



The Role of Reputation Management in Mitigating Environmental Damage and Restoring Trust

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Abstract:

This study aims to critically examine the ecological reputation crisis following a landslide disaster and land-clearing activities, focusing on the failure of defensive reputation management, power asymmetries, and the development of an alternative reputation management model. This study employed a critical qualitative case study design, with data collected through direct observation, in-depth interviews, and document analysis. The findings indicate that defensive corporate reputation strategies were ineffective in restoring legitimacy due to regulatory violations, polarized digital discourse, and distorted communication practices. Furthermore, instrumental communication that disregarded the four validity claims of communicative action theory intensified public distrust and widened the gap between corporate interests and community expectations. In response, the study formulates an Open Sustainable Tourism-Based Reputation Management Model that integrates discourse ethics, inclusive deliberation, regulatory compliance, and ecological accountability. The model implies that sustainable reputation management requires organizations to move beyond defensive communication toward transparent, participatory, and ethically grounded engagement. These findings contribute to crisis communication and sustainable tourism management by providing an alternative framework for reconciling tourism investment, corporate legitimacy, public trust, and ecological sustainability.

INTRODUCTION

Environmental reputation crises have become a societal concern because corporate environmental practices can affect public trust, ecological security, and community livelihoods. The point is that corporate legitimacy increasingly depends not only on economic performance but also on environmental accountability. The reason is that information transparency and social media enable citizens to scrutinize corporate claims and rapidly mobilize responses when perceived green commitments conflict with destructive practices (Supriatno, 2024). Evidence from contemporary tourism contexts shows that ecological controversies can escalate when environmental vulnerability intersects with threats to community living spaces and safety (Fuchs, 2021). Such conditions make reputation management more than a corporate communication concern; it becomes a public issue involving accountability and sustainability. Therefore, studying environmental reputation crises is important for society because it can identify communication practices that either restore trust or deepen conflict. This perspective

encourages businesses, regulators, and communities to pursue transparent and participatory responses to environmental risks.

The general problem emerges when economic development and environmental protection are pursued without balanced accountability. Communities surrounding tourism developments may depend on investment for employment and local income, yet they can bear ecological costs of land conversion, disasters, pollution, and weakened environmental safeguards. Tourism is recognized as an economic source capable of creating employment and contributing to regional or national income (Temiralyeva et al., 2021). This economic importance can create unequal power relations when businesses become employers or fiscal contributors, potentially reducing authorities' willingness to enforce environmental regulations consistently. Consequently, affected communities may face difficulties obtaining information, participation, and protection when ecological risks emerge. The problem is therefore not simply a corporate reputation failure, but a structural conflict involving economic interests, regulatory authority, environmental responsibility, and public rights. Addressing this problem requires a reputation management approach that recognizes material environmental impacts and community interests rather than treating reputation primarily as an image to be defended.

The phenomenon is illustrated by a commercial culinary tourism destination operating on steep land in an environmentally sensitive area. Since beginning operations in 2022, the destination promoted Eco-Tourism narratives through social media to construct a positive image (Wachyudi et al., 2024). However, this impression-management strategy encountered challenges following events during 2025. Landslides occurring from February to May disrupted access to a local tourism route and reportedly caused muddy water to enter water sources used by nearby residents. The crisis intensified in December 2025 when satellite imagery circulated through social media, allegedly showing extensive land clearing and raising questions about environmental compliance. The hashtag #selamatkangunungciremai subsequently amplified attention and transformed a local ecological issue into a digital reputation crisis. At the same time, the destination's economic significance complicated public responses because it provided employment and fiscal contributions. This situation demonstrates how ecological damage, economic dependence, regulatory concerns, and digital contestation can converge within one reputation crisis.

Previous crisis communication research has examined reputation crises through functionalist and corporate-centered perspectives. Situational Crisis Communication Theory, for example, emphasizes how organizations should match response strategies with perceived levels of crisis responsibility to protect corporate reputation. This framework is useful for explaining why defensive communication can fail when stakeholders attribute high responsibility to an organization. However, its primary orientation toward reputational protection can underemphasize ecological consequences and unequal power relations surrounding environmental controversies. Research on environmental reputation indicates that gaps between corporate green commitments and operational practices can generate distrust and digital protest (Truong et al., 2024). Meanwhile, evidence concerning ecological vulnerability highlights the importance of community safety and living spaces in evaluating corporate legitimacy. These studies establish foundations but leave a conceptual gap: environmental reputation crises cannot be fully understood through perceptions of corporate responsibility alone. A critical approach is needed to connect communication, ecological accountability, community interests, and power relations within crisis management.

Another limitation concerns the role of communication itself. Corporate narratives may function strategically to secure legitimacy rather than communicatively to

achieve mutual understanding. Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action provides an alternative perspective by distinguishing communicative action oriented toward understanding from strategic action oriented toward success. Through this lens, environmental reputation management can be examined according to whether corporate statements satisfy validity claims concerning truth, rightness, sincerity, and clarity. Existing crisis communication studies have rarely integrated these communicative dimensions with ecological compliance and local power relations, particularly in tourism environmental controversies. The literature also gives limited attention to polarized digital narratives and possible narrative steering by market actors. This gap is important because digital reputation crises increasingly unfold through contested information environments where corporate communication, community testimony, regulatory discourse, and commercial competition interact. Therefore, the present study positions communication not merely as a defensive instrument but as a social process whose ethical communicative quality influences legitimacy, trust, and sustainable conflict resolution.

The state of the art of this study lies in developing an Open Sustainable Tourism-Based Reputation Management Model that moves beyond reputation protection toward ecological accountability and inclusive deliberation. Unlike conventional approaches that prioritize controlling perceptions, this perspective integrates Situational Crisis Communication Theory with Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action to examine both responsibility attribution and the quality of corporate crisis communication practices. This integration matters because a reputation strategy may be technically responsive yet remain illegitimate when it ignores environmental facts, community safety, regulatory requirements, or unequal power relations. The central novelty lies in treating ecological compliance, discourse ethics, and inclusive participatory communication as interconnected foundations of reputation management. This is especially important because environmental crises in tourism can threaten ecosystems, trust, livelihoods, and business continuity. By reframing reputation as a relational outcome of accountable conduct and open communication, the study therefore offers a pathway for organizations to reconcile tourism investment with ecological sustainability while reducing greenwashing and strengthening public legitimacy.

Based on these gaps, the research problem concerns how reputation management responds to an environmental crisis when ecological impacts, community interests, economic dependence, regulatory compliance, and digital contestation intersect. It aims to analyze reputation management strategies, identify factors that make defensive communication ineffective, examine power relations among corporate actors, local stakeholders, regulators, and digital publics, and formulate an alternative reputation management model. The argument is that defensive strategies cannot restore legitimacy when communication is instrumental, environmental compliance is contested, and affected communities lack opportunities for deliberation. Instead, a reputation management model grounded in open sustainable tourism should place ecological accountability, legal compliance, discourse ethics, and inclusive participation at the center of crisis responses. This argument contributes directly by connecting crisis communication with communicative action and recognizing ecological and power dimensions. Practically, it provides organizations and policymakers with a framework for rebuilding trust through dialogue, environmental responsibility, and meaningful stakeholder participation rather than image management alone.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study employed a qualitative research approach to obtain an in-depth understanding of the ecological reputation crisis and its underlying social, environmental, and communicative dimensions (Danford, 2023; Pregoner, 2024; Takona, 2024). Qualitative research is an iterative process designed to understand a phenomenon or object more comprehensively and generate deeper insights for academic understanding. The study adopted a critical paradigm because the research sought to examine discourse hegemony, structural inequalities, power relations, and communication distortions surrounding environmental issues. This paradigm positions the researcher not merely as a neutral observer but as a critical interpreter who examines how corporate discourse, environmental practices, regulatory processes, and community interests interact within unequal power structures. The research design was an in-depth single case study, selected because it enables comprehensive exploration of a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context and is appropriate when researchers have limited control over the events being investigated.

The research was conducted at Arunika Eatery and its surrounding environmental and social context, which was selected because the area represents a relevant case of an ecological reputation crisis involving tourism development, land-use changes, environmental risks, community interests, and digital public discourse. The research focused on events and developments throughout 2025 to examine the emergence, escalation, and management of the reputation crisis within its contextual setting. Research informants were selected purposively based on their relevance, knowledge, experience, and involvement in the phenomenon under investigation. Purposive sampling was employed to obtain rich and substantive information from individuals considered capable of providing comprehensive explanations concerning the case. The informants included relevant corporate representatives, community members, environmental stakeholders, and other actors who possessed direct or contextual knowledge of the environmental and reputation issues examined in this study.

Data were collected through multiple complementary techniques, namely in-depth interviews, direct observation, and documentation. In-depth interviews were conducted to explore perceptions, experiences, communication practices, and responses concerning the ecological reputation crisis. Observations were used to examine environmental conditions, interactions, and relevant practices within the research setting. Documentation was conducted by analyzing environmental assessment documents, landslide-related records, satellite imagery from Google Earth covering 2022–2025, organizational or regulatory documents, and digital materials consisting of public comments and discussions on social media. The use of multiple data sources enabled the researcher to construct a comprehensive account of the case and compare empirical evidence from different perspectives. The collected data were subsequently analyzed through data condensation, data display, and data verification. Data condensation involved selecting, simplifying, categorizing, and focusing the data according to the research objectives. Data display organized the findings into thematic narratives and relationships among actors, events, communication practices, and environmental issues, while data verification involved identifying patterns, interpreting relationships, and drawing conclusions from the emerging evidence.

Data validity was ensured through source triangulation, technical triangulation, and the establishment of a transparent chain of evidence. Source triangulation was conducted by comparing information obtained from different informants to identify

consistency, differences, and complementary perspectives. Technical triangulation was undertaken by comparing interview findings with observations, environmental and licensing documents, satellite imagery, and relevant digital evidence. These procedures strengthened the credibility of the findings by preventing conclusions from relying on a single source or method. The overall analytical process was also informed by the case study framework proposed by Yin (2013), particularly through systematic examination of patterns, explanations, and chronological developments within the case. Through the integration of data condensation, display, verification, triangulation, and a documented chain of evidence, the study sought to ensure that interpretations were grounded in empirical evidence and remained consistent with the contextual characteristics of the ecological reputation crisis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The Reality of Arunika Eatery's Reputation Defense Actions in Facing the Environmental Crisis Issue

The year 2025 became a crucial phase for Arunika Eatery's reputation management due to the emergence of two environmental damage issues that triggered public resistance. To maintain its operational legitimacy, the company undertook various defensive actions, ranging from an accommodative local approach when facing physical landslide disasters to aggressive reframing communication strategies when the digital circuit issue surfaced. However, these tactical differences indicate a variation in strategy choices utilized by the management to respond to the ongoing reputation crisis. If mapped based on the crisis response typology in Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), the actions taken by the corporation include a combination of deny, diminish, and rebuild strategies (Coombs, 2007). A detailed mapping of Arunika Eatery's SCCT strategy application findings is evident in the following data.

First, the use of the *deny* strategy was seen in the management's official statement on social media on May 16, 2025, asserting that the infrastructure damage caused by the landslide in Cilengkrang Valley was purely due to extreme rainfall, not as a result of the company's commercial operational activities. This denial posture was later reinforced in an open discussion forum in Pajambon Village on May 19, 2025. In that forum in table 1 the management embraced authorities, academics, and geologists to legitimize the claim that the area naturally possesses high landslide vulnerability. This vulnerability is supported by historical data from the Mount Ciremai National Park Agency, which recorded a series of landslide disasters before the establishment of Arunika Eatery, namely 114 times in 2018, 69 times in 2019, 158 times in 2020, and 228 times in 2021.

Table 1. Landslide Data Prior to Construction

Disaster Name	Year	Number of Occurrences
Landslide	2018	114
Landslide	2019	69
Landslide	2020	158
Landslide	2021	228

Source: Mount Ciremai National Park Agency

Second, the application of the *rebuild* strategy was demonstrated through direct accommodative actions in the field as an effort to restore relations with the affected

communities. This step was realized through the provision of compensation funds and the financing of mutual cooperation actions to clean up the mudflow in the residential areas of Pajambon Village. The commitment to social assistance and local environmental recovery was confirmed and validated directly by Arunika Eatery's management as a form of corporate social responsibility.

Third, the *diminish* strategy was applied through issue reframing tactics conducted during the management's official press conference on December 8, 2025. On that occasion, the corporation attempted to dampen public perception of the ecological threat by highlighting narratives of environmental contribution, such as claims of replanting 7,000 tree seedlings and constructing water infiltration wells in its operational area. The existence of these greening and ecological improvement actions also received narrative reinforcement from relevant authorities who confirmed the planting activities on the offset land.

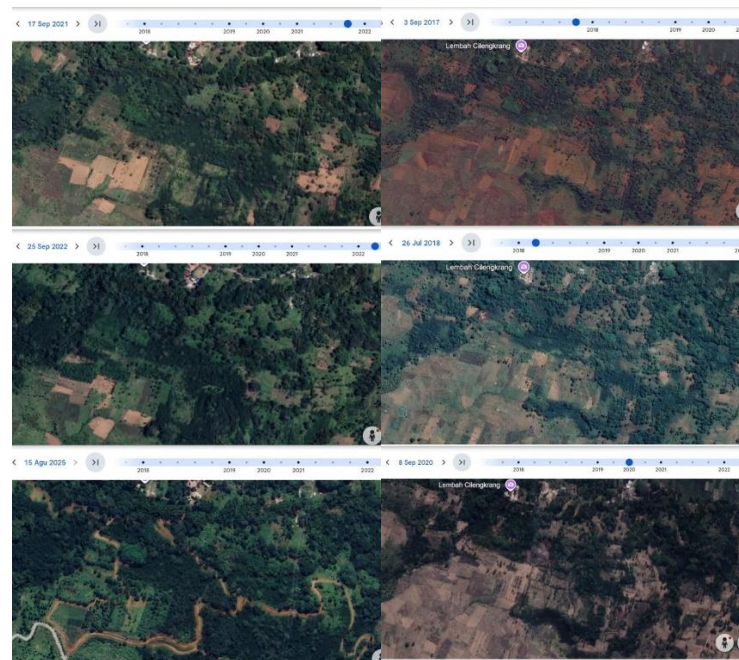


Figure 1. Images of Land Conditions Before Construction
(Source: Google Earth)

The series of empirical findings above figure 1 demonstrates that Arunika Eatery's management applied a dynamic and phased crisis response strategy according to the SCCT framework. A combination of scientific defense (deny), physical compensation (rebuild), and the formation of ecological contribution narratives (diminish) were used by the corporation as a defense mechanism to suppress the escalation of local conflicts while maintaining reputation legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

The Gap Between Green Image Claims and Field Realities

The fundamental gap between the corporate defense narrative and the objective conditions on the ground became a key finding that exposed the practice of image manipulation by Arunika Eatery's management. In the case of the landslide disaster in Cilengkrang Valley, the management built a defensive narrative by delegating the cause of the disaster purely to extreme natural factors and regional weather phenomena. However, empirical findings through local media reports, journalist testimonies, and

community leader testimonies revealed the contrary fact: the disaster flowed thick mud mixed with land structuring waste down to three villages, namely Pajambon, Sukamukti, and Gandasoli, located around the area. This lack of transparency was further emphasized by the pattern of post-disaster compensation fund distribution. Although official management claims positioned the fund disbursement as a form of social responsibility, field realities indicate that financial incentives to local youth and tourism operators functioned pragmatically as a tool to suppress resistance (co-optation) to prevent the escalation of mass protest actions that could potentially damage business reputation.

The inconsistency of corporate claims strengthened in the case of the land clearing issue captured on satellite imagery and went viral as the "circuit" issue on social media. The management attempted reframing by claiming that the winding soil stripping on private land was purely made as a mobilization path for planting 7,000 tree seedlings and as access to an Islamic boarding school's (pesantren) endowed land (tanah wakaf). However, field verification by Kuningan Care Community activists and journalists found that there were no physical construction activities for a pesantren at the location, but rather the existence of drainage channels and soil erosion using a 6-meter-wide heavy excavator, which is technically identical to preparing a mobilization route for a new commercial expansion. This phenomenon of discrepancy between the environmental sustainability narrative campaigned by the corporation and the facts of ecological destruction in the field confirms strong indications of greenwashing practices (Butt et al., 2022). The systematic discrepancy between technical-religious reasons and physical realities proves that Arunika Eatery's crisis communication strategy was oriented towards the formation of a false image (symbolic compliance) to cover up capitalistic expansion motives in disaster-prone areas.

Digital Public Rejection of Local Authority Political Intervention

The dynamics of handling Arunika Eatery's reputation crisis show the complexity of the intersection between economic dominance, local authority political legitimacy, and digital public resistance. At the local level, the corporation possesses very high bargaining power due to its contribution to labor absorption reaching 80% from the surrounding community, as well as the narrative of environmental improvement in the form of planting trees on former agricultural land which was also validated by the Kuningan Regency Environmental Agency.

The economic dependence of surrounding residents and authority legitimacy created a subtle conflict suppression mechanism, where local community anxieties regarding the threat of ecological disasters were co-opted by the sufficiency of short-term economic welfare. This condition reflects the phenomenon of economic hegemony where the community's material dependence on the corporation silences local critical power over environmental damage risks (Banerjee, 2022). However, this local stability is inversely proportional to public spotlight regarding indications of omission and permit leniency by local political authorities. Empirical findings confirm that the operation and business expansion of Arunika Eatery on a 5-hectare disaster-prone land proceeded without obtaining the initial Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA/AMDAL) documents.

The Environmental Agency confirmed that the licensing documents subsequently pursued were in the form of an Environmental Impact Assessment Evaluation (DELH) a retroactive procedure because the physical building and hotel operations had already

commenced before official permits were issued. This *ex-post facto* practice in licensing management strengthens indications of patronage networks and a tendency towards regulatory capture, where environmental regulations are loosened to accommodate capital interests. The practice of allowing operational permits before complete environmental documents indicates the existence of regulatory capture that reduces the supervisory function of public authorities to mere administrative formalities.

The leniency of rules and local authority interventions actually triggered an escalation of resistance in the digital public sphere, which is not bound by local economic hegemony. The digital public and social media audiences responded critically and skeptically to the corporate defense narrative, making reputation recovery efforts ineffective. According to the testimonies of journalists and community leaders, the corporate digital defense collided with public critical consciousness which was fragmented into three typologies of responses: skeptical groups questioning permit transparency, oppositional groups utilizing the issue for political agendas, and pro-corporate groups. The digital public's distrust of commercial narratives and bureaucratic interventions proves that local economic dependence failed to stem the wave of public rejection in the more emancipatory digital space. This phenomenon confirms that the digital public sphere functions as a counter-hegemony arena capable of dismantling elitist compromises between corporations and regional governments.

Demands for Reconstruction of Open Sustainable Tourism-Based Reputation Management

All the dynamics of the crisis and factual imbalances that occurred prompted the emergence of massive urging from various stakeholders for the realization of total transformation in corporate reputation governance. Critical informants, environmental activists, and local communities firmly rejected the conventional crisis communication model that is one-way and defensive in nature. Instead, they demanded full information transparency, honest acknowledgment of technical failures, and a reorientation of public relations language so as not to be manipulative in the public sphere.

Besides language transparency, grassroots stakeholders especially the Youth Organization *Karang Taruna* and affected residents demanded the opening of inclusive and equal spaces for dialogue and socialization, rather than merely administrative formality approaches to the village government. This demand for an equal deliberation space reflects the need for communicative action free from domination, where rational understanding is achieved through inclusive dialogue.

On the other hand, empirical findings reveal that the fundamental weakness of Arunika Eatery's reputation management is rooted in the absence of a specialized unit with technical capabilities in the environmental field. Community leaders and area authorities emphasized the importance of integrating ecological risk management into the organizational structure of corporations operating in geological disaster-prone areas, rather than relying solely on ordinary public relations strategies. Robust reputation governance is required to stand upon legal-formal regulatory compliance such as processing the EIA prior to operations, as well as alignment with technical rules of sustainable tourism industries recommended by the Mount Ciremai National Park Agency. The integration of ecological risk analysis into the corporate structure is an absolute part of sustainable environmental governance to prevent operational failures early.

This reputation transformation also includes compliance with technical

engineering and biodiversity recommendations manifest in the field. The Kuningan Regency Environmental Agency emphasized that claims of ecological reputation recovery cannot simply be built through image-building narratives but must be proven through landslide retaining vegetation engineering (such as planting *Calliandra* trees) and correcting water catchment infrastructure layouts appropriately geologically. The fulfillment of formal permits and technical improvements ultimately becomes an absolute prerequisite so that independent monitoring functions by the regional government can run optimally. This entire series of empirical demands becomes the main foundation for reconstructing an emancipatory reputation management model based on ecological compliance and distortion-free communication in the subsequent discussion chapter. This shift from symbolic compliance to tangible ecological action confirms a shift towards emancipatory reputation management that places citizen safety and natural preservation as top priorities

Discussion

The findings demonstrate that the corporate reputation defense strategies implemented during the ecological crisis were largely consistent with the response mechanisms described in Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), particularly deny, diminish, and rebuild strategies (Liu et al., 2025; Paydas Turan, 2022). However, the findings also reveal an important limitation that extends previous SCCT literature. Although defensive responses may protect reputation when responsibility is perceived as low or controllable, they became counterproductive when the public attributed substantial responsibility to the corporation. Technical explanations, reframing, and claims concerning extreme weather were interpreted as attempts to avoid accountability rather than as evidence-based crisis responses (Dominic, 2025; Masoud, 2025; Jong, 2025). This finding supports previous research showing that reputation strategies can fail when organizational communication is disconnected from stakeholder experiences, but it also demonstrates that environmental crises involve material consequences that cannot be resolved through symbolic communication alone. Theoretically, this finding expands SCCT by demonstrating that responsibility attribution should be considered together with ecological consequences, stakeholder vulnerability, and communication ethics. Practically, organizations should therefore align crisis responses with verifiable environmental facts rather than relying predominantly on image-restoration tactics.

The findings further indicate that the failure of defensive reputation management is closely associated with the transformation of strategic communication into systematically distorted communication. This finding is consistent with Habermas's Theory of Communicative Action, which distinguishes strategic action oriented toward organizational success from communicative action oriented toward mutual understanding (Albert et al., 2024; Luhukay, 2026). The corporate narratives examined in this study primarily functioned as instruments for managing public perception, resulting in a discrepancy between official claims and conditions observed by stakeholders. Such discrepancies undermine the validity claims of truth and sincerity and consequently weaken organizational credibility. The finding is also consistent with research emphasizing that reputation cannot be sustainably maintained when communication lacks transparency and ethical accountability (Eaddy et al., 2025). Nevertheless, this study extends previous literature by demonstrating that the validity claims of truth, rightness, sincerity, and comprehensibility provide a more critical analytical mechanism for

evaluating environmental crisis communication. Theoretically, this integration contributes a communicative-ethical dimension to reputation management research, while practically it suggests that organizations should ensure that every public statement is factually verifiable, normatively justified, sincere, and understandable.

Another important finding concerns the relationship between reputation defense, economic dependence, and power asymmetry. The absorption of local labor and distribution of post-disaster material assistance appeared to reduce open resistance, supporting the concept of coercive harmony in organizational governance (Alfian et al., 2025; Wæraas & Dahle, 2020). This condition is compatible with Habermas's concept of the colonization of the Lifeworld, in which economic and bureaucratic systems increasingly penetrate social spaces that should otherwise be governed through communicative interaction. The findings also indicate that material incentives can transform opportunities for genuine public deliberation into pragmatic compromises, while political-economic relationships may weaken the independence of environmental supervision. This finding complements research on regulatory capture and the use of formal legitimacy to protect organizational interests. At the same time, it extends the existing literature by connecting regulatory capture directly with corporate reputation defense, rather than treating regulation and reputation as separate domains. Similar patterns of strategic reputation protection through social and material instruments have also been identified in organizational and tourism contexts (Yang et al., 2023). The theoretical implication is that reputation should be understood as a product of power relations as well as communication, while the practical implication is that regulators must maintain institutional independence and communities must have meaningful opportunities to participate in environmental decision-making.

The digital public sphere represents another major finding that both confirms and extends previous scholarship. The study shows that social media audiences actively challenged corporate claims by comparing official narratives with environmental evidence, legal requirements, and community experiences. This finding supports the argument that digital spaces increasingly function as arenas of counter-hegemony in which organizational narratives can be publicly contested and reconstructed. The rejection of claims concerning environmental conditions, private land rights, tree planting, religious initiatives, and technical terminology demonstrates that euphemistic communication can intensify rather than reduce reputational damage (M. Lee et al., 2024; Okeke, 2026; Melloni et al., 2017). The findings therefore reinforce the importance of communication validity while showing that digital publics have become active evaluators of organizational legitimacy. This condition also corresponds with studies emphasizing transparency, stakeholder participation, and ethical communication in reputation management (Butt et al., 2022; Hou & Johnston, 2024). The practical contribution is that organizations should treat digital publics as legitimate stakeholders rather than passive recipients of corporate messages. Crisis communication should consequently provide accessible evidence, acknowledge uncertainty, respond to community concerns, and enable public verification rather than attempting to suppress critical narratives.

Based on these findings, the study contributes the Open Sustainable Tourism-Based Reputation Management Model as an alternative to conventional defensive reputation management. The model synthesizes the strengths of SCCT in recognizing crisis responsibility with Habermas's communicative perspective on ethical and

undistorted public dialogue. Its three pillars Honest Discourse Ethics, Equal and Open Deliberation, and Legal Compliance and Tangible Ecological Action respond directly to the limitations identified in the empirical findings. The first pillar requires radical honesty and rejection of manipulative euphemisms (Hou & Johnston, 2024); the second establishes pressure-free deliberation and prevents material co-optation (Karsono, 2023; S. Lee & Ben Romdhane, 2025); and the third connects reputational legitimacy with substantive environmental compliance, technical mitigation, and ecological accountability (Chen et al., 2025). These principles reinforce recent arguments concerning sustainable reputation governance and tourism accountability (Polimetla & Soni, 2026; Syah Putri et al., 2026). The theoretical contribution lies in reframing reputation as an outcome of ethical communication, power-balanced participation, and material accountability, while the practical contribution is a model that can guide tourism organizations, regulators, and communities in reconciling investment continuity with ecological preservation and community safety (Wisandiko & Indarwati, 2021).

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that ecological reputation crises cannot be effectively resolved through defensive or manipulative public relations because distorted communication, weak accountability, and regulatory noncompliance accelerate public distrust. The most important finding is that sustainable reputation depends on the integration of honest discourse, inclusive deliberation, and tangible ecological responsibility, formulated through the Open Sustainable Tourism-Based Reputation Management Model. Scientifically, this study contributes by extending Situational Crisis Communication Theory through Habermas's communicative perspective, positioning reputation as an outcome of ethical communication, balanced participation, and substantive environmental accountability. However, the study is limited by its single-case design and reliance on qualitative evidence within one environmental tourism context. Future research should examine the model across diverse tourism settings using comparative cases, longitudinal designs, and mixed-method approaches to assess its broader applicability and effectiveness.

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