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The Creation of Events During a Crisis: A Case Study of the "Covid...Rao-Tid-Pan-Daiii" (Relation-VID) Project

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Abstract

This study explores the creation of events during the COVID-19 crisis, focusing on the "Covid...Rao-Tid-Pan-Daiii" (Relation-VID) project. Adopting a qualitative research design, the study employs interviews and participatory observations to examine methods of event creation. The primary objective is to study how event communicate the notion that positive outcomes can emerge from challenging circumstances. The findings underscore the need for production teams to adapt concepts, creative ideas, and procedures, ensuring alignment with audience expectations during crises. The research reveals that while most narrative elements remain stable, the "Concept" requires heightened innovation and adaptability. Additionally, the study incorporates Crisis Management Theory to highlight how strategic planning, effective communication, and proactive adaptation are essential in mitigating disruptions and ensuring event success during a crisis.

Keywords: event organizer, crisis management, COVID-19, live event, narrative

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic, which emerged in late 2019, has had profound effects across various industries, including event management. In Thailand, the country's first major outbreak occurred in March 2020 following a Muay Thai boxing event, prompting the government to impose strict measures such as curfews, social distancing, and travel bans (Pulitzer & Greeley, 2020). These restrictions severely impacted event organizers, resulting in substantial financial losses and disrupting both educational activities and practical training in event management (Dillette & Ponting, 2021; Harris et al., 2021).

Event organizers are among the hardest damaged industries (Dillette and Ponting, 2021; Gossling et al., 2021). Inability to hold events resulted in severe losses for the sector (Harris et al., 2021). This effect of crisis is not only in organization level but in teaching and learning level as well.

The protracted lockdown not only dealt a significant hit to the country's tourism-dependent economy, but it also delayed the start of the new school session. Originally scheduled to resume teaching in mid-May 2019, the new term start date was moved to July 2019. Responding to university closures drove many educational institutions, notably tertiary education institutes, to shift their students and courses to online distance learning. All dormitories were closed. In contrast to lecture courses, practice-based courses appear to have a focus on teaching and learning. As a result, the person in charge must examine how to mitigate the impact of the crisis on the effectiveness of the study's outcomes.

Significance

Research in health psychology and primary care psychology provides a window into what is happening in hundreds of millions of families throughout the world. Furthermore, those who are quarantined are more prone to experience a variety of psychological stress and disorder symptoms, such as low mood, insomnia, stress, anxiety, rage, irritability, emotional weariness, melancholy, and post-traumatic stress disorder. The study highlights the prevalence of low mood and irritation. Furthermore, in cases where parents were isolated with their children, the mental health consequences were considerably more severe. In one study, not less than 28% of confined parents justified a diagnosis of "trauma-related mental health disorder". (Elke Van Hoof, 2019)

The mental condition impacts a large area around the world, including Thailand, at all ages, particularly teens, according to the survey results of Dosomething.org members. A new research asked students aged 13 to 25 about their current mood, and the top three responses were "frustrated" (54 percent), "nervous" (49 percent), and "disconnected" (40 percent). Teenagers are anxious, agitated, and nostalgic. Teenagers and college students have magnified natural, developmental motivations, making them difficult to segregate at home.

As the research it mentioned that during the period that teenagers have to pause at home for a long time to be free from Covid-19, the whole country, when locked up at home, living 24 hours together can lead to "accumulation stress" and beyond "Depression" because they feel that they are losing their own space to express how they feel or to express themselves.

University student who is in the age of teenager, is one of the group of people, were effected on this mental problem. Because of the changing both of lifestyle and surrounding. From independent university lifestyle to being at home with family, lacking of the freedom as before or feel lack of personal space then lead to the argue with the member of family or people around them which is the problem of "RELATIONSHIP" during the time of quarantine. As the result, the bad situation from covid-19 lead them to stress and make relationship worse. Finally, they feel unhappy with bad relationship with family and people around which make them feel getting worse. As a result, the biggest issue for the family throughout the quarantine period is a "relationship" that deteriorates with time. In response to the transition to online learning at Assumption University, this study examines how the "Covid...Rao-Tid-Pan-Daiii" project adapted to these unprecedented challenges. It aims to offer insights into effective crisis management strategies in event creation.

Theoretical Framework

Narrative elements serve as the foundation for storytelling, shaping a narrative's structure, meaning, and emotional resonance. These elements include plot, characters, point of view, setting, theme, conflict, and symbols/motifs (Bal, 2017; Chatman, 1980).
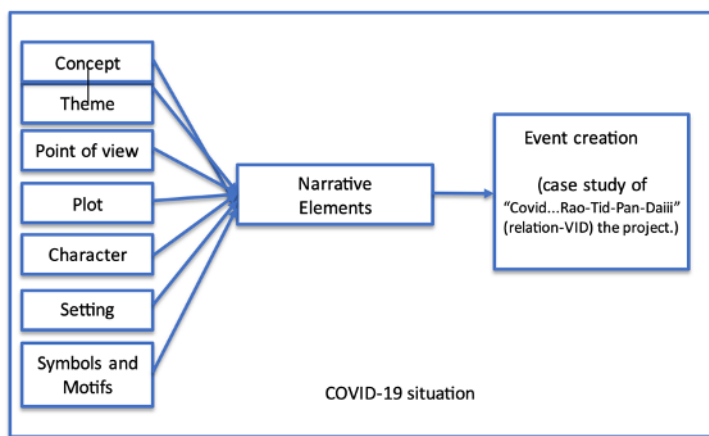

Figure1: Theoretical framework

Additionally, this study incorporates Crisis Management Theory and Social Determinism to provide a broader analytical framework. Crisis Management Theory emphasizes the need for proactive planning, adaptability, and strategic decision-making during unexpected disruptions (Coombs, 2015). This theory highlights the significance of effective communication, stakeholder engagement, and creativity in mitigating crisis impacts. It further explains how event managers must continuously assess risks, create contingency plans, and foster transparent communication with their teams and audiences.

Social Determinism, on the other hand, posits that human behavior and creativity are influenced by social structures, cultural norms, and environmental factors (Marx, 1978). In the context of event creation, it underscores how societal constraints during the COVID-19 pandemic shaped the project's design, messaging, and execution.

Methodology

This research employs a qualitative case study approach (Creswell, 2018; Yin, 2018), focusing on the live event production course at Assumption University. Data collection methods included participatory observation from November 2020 to March 2021 and structured interviews conducted in March 2021. The study's respondents comprised six key individuals: the project manager, producer, creative lead, scriptwriter, art director, and designer.

This case study is the event project which is from course of live event creation and management department, Albert Laurence School of Communication Arts at Assumption University in Thailand. The majority, of course, are practice-based of event production. During Covid-19, all classes were changed to online, but it was not possible to practice event production and administration. As a result, lecturer must investigate the manner in which events are generated in this crisis environment.

Data were collected using participatory observation and structured interview techniques, Six people were chosen as respondents for this study based on their responsibilities and range of authority. Researcher conducted participatory observation during November 2020 to March 2021 and interviews during March 2021. The research's analysis was done.

Location	category	Number of respondents
Thailand	Project Manager	1
Thailand	Producer	2
Thailand	Creative	3
Thailand	Script writer	4
Thailand	Art Director	5
Thailand	Designer	6

Table 1. Respondent classification

Results and Discussion

Event or Live performance is the tool for communicating the idea or main message to the audiences. The goal is to create a memorable experience for attendees, sponsors, exhibitors, and other stakeholders. Event communication is the process of sharing information about an event with its target audience. Main message of Event can be communicated to people through storytelling or narrative technique. A key element of narrative theory is the idea that stories are structured and shaped to create meaning for their audience (Bal, 2017). Narrative theory explores how stories are constructed, interpreted, and how they function across various contexts, including literature, film, oral traditions even in live performance. Elements of event creation are

Concept: The "Covid...Rao-Tid-Pan-Daiii" project originally envisioned a live stage performance and on-site exhibition. However, due to pandemic restrictions, the event evolved into a hybrid virtual stage play and online exhibition. "Covid...Rao-Tid-Pan-Daiii" (relation-VID) Project is new live event concept during the crisis. Event is consisted of 2 pieces of work which are online exhibition named "Covid...Rao-Tid-Pan-Daiii" (relation-VID) exhibition and hybrid simulated stage play named "Besties store". This concept has changed since the inception, which was a stage performance and onsite display. During the crisis, full live stage plays could not be shown, therefore they were replaced with hybrid virtual stage plays that used puppet shows instead performers.
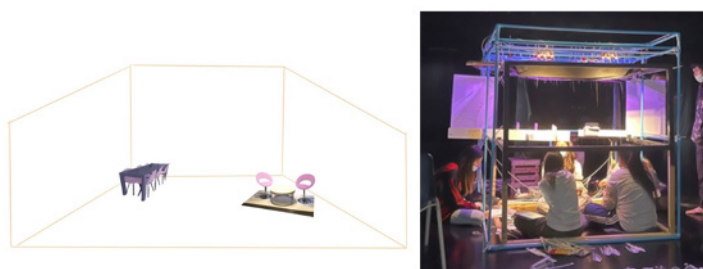
Figure2: simulated stage plays by using puppet plays

Crisis Management Theory explains this shift as a strategic adaptation, ensuring the event's continuity while adhering to health protocols. Proactive measures, such as creating digital platforms and employing virtual communication tools, showcased the team's agility in overcoming crisis-induced barriers. Mair and Whitford (2020) highlights how event organizers globally adapted to similar disruptions by leveraging virtual formats and hybrid models. Their study emphasizes the critical role of digital innovation in sustaining audience engagement during crisis periods. This aligns with the strategies employed by the "Covid...Rao-Tid-Pan-Daiii" project.

Moreover, Social Determinism highlights how the societal shift towards digital platforms influenced the project's format, reinforcing the idea that external social forces dictated creative decisions. According to Getz and Page (2021), event production during crises is not solely driven by internal creativity but also shaped by external pressures and societal expectations.

Theme: The event's central theme, "Relationship," stemmed from a pilot study that highlighted both strengthened sibling bonds and heightened familial conflicts during quarantine. Kim and Park (2021) found that pandemic-era events often incorporated themes of unity, mental health awareness, and interpersonal relationships, reflecting a global trend in event management strategies during crises. The "Covid...Rao-Tid-Pan-Daiii" project's focus on relationships aligns with these findings.

Plot: The plot followed a traditional five-stage structure: exposition (pre-pandemic family disconnection), rising action (enforced quarantine), conflict (familial disputes due to prolonged cohabitation), climax (resolution of conflicts), and resolution (finding optimism amid adversity). Crisis Management Theory informed the plot's progression by emphasizing conflict resolution—a key component of crisis response. By integrating crisis recovery strategies into the narrative, the project reflected real-world strategies for managing emotional and logistical challenges during the pandemic. Stokes et al. (2021) examined how global event narratives incorporated elements of conflict resolution, often mirroring real-life responses to crisis situations. The "Covid...Rao-Tid-Pan-Daiii" project adopted a similar approach, crafting its storyline to resonate with contemporary audiences.

Characters: Nineteen team members acted as protagonists, sharing personal quarantine experiences, while family members were portrayed as antagonists. Social Determinism explains how these character arcs mirrored real-life societal tensions, reflecting the psychological and relational struggles exacerbated by the pandemic. Crisis Management Theory also highlights the importance of clear roles and responsibilities, as the team structured their creative and operational roles to maintain efficiency and address conflicts.

Point of View: A first-person narrative perspective was adopted, allowing team members to share their experiences directly, fostering authenticity and enhancing audience empathy. Crisis Management Theory supports this approach as an effective communication strategy, promoting transparency and emotional connection.

Setting: The setting of the narrative reflected the crisis context, emphasizing home isolation and the pandemic's disruption of daily life. Social Determinism highlights how these settings were not just artistic choices but reflections of broader societal realities dictated by pandemic restrictions.

Symbols and Motifs: The project employed linguistic and visual symbols to reinforce its theme. The Thai phrase "ติด-พัน" (interpreted as both "relationship" and "infection") symbolized family bonds and pandemic-related struggles. Additionally, a heart-shaped logo and thread imagery emphasized love and interconnectedness. Social Determinism provides insight into how these symbols were influenced by cultural and societal interpretations of the pandemic.
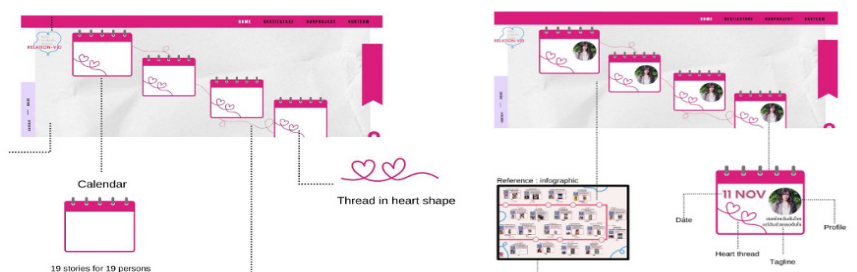

Figure4: online exhibition design for
"Covid...Rao-Tid-Pan-Daiii" (relation-VID) the project

According to Coombs (2015), crisis management is divided into three essential stages, each playing a crucial role in the success of event production during a crisis:

Pre-crisis Stage (Preparation and Prevention): In this stage, event organizers identify potential risks and develop contingency plans. For the "Covid...Rao-Tid-Pan-Daiii" project, this involved scenario planning, such as shifting from live events to hybrid platforms. The team anticipated restrictions on gatherings and proactively created an online event structure. Clear communication strategies were also established to keep all stakeholders informed.

Crisis Response Stage (Immediate Action): This stage involves the implementation of strategies to mitigate damage when a crisis occurs. The project's team quickly responded to government restrictions by transitioning to a hybrid format, combining a virtual stage play and online exhibition. They maintained transparency with their audience through social media updates, fostering trust and engagement.

Post-crisis Stage (Learning and Adaptation): After the event, the team conducted a thorough evaluation of their crisis response strategies. They gathered feedback from participants and analyzed technical challenges to strengthen future crisis preparedness. This reflection allowed them to build a more resilient event planning framework, ensuring adaptability for future disruptions.

Conclusion and Implementation

This study demonstrates that event creation during a crisis necessitates adaptability, particularly regarding the "Concept," which requires increased creativity and originality. Crisis Management Theory reveals that strategic flexibility, clear communication, and stakeholder engagement are crucial in overcoming event-related challenges. Simultaneously, Social Determinism underscores how societal constraints and cultural contexts directly influence creative outputs.

Ultimately, the integration of these theories illustrates that successful event management during a crisis is not only about internal creativity but also about responding to and reflecting broader social dynamics. The research not only prepared students for real-world event production but also highlighted the value of relationships, resilience, and adaptive storytelling during challenging times.

Limitations

This study has several limitations, most notably the small number of cases studied. This study employs a single intrinsic case study method, so we only look at one interesting case, that of university project. As a result, the findings of this study cannot be generalized to all cases of virtual events with different socioeconomic contexts. Furthermore, the focus of this research is on how to adjust event creative and production during crisis.

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