Feelings Regarding Communications during the Evacuation of  
Tsunami Victims

<b>Feelings</b>	$\bar{x}$	<b>Level of feeling</b>
I felt tense and nervous.	3.15	Moderate
I felt self-confident while communicating.	2.25	Low
I felt calm when I was talking.	2	Low
I felt uncomfortable to use gestures when I spoke.	1.85	Low
I could not think clearly.	2.5	Low
I felt poised and in control.	2.15	Low
My body felt tense and stiff.	2.35	Low
My words became confusing and jumbled.	2.25	Low
I felt relaxed.	1.5	Lowest
My fingers and hands trembled while communicating.	1.9	Low
I felt awkward.	2.65	Moderate
My heart seemed to beat faster than usual.	2.4	Low

The mean scores indicate that two aspects measured at a moderate rate: tenseness and nervousness (3.15), and awkwardness (2.65). Feeling relaxed registered the lowest rate with a mean score of 1.5. The remaining items were found at low levels as follows: Unclear thinking measured 2.5; faster heartbeat at 2.4; tenseness and stiffness at 2.35; Self-confidence while communicating measured 2.25; words being confusing and jumbled at 2.25; calmness at 2; trembling fingers and hands during communicating at 1.9; discomfort using gestures while speaking rated at 1.85; and feelings of poise and control

came in at 2.15. To summarize, the findings reflect that SAS employees experienced extreme emotions during the crisis.

### **Opinions on how Anxiety was a Negative Influence on Messages Sent and Received**

This section demonstrates opinions concerning the negative influence of anxiety on messages that SAS employees had sent and received. The respondents were asked to rate their agreement concerning four issues. The results are illustrated in Tables 5.

Table 5 How Anxiety was a Negative Influence on the Message that SAS Employees Sent and Received

<b>Issues Influenced by Anxiety</b>	<b><math>\bar{x}</math></b>	<b>Level of agreement</b>
Accuracy of information	4.10	High
Reliability of information	4.00	High
Timeliness of information	4.00	High
Confidentiality of information	3.40	Moderate

Three issues yielded a high level response: accuracy of information (4.10), reliability of information (4.00) and timeliness of information (4.00). The issue of confidentiality of information produced a moderate response (3.40). This confirms that anxiety had a negative influence on messages in terms of accuracy, reliability and timeliness.

### Opinions on how Anxiety Obstructed the Communication Process

This section explored SAS employees' opinions on how anxiety obstructed the communication process during the tsunami crisis. The respondents rated their relative agreement concerning five issues. The results are demonstrated in Table 6.

Table 6 How Anxiety Obstructed the Communication Process

Issues Obstructed due to Anxiety	$\bar{x}$	Level of agreement
The collection and transfer of information.	3.90	High
The transfer of relevant knowledge with stakeholders.	3.90	High
Rapid identification and sharing of information.	4.00	High
The effectiveness of the information flow.	4.00	High
The assembly and transfer of relevant knowledge for planning a crisis response.	4.30	High

All issues were evaluated at a high level of obstruction. The assembly and transfer of relevant knowledge for planning a crisis response was at the highest level (4.30); this was followed by the effectiveness of the information flow (4.00); and rapid identification and sharing of information (4.00). The collection and transfer of information, and the transfer of relevant knowledge with stakeholders registered the same level of 3.90. SAS employees agreed that anxiety obstructed communications in all ways.

## How Anxiety Affected the Crisis Response during the Evacuation of Tsunami

### Victims

This section demonstrates how anxiety affected crisis response during the evacuation of tsunami victims. The results are illustrated in Table 7.

Table 7 How Anxiety Affected the Crisis Response

Issues Obstructed by Anxiety	$\bar{x}$	Level of agreement
Decision making	4.00	High
Effectiveness of crisis response	4.10	High
Rapidity of crisis response	4.15	High

SAS employees agreed that anxiety affected the crisis response in terms of decision making, effectiveness of crisis response and rapidity of crisis response. All issues registered at a high level: decision making (4.00), effectiveness (4.10) and the most highly affected issue was in terms of rapidity of response (4.15).

### SAS Employees' Anxiety Management

SAS employees were asked three open-ended questions: How did you manage anxiety that arose during the evacuation of tsunami victims? How did you manage anxiety that obstructed the communication process? How did you manage anxiety that affected the crisis response?

To manage anxiety during evacuation, eight of the nineteen respondents tried to stay calm. Six mentioned that they took deep breaths to reduce anxiety. Four respondents tried to gather as much information as possible. Three respondents aimed to stay focused while three others took breaks. Two respondents indicated that speaking out loud and clear helped them manage anxiety. Two others pointed out that they had to follow orders, instructions and recommendations strictly. One respondent said that she discussed the situation with co-workers to figure out how to deal with issues. Most respondents pointed out that handling their emotions and self control most helped them to manage anxiety.

Six-teen respondents shared their experience in how they managed anxiety that obstructed the communication process. Five of the SAS employees clarified that it was important to stay calm and take breaks. Three respondents indicated that they had to think clearly before speaking. Two suggested that they had to speak slowly and listen carefully. One respondent pointed out that she had to repeat statements and get feedback, while another stated that she gathered accurate information and then prioritized her response, while keeping in mind that she needed to be strong and reliable. Another respondent revealed that when communication broke down, she solicited assistance from co-workers. Other responses included taking messages from the supervisor because it was reliable, maintaining confidence and trying to understand victims' feelings.

Ten responses related how they managed anxiety that affected the crisis response. The majority of the respondents (7) suggested they had to control their emotions and stay calm. Two respondents pointed out that they followed company procedures and one said she concentrated and focused on the situation.

In summary, the research shows that SAS employees encountered a variety of forms of anxiety during the evacuation of tsunami victims. The major cause of anxiety

was the loss and death of tsunami victims. The findings also revealed that anxiety was a negative influence on messages that SAS employees sent and received. In addition, anxiety obstructed the communication process and crisis response. However, SAS employees tried to maintain emotional control and stay calm in order to manage anxiety.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION**

This chapter presents the conclusion of the study, discussion of the findings and the limitations of the study. In addition, suggestions for further studies are given.

#### **Conclusion and Discussion**

On 26 December 2004, the west coast of Thailand was struck by a tsunami for the first time in recorded history. Since a tsunami was never expected to occur in Thailand, little information was available and no contingency plans had been prepared. SAS employees who participated in the evacuation of tsunami victims experienced difficulties during the crisis. They had to communicate without communication plans to collect and transfer important information concerning the victims and evacuate them safely to their home countries. Since communication played an important role during the evacuation of tsunami victims, it was necessary to analyze communication barriers and strive to minimize them. Therefore, effective communications and communication plans should be developed for future crisis situations.

The questionnaires were distributed to 20 SAS employees who had participated in the evacuation. The first purpose of the study was to determine how anxiety affected communications and actions during the evacuation. The second purpose was to explore how SAS employees managed their anxiety during the crisis.

The research findings illustrate how anxiety affected communications and actions during the evacuation process. Anxiety had a negative influence on the communication of information. It had a severe influence on accuracy, reliability and timeliness of information. The results suggest that anxiety was the primary negative influence on the

accurate communication of information. It obstructed the collection and transfer of information, the transfer of relevant knowledge from stakeholders, the rapid identification and sharing of information, the effectiveness of the information flow and the assembly and transfer of relevant knowledge for crisis response planning. These findings are consistent with Coombs (2007) who explained that time pressure during a crisis increases the risk of inaccurate information. Booth-Butterfield (1991, p. 8) also discussed how anxiety and fear influence information processing.

The findings further indicate that anxiety had an adverse effect on actions in terms of decision making, effectiveness of the crisis response and the rapidity of the response. The findings are consistent with the research of Camp and Setterwhite (1998) who showed how communication facilitates decision making (p. 310). Having encountered communication difficulties, SAS employees could not effectively take action because they did not have important information to facilitate decision making.

The results show that SAS employees encountered anxiety during the evacuation process. They had difficulties communicating during the crisis, resulting in delayed action. Therefore, it is important to minimize anxiety in order to communicate effectively.

The second purpose of this study was to explore how SAS employees managed anxiety. The results indicate that handling emotions and self control most helped them manage their anxiety. They tried to stay calm and understand victims' emotions. To reduce anxiety during communication, they listened attentively, shared information, spoke slowly and clearly, checked feedback and took breaks. When asked how they managed anxiety that affected their crisis response, they explained that they followed

instructions and recommendations strictly. The employees emphasized the need for contingency plans so they would know what to do during future crisis situations.

In summary, SAS employees encountered anxiety during the evacuation because the situation concerned loss and death and they did not know exactly how to respond. This anxiety affected their communications and actions because they did not have contingency plans to follow. Therefore, the study suggests that Scandinavian Airlines should develop contingency plans for future crisis so that employees are well prepared for such events. Contingency plans could also minimize loss and death during a future crisis.

### **Limitations of the study**

This study has the following limitations:

1. The study was limited to a small group of participants. Only 20 SAS employees were included in the study. As this study focused on SAS employees' opinions, the results may not represent the overall attitudes of all stakeholders towards barriers to communication during the evacuation.

2. The crisis occurred in 2004, but the research was conducted in 2008; therefore, it might be questionable whether SAS employees accurately recall their feelings during the situation.

### **Recommendations for Further Studies**

Based on the findings, the following areas for further research are suggested:

1. Due to the frightening nature of the event, stress and trauma counseling plans might be considered for further study.

2. While there are numerous barriers to crisis communication, this study focused only on anxiety. Other barriers to crisis communication should be further explored

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## **APPENDIX**

## Questionnaire

This questionnaire is designed for a Graduate Research Project in Business English for International Communication at Srinakharinwirot University on the topic “Crisis communication: anxiety encountered by Scandinavian Airlines employees in Bangkok during the evacuation of tsunami victims”. Your answers are confidential and used in this research only.

### **Part 1: Personal Information**

#### 1.1 Gender

Male                       Female

#### 1.2 Age

20-25                       26-30                       over 30

### **Part 2: How anxiety affected communication and actions during the evacuation of tsunami victims.**

2.3 Before 26 December, 2004, had you known anything about a tsunami?

If the answer is yes, how did you know?

Yes \_\_\_\_\_

No

2.4 Did you encounter anxiety during the evacuation of tsunami victims?

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2.5 Were these the causes of your anxiety during the evacuation?

<b>Causes of anxiety</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
Uncertain situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Threatening situation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Loss and death of tsunami victims	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of contingency plan	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of simulation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.6 Please select the single cause from number 2.5 that caused most anxiety.

Please explain about it.

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2.7 Please rate how you felt regarding communication during the evacuation of tsunami victims

Directions: Please rate your opinions by marking (/) on the statement level which you agree.

5 = Extremely, 4 = Very much, 3 = Moderately, 2 = Somewhat, 1 = Not at all

Feelings	Level of Agreement				
	5	4	3	2	1
I felt tense and nervous.					
I felt self-confident while communicating					
I felt calm when I was talking.					
I felt uncomfortable to use gestures when I spoke.					
I could not think clearly.					
I felt poised and in control.					
My body felt tense and stiff.					
My words became confusing and jumbled.					
I felt relaxed.					
My fingers and hands trembled while communicating					
I felt awkward.					
My heart seemed to beat faster than usual.					

**2.8 Please rate your opinions on the following issues:**

Directions: Please rate your opinions by marking (/) on the statement level which you agree.

5 = Strongly agree, 4 = Agree, 3 = Neutral, 2 = Disagree, 1 = Strongly disagree

**Anxiety was a negative influence on the message you sent and received:**

Issues Influenced by Anxiety	Level of Agreement				
	5	4	3	2	1
Accuracy of the information					
Reliability of the information					
Timeliness of the information					
Confidentiality of the information					

**Anxiety obstructed your accomplishment on:**

Issues obstructed due to Anxiety	Level of Agreement				
	5	4	3	2	1
The collection and transfer information					
The transfer of relevant knowledge from and to stakeholders					
The rapid identification and sharing information					
The effectiveness of the information flow					
The assembly and transfer of relevant knowledge for crisis response planning					

**Anxiety affected crisis response in terms of:**

Issues Obstructed by Anxiety	Level of Agreement				
	5	4	3	2	1
Decision Making					
Effectiveness of crisis response					
Rapidity of crisis response					

**Part 3: How SAS employees managed anxiety during the evacuation of tsunami victims.**

3.1 How did you manage anxiety that occurred during the evacuation of tsunami victims?

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3.2 When anxiety obstructed communication process, how did you manage the situation?

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3.3 As crisis response are to notify stakeholders to exchange accurate information, to act fast to acknowledge the situation and lessen stress and provide counseling plan, how did you manage anxiety that affected the crisis response?

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Thank you for your kind cooperation

**VITAE**

**VITAE**

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