

NEWS MEDIA AND CRISIS LIFE CYCLE IN A TRANSNATIONAL ENVIRONMENT:
A CASE STUDY OF THE FOXCONN®'S CRISIS IN CHINA

By

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To my parents and those who inspired my intellectual curiosity, research interests, and supported my determinations throughout my lifetime

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Crises are unpredictable events. With the trend of globalization, the development of emergent communication technologies, and the diversity of the world media system have posed a challenge to transnational corporations (TNCs) in crisis management. In order to find guidance for this complicated issue, this study examines and analyzes a transnational crisis, the Foxconn[®]'s crisis. Through the quantitative content analysis of news stories generated from news agencies of three involved countries, this study examines the news coverage about Foxconn[®] employee suicide outbreak, which was between January 23, 2010 and December 26, 2010. With a series of suicide attempts occurred within Foxconn[®] factories, the company faced critics about labor right mistreatment and also affected its clients, such as Apple[®] and Dell[®].

In this study, the printed newswire coverage of Foxconn[®] crisis from Chinese Xinhua News Agency, Taiwanese Central News Agency, and Associated Press of the United States are analyzed to identify the characteristics of news content in terms of news frequency, themes covered, frames used, and sources cited.

The study found that the news frequency of Foxconn[®] crisis was affected by the crisis stages and the locations of news agencies. News media in China, Taiwan and the United States would cover different themes about Foxconn[®] crisis and used different news frames as well as

the news sources. There is a significant difference found between the five crisis stages in terms of the theme number, source number, and the frames used.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Crisis Management in Transnational Environment

Crises are unpredictable events. If poorly managed, they can damage an organization's viability, credibility, reputation and relationships with their stakeholders (Howell & Miller, 2006; Wang, 2005). Crisis communication management in the international environment, including prevention and response/reparation, is a complex task in public relations and communication management. Globalization, development of emergent communication technologies, and the diversity of the world media system, have posed a challenge to transnational corporations (TNCs) in managing crises, issues and challenging situations in multiple home and host locations. This study used a quantitative content analysis of news stories about Foxconn[®] suicide outbreak, which was between January 23, 2010 and December 26, 2010, from different media systems to demonstrate how crisis shift from one to other locations and how newswire coverage differed through the media systems when covering a same transnational crisis.

According to Molleda and Connolly-Ahern (2002), transnational corporations' (TNCs) decisions, actions, and operations influence not only domestic, but also global publics that include people where TNCs are headquartered and centrally operated. The blurred boundary between domestic and international business means crises are no longer restricted by national borders (Molleda, 2011; Seymour, 2002). In order to study crisis management in an international context, researchers have developed a series of propositions regarding cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) that mainly states that a transnational crisis in a country may potentially shift to other places in the world (Kim & Molleda, 2005; Molleda & Quinn, 2004).

Assisted by increasingly sophisticated communication technology, international and national news media play important roles in informing global and local public issues involving

transnational corporations (TNCs). “Without delay, a news event will be published and discussed with great interest where it has some or high resonance,” Molleda (2010) wrote (p. 678). Within the cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) theoretical framework, international news media were considered as a variable that could affect transnational crises management. As one of the propositions that Kim and Molleda (2005) proposed, news media of host and home countries will frame the same crisis event differently. Molleda (2011) also presented CNCS propositions that were relevant to the preferences of international newswire coverage in a transnational crisis. These studies revealed that international news media are powerful tools for setting the agenda for publics and framing their opinion since TNCs also use mass media to communicate with their stakeholders during crises through controlled and uncontrolled corporate messages (Howell & Miller, 2006; Kim & Molleda, 2005; Molleda, 2011; Molleda & Connolly-Ahern, 2002). Freitag’s (2002) study about international media coverage of the Firestone tire recall case emphasized media reports as one of the potentially determining factors in crisis planning and response models. He suggested that news media in different countries have various highlights of news coverage and knowing these preferences will aid TNCs and public relations practitioners in predicting, anticipating, and addressing unique dimensions of crises subject to international exposure (Freitag, 2002). Thus, this study seeks to identify the key elements that news stories privilege. Moreover, this study also aims to integrate these elements with crisis response strategies and to provide an effective framework for monitoring and managing crisis communication at every stage in a transnational crisis.

Although the preferences of news coverage in particular countries involved in a transnational crisis have become a favorite topic for analysis, there is little research that integrated crisis response with international news coverage, which is an important step for

bridging the gap between academic research and practice. Molleda's (2011) study about international news coverage of the 2007 Mattel's product recalls of made-in-China toys found associations between "key terms" in media coverage and the issues raised by them. He further indicated that "these key terms may change during the chronological cycle of the CNCS" (Molleda, 2011, p. 67).

For integrating crisis response and media coverage in their study, Howell and Miller (2006) extended Mitroff's five-stage crisis life cycle model with news coverage to a framework by analyzing a domestic crisis of Australian-based Ansett[®] Airline to better predict the changes and media coverage during crisis in order to develop a series of efficient crises communication strategies. They found the different interests of Australian news media in each stage of signal detection, probing, containment, learning, and recovery (Howell & Miller, 2006). However, there is still a gap between domestic practice and managing crisis in a global context, which is more dynamic and complicated because of the differences of media structure and function, as well as cultural norms among countries.

The purpose of this study, therefore, is to bridge the gap between domestic and international practice as well as combining nature of news coverage with crisis life cycle in a crisis response mode. Also, this study hopes to add useful data of international media coverage in existing research by analyzing the news coverage of the 2010 Foxconn[®] employee suicide crisis in China, Taiwan, and United States, using Howell and Miller's (2006) framework.

The 2010 Foxconn[®] Employee Suicide Crisis

This crisis started in China by Foxconn[®], a TNC headquartered in Taiwan. It is one of the biggest electronic product manufacturers in China that has large businesses with transnational corporations (TNCs), such as Sony[®], Dell[®], Apple[®], and Hewlett-Packard Development Company[®] (also known as HP[®]), among others. Similar to other manufacturers who operate

their factories in China, the main competitive advantage of Foxconn® is low labor cost. In managing large amount of Chinese employees, Foxconn®'s management power is highly concentrated and somehow not humanitarian. According to the news of Agence France Press (2011), the company is alleged to treat employees as machines.

Foxconn® confronted the most terrible crisis regarding employee relations in a host country where it has most of its factories, China. The employee mistreatment crisis shifted from the host country, China, to its home country, Taiwan, immediately, and then to the United States since Apple® was also involved as Foxconn®'s major client. According to a report from Students & Scholars Against Corporate Misbehaviour [SACOM](2010), a Hong Kong based non-government organization, 17 Foxconn® workers attempted suicide from January to August, 2011, which resulted in 13 deaths with 4 injured. Along with the continuous news reports on the employee suicides, Foxconn® was heavily criticized for its employee management by the news media, a variety of publics in China and Taiwan, activists, and scholars. However, Foxconn® did not respond appropriately at the beginning of the crisis. Its CEO, Terry Guo, did not choose to face the media. Instead its management team in China put suicide-prevention netting around employee dorms and asked employees to sign no-suicide pledges. After the multiple suicide events, the Foxconn® crisis impacted its clients, as well as well-known global electronic product corporations such as Apple®, Sony®, and Dell®. The crisis involving employees of the corporation has transformed into an ethical concern for consumers. As stated in SACOM's (2010) report, people who buy the products of those brands "are consuming the blood and tears of the workers" (p.4). Among Foxconn®'s clients, Apple® was most involved in this crisis since it was the major customer. During the crisis life cycle, Apple® was often associated with Foxconn® in many news stories since it is more recognizable.

After the ninth suicide, Apple[®]'s U.S. headquarters released a statement expressing that they would investigate the suicide events and ensure that all their “suppliers to treat all workers with dignity and respect” (cited in Vause, 2010, ¶ 7).

During the crisis, there were a large number of news stories covering the development of this event in China, Taiwan, and United States. However, the media environment in each country is different. This includes elements such as levels of press freedom that might influence news coverage. For media in China, they received instructions from the government to stop reporting Foxconn[®] suicides after the 12th employee committed suicide. According to Freedom House (2010), government's media policy, media ownership, and censorship may lead to different levels of press freedom, which means more restriction on news content. According to the 2010 report of Freedom House in press freedom section, Taiwan, China and United States have different ratings in press freedom, which considers the criteria of (1) legal environment that laws and regulations could influence media content and the authorities' intention to use them to restrict the media, (2) political environment which means degree of political control over the content of news media, and (3) economic environment for the media such as media ownership. Considering Hachten and Scotton's (2007) classification based on the role of journalism and mass communication in each political system, news media in China, Taiwan and United States belong to these five concepts: (1) authoritarian, (2) western, (3) communist, (4) revolutionary, and (5) developmental. These differences in media system make it interesting in comparing news coverage from these three countries and treat media freedom as a variable in affecting news contents.

This case study provides a chance for international public relations research to integrate the field of cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS), crisis communication, global journalism, and

world communication system together. As a transnational crisis in which three countries were involved, Foxconn®'s crisis enables the researcher to (1) test and revise existing news media trend model of crisis communication in a global setting. Different media environment in these three countries, China, Taiwan, and United States, provides a good opportunity to (2) examine the differences in news coverage among the three countries that may be affected by their media environment. As Freitag (2002) suggested, future studies should focus on smaller number of nations and take media structure and function into consideration when analyzing news coverage of a transnational crisis. He also indicated that considering "factors such as comparative media systems and cultural syndromes might permit even more precise development of matrices to help anticipate and respond to international media coverage of a crisis" (Freitag, 2002, p. 254). In addition to looking for the nature of international media coverage during different stages in CNCS's life cycle, Foxconn®'s crisis is a suitable case for (3) tracking influences of news coverage on major actors' crisis responses (e.g., Foxconn® China, Taiwan's headquarter, Apple®, and Chinese and Taiwanese governments) since the crisis involved many stakeholders. This increases complexity of the associations among the actors.

Through this study, scholars and international public relations practitioners are able to better understand evolution of a transnational crisis and how it interact with news media to guide decision making of crisis response strategies. In the literature review chapter, these purposes will be explained by incorporating theories of cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS), crisis communication response, agenda-setting effects, and press freedom.

This research will be accomplished by conducting a content analysis of newswire coverage related to Foxconn® crisis in China. These analyses will examine printed news stories of three major international news agencies in China, Taiwan, and the United States in order to apply the

model of crisis communication to a global context. The study is not only expected to shed light on international public relations research, but also expected to suggest a working framework for public relations and communication management practitioners in order to bridge the gap of academic research and practical implications.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Cross-National Conflict Shifting

As one of the consequences of the globalization trend, business corporations are involved and affected by transnational incidents or challenging situations (Wakefield, 2001). For further research about these types of transnational incidents, international business scholars Welge and Holtbrügge introduced the concept of cross-national conflict shifting in 1998 and extended this concept later in their book, *International Management* (as cited in Molleda, 2002). Molleda and Connolly-Ahern (2002) later borrowed this cross-national conflict shifting concept from an international strategic and business management discipline, after which they introduced it to the public relations field.

According to Molleda and Connolly-Ahern (2002), the term ‘transnational crisis’ within global public relations is known as ‘cross-national conflict shifting’ (CNCS). As defined by Molleda (2010), CNCS means “crises or troublesome situations that transnational organizations (TNOs) face either at ‘home,’ where they have their headquarters, or in ‘host’ countries, where they operate and engage in commercial and/or institutional activities” (p. 608). For modern TNOs, the globalization trend is a double-edged sword that enhances their business expansion to the global market while also posing unanticipated and complicated crises challenges. With an unparalleled force, the emerging communication technologies, such as satellite and Internet, local issues can easily shift across national borders. Molleda and Laskin (2009) explained, “[c]ross-national conflict shifts involve a variety of publics at various geographical levels, namely, host, home, and transnational publics (e.g., NGOs and activist groups, global media outlets, international news agencies, pan-regional media, shareholders)” (p. 333).

To better understand and illustrate cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) in the global public relations arena, Molleda and Connolly-Ahern (2002) conceptualized CNCS by providing a case study of a legal crisis that involving America Online Latin America (AOLA) in Brazil. The AOLA crisis shifted from Brazil to the United States, and then to Europe, causing financial consequences for the organization in terms of its stock value. They further expanded their conceptualization of CNCS, stating that:

There are organizational decisions, actions and operations that affect publics in one country and have an impact internationally. This impact seems to be greater at the home country of the organization or organizations involved, which could be explained by the relevance and proximity of organization for the home publics. Domestic conflicts are increasingly shifting worldwide because of the growth of international transactions, transportation and communication, especially information technology. (Molleda & Connolly-Ahern, 2002, p. 4)

Molleda and Quinn (2004) elaborated this concept of CNCS with a focus on three major components: (1) the characteristics of the issue, (2) the ways in which a national conflicts reach transnational audiences, and (3) the parties involved or affected. They articulated 10 propositions of CNCS and some of them were tested and supported by Molleda, Connolly-Ahern, and Quinn (2005) through a content analysis of international news coverage of the Lesotho bribery scandal:

- Proposition 1: Cross-national conflict shifting is mainly related to corporate social performance issues and negative economic consequences of globalization.
- Proposition 2: The magnitude of a cross-national conflict shifting will increase when it starts in an emergent or developed economy because of the greater pressure the transnational corporation will face in the host country and from the international activist community.
- Proposition 3: Conflicts that occur in developed nations have usually a shorter life and do not cross borders as often as conflicts that start in developing nations or emergent economies.
- Proposition 4: A greater number of involved parties will characterize a cross-national conflict shift in which a developed nation transnational corporation is the principal participant of the crisis.

- Proposition 5: A lower number of involved parties will characterize a cross-national conflict shift in which a developing nation or emergent economy corporation is the principal participant of the conflict.
- Proposition 6: Transnational corporations that produce or commercialize tangible, boycottable products are more likely to receive attention than those who produce and commercialize intangible services.
- Proposition 7: Transnational corporations headquartered in developed nations that produce or are part of a national conflict outside their home country, will attract great attention from global NGOs, international regulatory bodies, national governments, organized citizen groups, and international news agencies and global media outlets.
- Proposition 8: The direct involvement of a transnational corporation in a cross-national conflict shifting will produce greater consequences and demand a more comprehensive set of responses than a transnational corporation that is indirectly related to the issue.
- Proposition 9: National conflicts shift to the international arena when primarily global NGOs or media report on the situation to audiences or publics in different parts of the world.
- Proposition 10: National conflicts with a great human interest focus are likely to be shifted to the international arena. (Molleda & Quinn, 2004, pp. 5-7)

Kim and Molleda (2005) advanced CNCS theory by combining CNCS theory with crisis management and analyzing the Halliburton bribery probe case in Nigeria. Their study was based on Coombs' (1995, 1999) crisis communication strategies which are: attack, denial, excuse, justification, ingratiation, corrective action, and full apology. They also expanded their original CNCS theory in order to include political aspects in a dynamic global context. Kim and Molleda (2005) developed three additional propositions:

- Proposition 11: Although a transnational corporation that does not produce or commercialize tangible, boycottable products, if the CEO or top level management have a cohesive relationship with the home country government or another highly visible institution, it will draw more attention from home country media, international media, international NGOs and regulatory bodies, and the issue will have greater political repercussions and debates.

Proposition 12: Domestic or national conflicts are not only perceived differently by related parties in the home country and host country, but also framed differently by the host country and home country media.

Proposition 13: National or domestic conflicts of transnational corporations are sometimes combined with other related conflicts or issues that negatively affect the reputation of transnational corporations in home and host countries and, therefore, require more complex responses and public relations strategies (until the conflicts resolve). (Kim & Molleda, 2005, pp. 14-16)

For as many factors that could manipulate crisis management, ‘media’ has been included into cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) theory. Curtin and Gaither (2007) stated, “the speed at which information and news travel has created a more informed citizenry and galvanized them behind issues and policies as never before” (p. 23). Wang’s (2005) study about the DuPont Teflon crisis in China also suggests CNCS should be interpreted from three perspectives which have taken media into consideration: the crisis management performance of the involved transnational organizations (TNOs), the level of media interest in the involved issue, and the unique and complicated social and cultural context of the involved country.

To advance cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) theory within a more complex global context that includes media influence, Molleda (2011) examined news coverage of the 2007 Mattel’s product recalls of ‘made-in-China’ toys based on Kim and Molleda’s (2005) study. He articulated new propositions about international media coverage in a CNCS for theory implications:

- Major transnational corporate crises will result in greater international newswire coverage, especially from the countries involved in the conflicting situation.
- The news stories will be mainly filed from major cities of the countries involved where the conflicting situation has greater resonance to more active and affected stakeholders.
- International newswire agencies will frame conflicts differently and will highlight particular aspects of a CNCS depending on where they are headquartered in relation to the involved transnational corporation’s main office.

- The international newswire coverage of a transnational crisis will privilege corporate and governmental responses and actions, which could indicate that newswire services would favor powerful voices or that these sources are habitually available for news reporters during the coverage of a cross-national conflict shift. (Molleda, 2011, pp. 67)

Media, as described in these propositions, is considered when examining crisis management efforts of a transnational conflict; especially the news media. The concept that media has an effect on audience such as agenda setting and framing, has gained prominence in crisis communication studies; which could “give guidance to both investigations of media contents, issues and frames during corporate crises and to the relationship between media and public opinion” (Valentini & Romenti, 2011, p. 1). According to Olson (2001), the theories of cultivation, agenda setting, and spiral of silence all may be considered powerful media effects. Wanta, Golan, and Lee’s (2004) study is based on agenda-setting theory. By analyzing international news content and poll data from the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, they found a clear relationship between media coverage of foreign nations and its audiences’ perceptions toward those nations. The results of the study showed the more the news media covered a nation, the more likely audiences were to think that nation was vitally important to U.S. interest (Wanta, Golan, & Lee, 2004). Olson (2001) also highlighted that ‘agenda-setting’ is useful to public relations practitioners “because once they are able to place issues on the news media agenda, the public’s agenda theoretically will follow with increased importance subsequently allocated to those issues” (p. 276).

Media Agenda-Setting and Crisis Communication

Through emergent communication and media technologies, an event that is worth reporting in one place will flow worldwide immediately. As Freitag (2002) described, “thanks to Internet, a regional issue can become an international crisis” (p. 240). According to Molleda and Connolly-Ahern (2002), international news agencies (e.g., Associated Press, United Press

International, and Reuters) and global media (e.g., CNN International, BBC World Service) are considered as global news media that rapidly disseminates the incidents of which transnational businesses are involved.

In the perspective of global public relations, communication media not only serve as an information distributor, but it also “play central roles on public relations as channels of communication between an organization and its key publics” (Hallahan, 2001). Although there are several studies on the role media play in public relations’ agenda-setting, the majority of these discuss media’s influence based on certain public issues and/or political candidates. Researchers have conspicuously paid little attention to the effect of media on crisis management (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Howell & Miller, 2006)

The agenda-setting effect of news media is defined as the ability to influence both the topic and the perception among audiences (McCombs & Reynolds, 2002). Carroll and McCombs (2003) drew the role of agenda-setting in media out of its original domain (i.e., political issues and public affairs) and found it fit equally well in the world of business communication. They believed that the everyday selection and display of news content by journalists “focuses the public’s attention and influences its perceptions” (Carroll & McCombs, 2003). They offered five propositions on the effects of first and second-level agenda-setting on corporate reputations among the public. Carroll and McCombs’ (2003) propositions on the effect of news media agenda setting are:

- P1: The amount of news coverage that a firm receives in the news media is positively related to public’s awareness of the firm.
- P2: The amount of news coverage devoted to particular attributions of a firm is positively related to the proportion of the public who define the firm by those attributes.
- P3: The more positive that media coverage is for the particular attribute, the more positively will members of the public perceive that attribute. Conversely, the

more negative that media coverage is for a particular attribute, the more negatively will members of the public perceive that attribute.

- P4: The agenda of substantive and affective attributes associated with a firm in business news coverage, especially those attributes specifically linked with a firm, primes the public's attribute and opinion about the firm.
- P5: Organized effort to communicate a corporate agenda will result in a significant degree of correspondence between the attribute agenda of the firm and news media. (pp. 39-42)

Some research has attempted to integrate the effects of agenda-setting in news media and crisis communication within an international setting. Ha (1999) analyzed news coverage of the Clinton-Lewinsky scandal and found media in both South Korea and the United States “can exert a global agenda-setting influence” (as cited in Freitag, 2002, p. 242). Ha (1999) also suggested that, as part of crisis response efforts, organizations should monitor and be aware of news coverage relevant to the crisis (Ha, 1999; cited in Freitag, 2002). Lim (2008) conducted an experiment that focused on how host consumers of automobiles may perceive the corporate reputation of major transnational organizations (TNOs) with two types of crises (e.g., a massive product recall and a bribery scandal) through news media. She found that the potential customers of a host country form negative attitudes and negative behavioral intentions by reading news coverage of a TNO involved in a crisis (Lim, 2008). In other words, as Patterson (2004) said, “perception is truth and the media creates [sic] the perception following a crisis” (¶ 1).

According to Lim (2008) and Wang (2005), this effect is harder to control once issues regarding cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) have come out and the transnational organization (TNO) will need to be flexible and dynamic in an information transaction in order to have a better transnational crisis defense system. Synnott and Mckie (1999) noted that when crisis shifts internationally, there are other potential factors would impact public perception of crisis and organization. They further illustrated that “the level of national economic development

bears on perceived priorities of public relations research needs, and that geographic region and cultural diversity” (Synnott& Mckie, 1999, p. 242).

International Crisis Communication and Media

“Media are efficient in moving issues cross borders. Worldwide audiences get the same stories through high quality reports of CNN or BBC,” said Harold Burson during a personal interview (as cited in Molleda & Connolly-Ahern, 2002, p. 3). With gradually sophisticated communication technology and increasing public access toward information, media has become a powerful force that can make a national happening become a transnational or global event; and even impact the parties involved in their home, host, and transnational locations around the world (Molleda & Connolly-Ahern, 2002). According to Howell and Miller (2006), “the media’s influence over a crisis has evolved with the digital revolution to instantaneous and exhaustive, global coverage” (p. 1). Since media, especially news media, have an ability to set public agenda and further influence people’s perceptions toward certain events, it has been viewed as a variable and an important tool to crisis management (Howell & Miller, 2006; Patterson, 2004; Molleda & Connolly-Ahern, 2002; Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2001). Much research has been conducted for the purpose of analyzing the nature of news coverage and the angles taken by the media, which is critical for organizations when communicating with multiple stakeholders. Freitag’s (2002) study of the Firestone tire recall crisis identified the elements of a crisis that could predict international media coverage and public reactions and the factors affecting the nature of coverage. He then proposed adjustments that are needed in a crisis response plan for an international environment. By analyzing international news coverage of the Firestone- Bridgestone tire recall, Freitag (2002) concluded in his study what issues have covered and news editorial preferences of certain countries. He found, for example, the event was prominently covered by Japanese news media, although its consumers were not significantly affected by the recall, as a result of the corporate

link between Bridgestone – a Japanese-based transnational corporation – and Firestone. In contrast, the coverage in Denmark, India, Malaysia, South Korea, and Thailand was limited and only related to consumer assurances or business analyses (Freitag, 2001). Freitag (2001) also emphasized that factors such as cross-cultural communication dynamics and mass media structure issues might affect news coverage.

At the end of his study, Freitag (2001) called for more studies that focus on one national or geographic area and suggested that future research should consider the roles of cultural patterns, media structure, and function. Wang's (2005) study analyzed news coverage of the DuPont Teflon crisis in China from three perspectives: the crisis management performance, the level of media interest, and the complex of social and cultural context in where the crisis took place. She suggested a reversed cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) proposition that a conflict involving a transnational organization (TNO) could shift from a home country to a host country through international media and cause greater impact in the host country (Wang, 2005). The study revealed that Chinese news coverage differed significantly from those covered in the United States through the elements such as event location, story focus, and primary problem attribution (Wang, 2005).

In addition to the studies that focus on the different way news media frame crises among countries, there are studies that discuss how cross-national conflict shifting affects the perception of host customers toward transnational corporations involved in the conflict. Divergently from other international crisis communication research that analyzes news coverage, Lim's (2008) research showed that audiences exposed to the news story about massive product recall of a transnational organization (TNO) resulted in a more negative attitude and behavioral intention than the news story about bribery scandal of the same company.

Previous studies illustrated that media play an important role in setting the public agenda and shaping public opinion through the selection of news content. For the reason that the public would learn the important issues from the amount of coverage given to them in the news media, monitoring media coverage has been considered extremely crucial while managing a crisis (Coombs, 2006; Valentini & Romenti, 2011). Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2001) also stressed that “tracing media coverage serves as an ideal means of gauging the effectiveness of post-crisis communication,” as well as monitoring reactions of crisis communication from the news media (p. 162).

In several research studies, the framing role of media during corporate crises, and the relationship between media and public opinion are again being emphasized with more focus on the international news media. In order to compare crisis issues, tones and frames produced by national and international newspapers, Valentini and Romenti (2011) examined how Italian and the international news media outlets framed Italian national airline Alitalia’s crisis in 2008 differently by analyzing both Italian and international news coverage. The authors indicated the importance of including contextual factors, such as media systems and journalists’ news practice, when developing crisis communication strategies and sending messages to the media in the international environment (Valentini & Romenti, 2011). The study identified eight main crisis issues that were primarily covered by Italian and the international news media during the 2008 crisis. These issues are: Alitalia’s financial situation, government management, political positions on Alitalia’s crisis, the role of Silvio Berlusconi (the Italian prime minister), investor relations, labor union relations, employee relations, and strikes/protests. Valentini and Romenti (2011) found that Italian and international news media would select different issues among these eight as well as the different tone and frame when covering the crisis. They also stated that media

systems and news practices have impact on choosing the tonality and associated frames among Italian and international news agencies, which proved the previous studies by Hallin and Mancini (2004) that the Italian news media are highly politicized with a preference for the conflict frame.

Molleda (2011) analyzed international newswire coverage over Mattel's 'made-in-China' product recall crisis in 2007 and suggested that transnational organizations (TNOs) involved in a transnational crisis should monitor and analyze the highest peak of news coverage concerning the global flow of information and international newswire. Through this strategy, TNOs are able to respond and track other influential actors' responses proactively thus to implement immediate communications and corporate actions during crisis (Molleda, 2011). By examining the news coverage from China, Europe, and the United States, he indicated that newswire services would privilege different voices in the coverage of cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS). Molleda's (2011) study expanded his original 13 propositions of CNCS and articulated four more propositions regarding to international news coverage for advancing the CNCS theory. One of his propositions that developed in this study stated that: "International newswire agencies will frame conflicts differently and will highlight particular aspects of a CNCS depending on where they are headquartered in relation to the involved transnational corporation's main office" (p. 67).

Furthermore, he also pointed out the preference of international newswires when covering a transnational crisis that: "The international newswire coverage of a transnational crisis will privilege corporate and governmental responses and actions, which could indicate that newswire services would favor powerful voices or that these sources are habitually available for news reporters during the coverage of a cross-national conflict-shift" (p. 67).

For developing better crisis management strategies and bridging the gap between academic research and real practice, many scholars integrated crisis response disciplines into their studies with an emphasis on media effects (e.g., Coombs, 2006; Freitag, 2001; Howell & Miller, 2006; Huang, 2006; Len-Ríos, 2010; Lim, 2008; Molleda & Connolly-Ahern, 2002; Molleda, Connolly-Ahern, & Quinn, 2005; Valentini & Romenti, 2011; Wang, 2005). Freitag's (2001) study on the Firestone-Bridgestone tire recall crisis, as aforementioned, discussed factors that may influence media coverage on a crisis, such as cultural dimensions, and media structure and function which determine crisis planning and response strategies. Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2001) also mentioned that, used as an effective crisis response strategy, organizations follow media closely so as to defend themselves against any false information that is reported. And if successful, the organization then has the ability to "shape the communicative agenda" and to save the company's reputation (p. 161).

Different from other research that focus on analyzing news content and examining the effects of the media on an audience during a crisis, Molleda (2011) found a link between issues that were raised by key terms presented in a newswire and the transnational organizations (TNOs) involved. He further identified that the key terms, like those in his study about Mattel's tainted product recall were "tainted," "safety concerns," and "poor quality"; which can be found by monitoring the series of chronologically published headlines and lead paragraphs (p. 67). In addition to identify those key terms, he pointed out that these key terms may change during the chronological cycle of the cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS). As Molleda (2011) stated, "a successful transnational crisis-control program should be supported by continuous executive media training, the efficient coordination of responses and actions, and, particularly, effective

localization of information subsidies, action, or response”, to understand crisis life cycle as developing crisis response strategies in media perspective is necessary (p. 67).

Crisis communication: A Focusing on Crisis Life Cycle

According to Fearn-Banks (2001), the public relations profession has been crisis driven since it was created in the early 20th century. With the advancement of technology, key publics have grown up accompanied by various communication tools, such as television, radio, newspaper, books, magazines, and the internet, that keep providing its audience with an abundance of information. Therefore, because the public demands to know issues about corporations, concerning their financial condition, and communications they use to thwart the problems, organizations are increasingly seeing the need for crisis communication (Fearn-Banks, 2001). Fearn-Banks (1996, 2001) defined “crisis communication” is a process that organizations use verbal, visual, and/or written interaction between the organizations and the public; often through the news media, and it is designed to minimize damage to the reputation of the organization. Coombs (1999) suggested in *Ongoing crisis communication: planning, managing and responding*, the need for public practitioners to understand crisis life cycle in order to plan the different response for each stage.

The crisis life-cycle model, as termed “staged approaches” by Coombs (1999), was derived from the marketing product life-cycle model. The concept of a crisis that could progress was developed in 1980s with Fink’s (1986) four-staged model that was applied initially to better understand crisis behaviors (Howell & Miller, 2006). Fink’s (1986) staged approach contained four stages in the development of a crisis which are: (1) prodromal – clues and warning signals that begin to emerge; (2) acute/crisis breakout – an event or incident occurs followed by a negative outcome; (3) chronic – the effects of the crisis linger as to limit the crisis progress; and

(4) resolution – the crisis is no longer a concern to stakeholder and the organization returns to normalcy (Coombs, 1999; Fearn-Banks, 2001).

Barton (1993), Mitroff (1996), and other scholars (e.g., Coombs, 1999; Sturges, 1994) further expanded Fink's original four-staged model to a five-staged model. Crisis expert Ian Mitroff (1994) divided crisis management into five phases which emphasizes more prescriptive functions: (1) signal detection – organizations identify the warning sign for a new crisis, (2) probing and prevention – organizations search known crisis risk factors and make plans to avoid the crisis through proactive strategies to reduce the potential of harm, (3) damage containment – similar to Fink's acute stage that crisis hits and organizations make effort to limit the duration of the crisis and try to prevent the crisis damage from spreading, (4) recovery – organizational operation return to normal, and (5) learning – organizations review, evaluate, and determine their crisis management effort as a lesson for the next time (Coombs, 1999; Fearn-Banks, 2001; Mitroff, 1987).

Usually, the purpose of crisis communication is to offset the potential negative impact while organizations fail to respond to warning signs in the early stage (Coombs, 1999; Howell & Miller, 2006). Through communication technical development, the news media's ability to disseminate messages to public sped up less than a decade ago. Typically, the framework for crisis communication research makes the assumption that media coverage is important as it could frame audiences' opinions about certain issues, but little literature specifically focuses on changes in content of media coverage during the crisis (Howell & Miller, 2006).

According to Holtzhausen and Roberts (2009), there is a strong association between crisis stage and media portrayals of individuals in the crisis. Len-Rios (2010) evaluated the effectiveness of Duke University's communication strategies during its lacrosse team crisis of

sexual harassment by analyzing local news coverage. Following the suggestion of Brinson and Benoit (1996) that there are benefits in examining news coverage with crisis stages, she included crisis stage factors into her study. The study also determined how crisis stages affect the tone of local newspaper portrayals of Duke's identity. Len-Rios (2010) found in Duke's case that different strategies are used at different stages in the crisis as well as the themes selected by local newspapers. The results showed that "the top theme in all stages was legal issues, but the proportion of themes changed among the other categories across time" (p. 280).

Howell and Miller (2006) believed that mass media coverage during a crisis can be predicted and managed to influence stakeholders' opinions. "Each stage of the crisis life cycle contains different themes in mass media coverage, and each theme exhibits attributes pertinent to the stage to which it is allocated," Howell and Miller argued (2006, p. 2). They suggested an amended crisis life-cycle model that maps the news media content during each stage of crisis and they illustrated it by analyzing the local news of the safety crisis in Ansett[®], an Australian-based airline. Their crisis life-cycle is comprised of five stages that integrated previous studies of crisis stages. (1) phase one – which termed prodromal (Fink, 1986; Barton, 1993), signal detection (Mitroff, 1996), and detection (Fearn-Banks, 1996), the model predicts that the issues that have the potential to become crises appear as small news stories in mass media; (2) phase two – which termed preparation (Barton, 1993), probing (Mitroff, 1996) and prevention (Fearn-Banks, 1996), the model suggests that those trigger themes in initial stages will continue to appear in mass media coverage and also suggests how to manage those themes which are vital to organizations; (3) phase three – which termed acute (Fink, 1986) and containment (Barton, 1993; Mitroff, 1996; Fearn-Banks, 1996), the model predicts that "the trigger theme associated with the specific prodrome will be the focus of mass media content, and mass media coverage will evolve to

extensive discussions about the actual crisis” (Howell & Miller, 2006, p. 5); (4) phase four – which termed chronic (Fink, 1986), learning (Barton, 1993; Gonzalez-Herrero & Pratt, 1996), damage containment (Mitroff, 1996) and recovery (Fearn-Banks, 1996), the model indicates that “mass media coverage during this stage will be driven by criminal and civil charges, government inquiries, litigation, and responses from affected stakeholders” (Howell & Miller, 2006, p.6); (5) phase five – which is termed resolution (Fink, 1986), recovery (Barton, 1993; Mitroff, 1996) and learning (Fearn-Banks, 1996): in this stage, “journalists seek to resolve the trigger theme and summarize how the crisis occurred, who and/or what was to blame or responsible for the crisis, and what can be drawn from the events as lessons for the future” (Howell & Miller, p. 6).

Howell and Miller’s (2006) study provided a framework for organizations and public relations practitioners to develop more efficient crisis communication strategies to communicate with different stakeholders in each of these stages. However, whether this model can be applied to the international environment has not yet been tested. For managing cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS), there is a need to consider factors such as the cultural syndrome, media structure, and its function in each country that are involved in the conflict, according to Freitag (2002). Valentini and Romenti (2011) also argued that organizations should consider “the specific features of the national media system and news practice before choosing crisis response strategies” (p. 364). Furthermore, they suggested more research is needed on media systems, news practices, and the choice of crisis news frames are necessary to gain insight into managing and communicating crises in different international contexts (Valentini & Romenti, 2011).

World Media System

Based on the ‘agenda-setting’ role of news media, newswire coverage provides frames to understand an event or issue by defining problems, diagnosing causes, making moral judgments, and suggesting remedies (Valentini & Romenti, 2011). Framed news coverage provides

audiences with a visible public expression of approval or disapproval of corporations and their behaviors (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Valentini & Romenti, 2011).

There are many internal factors in journalism that can affect a news frame; such as the communicator, the text, the receiver, and its culture. However, external factors, such as media system in countries where the media operates, also determine media framing (Entman, 1993; Valentini & Romenti, 2011). Several scholars have provided theoretical models defining and classifying dynamic world media systems (e.g., Hachten & Scotton, 2007; Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Siebert, Peterson, & Schramm, 1963).

According to Hachten and Scotton (2007), political and cultural conflicts influence the media environment within each country. They stated that “the differing perceptions about the nature and role of journalism and mass communication are rooted in divergent political systems and historical and cultural traditions” (p. 16).

Revised “Four Theories of the Press”: The “four theories of the press” were proposed early in 1956 by Siebert, Peterson, and Schramm. They believed media should ideally perform under certain political systems and social values. These values were then entitled as the authoritarian theory, the libertarian theory, the social responsibility theory, and the soviet communist theory. Although some scholars argue that the “four theories of press” no longer fit well within modernity, it still accounts for an important point in the classification of world media systems; which had a tremendous influence on proceeding studies on the freedom of the press (Berry et al., 1995). Therefore, this study draws some of its insight from the “Four theories of the press” as the foundation of other modified models. Hachten and Scotton (2007) expanded the “Four theories of the press” and proposed that dynamic world media systems are reflected in five

contemporary political concepts of the press: (a) authoritarian, (b) western, (c) communist, (d) revolutionary, and (e) developmental.

The ‘authoritarian theory’, which is the oldest concept among the four, indicates the press should always support and advance the policies of the government in power. According to Hatchen and Scotton (2007), the media is controlled by the sovereign state and “cannot be used to challenge, criticize, or in any way undermine the sovereign” within this concept (p. 18). The authoritarian press can be found in some countries, such as Burma, Malaysia, Kenya, and Zimbabwe (Hatchen & Scotton, 2007).

Along with the libertarian concept, the ‘social responsibility theory’ is classified as a western concept by Hatchen and Scotton (2007). The ‘libertarian theory’ is the positive version of authoritarianism, according to Berry et al. (1995). The purpose of the press under the libertarian concept is to inform and entertain the audience, as well as discover the truth and supervise the government. This concept was rooted in the philosophical view that man is rational and has the ability to discern the truth.

The ‘social responsibility theory’ holds a view that “the media have clear obligation of public service that transcend moneymaking” (Hatchen & Scotton, 2007, p. 22). The theory states that the purpose of the media is not only to inform and entertain audiences, but also to ensure that all voices and views in the society are heard. Furthermore, within the role of media’s social responsibility, the government has limited influence in media operations and regulations, which were demonstrated in the early practices of the United States.

The soviet concept presents the role of media under the Soviet socialist system as a tool for serving the interests of the communist party. According to Schramm (1956), the Soviet press system is planned and completely party-controlled with no permission of competing private

media. He further illustrated that news practices under this system are defined as providing “positive” information that fulfills the goals of the communist party. Hatchen and Scotton (2007) also said that the press within this concept “was used to control the people as well as to promote government policies and prepare the public for future policy changes” (p. 25). With the fall of the Soviet Union, the Soviet communist concept has been questioned by scholars and received several critiques (e.g. Berry et al., 1995; Hatchen & Scotton, 2007) regarding whether it can really reflect the press in present communist countries. It is clear that “a communist press system does not thrive in a capitalist world” while the world is changed into an Industrialist dominated environment (Berry et al., p. 131). For press in Russia, (the former Soviet Union), it now can be described more as authoritarian (Hatchen & Scotton, 2007). For the media systems currently under control of the communist party, such as China, they no longer meet all the characteristics of the original Soviet communist theory, but are still considered as a different form of communist concept. As Freedom House (2011) described, the China Communist Party (CCP) keeps direct control over news media coverage through its Central Propaganda Department (CPD) and maintains “a tight grip on traditional and online media coverage of a range of politically sensitive topics” (¶. 1).

The revolutionary theory shares a common trait with Western concept that suggests media systems operate outside of government control. Hatchen and Scotton (2007) stated that “the revolutionary press is a press of people who believe strongly that the government they live under does not serve their interests and should be overthrown” (p. 28). They further indicated that communication tools, such as radio stations, the photocopying machine, the audiocassette and personalized media present challenges to centralized autocracies trying to control news and information.

As the revolutionary concept is viewed for short-term implementation, developmental concepts emerged as a variation of the media systems' authoritarian theory (Hatchen & Scotton, 2007). It holds the values that the press must be utilized by the government to assist the development of the society, the media should support government instead of challenging it, and information or news is the property of the state that must be used to further the national goal. This model also suggests that nations have sovereign right to control both foreign journalists and the flow of news across the borders (Hatchen & Scotton, 2007).

Hallin and Mancini (2004) added new insights on the interaction between the media and the political structure. They further identified three models of media systems among Western cultures. The "polarized pluralist model" of southern European countries distinguishes that the press is 'libertarian,' but is intimately involved in political conflicts and maintaining the strong tradition that the media is a medium of ideological expression and political mobilization. The "democratic corporatist model" of nations in Northern/Central Europe characterizes the strong tendency for media to express partisans because of the high degree of political parallelism, the early development of press freedom with the tradition of limits on state power, and the high degree of journalistic professionalism as well as a notion of commitment to public interest. The "liberal model" found in Britain, Canada, Ireland, and the United States is what commercial newspapers developed relatively early with little state involvement. Within this model, the strong tradition of political neutrality affords the informational style of journalism to dominate.

The revised "Four theories of the press" model by Hatchen and Scotton (2007) provided a relatively practical and flexible way to explain the difference between media systems nowadays. They stated that "all press systems exist somewhere along a continuum, from complete control (absolute authoritarianism) at one end, to no control (pure libertarianism) at the other" (p. 17).

Although scholars (e.g., Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Hatchen, & Scotton, 2007) argued that globalization trends result in an uprising degree of homogenization among media systems, especially in commercial structures and the culture of journalism; the trend also increases opportunities for conflicts between different concepts because of the increasing transnational communication.

This literature review seeks to provide theoretical background to this research of cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) that aims to suggest a working model for efficiently managing the media during a crisis by testing the previous relationship model between news media and the crisis life-cycle (Howell & Miller, 2006). Since globalization as a trend influences corporations' expanding business in the international arena, there is a raising imperative for transnational corporations to have ability to deal with corporate crises across national borders.

Crises are unpredictable; therefore proactive and efficient managing strategies are needed to reduce the damage of crises on corporations. Studies and propositions of cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) provide a theoretical framework for managing crises in the international environment which is marked as more dynamic and complex. Based on the agenda-setting and framing effects of news media, Howell and Miller's (2006) crisis life-cycle model articulated a new perspective of integrating media coverage with crisis stages. The crisis life-cycle model explains crisis evolution with the nature of news coverage as a strategy of crisis response. The study derives insights from research in the macro-context such as media systems, and the level of press freedom into cross-national crisis management. Those perspectives not only reflect political systems in each country, but also present the diversity between nations and their news practices; which therefore can better inform crisis communication.

Case Background

For better illustrate the relation between media coverage and crisis life cycle of a cross-national crisis, this research is going to use 2010 Foxconn[®] employee suicide to map the news media content during each stage of the crisis and to test the model provided by Howell and Miller (2006) in international setting. The Foxconn[®] crisis is well suitable for this research since it is a cross-national conflict that shifted to three countries which have different media and political environments that author is especially interested in.

Foxconn[®] Employee Mistreatment Controversy

In this sub-section, the brief introduction of Foxconn[®] Technology Group will be summarized for reader to understand the background of the corporation. The controversy of employee mistreatment that happened four years before the crisis hit in 2010 will also be described to put the study in context.

Foxconn[®] Technology Group is a subsidiary of the Taiwan-based multinational corporation, Hon Hai Precision Industry Company, which is headquartered in Tucheng, Taiwan. The company focuses primarily on products from mobile handsets to computers, including products as iPhone[®] and iPad[®] (Hoovers, 2011). According to Fortune magazine (2010) and Hoovers (2011) business report, the company is ranked 112 out of 500 corporations and owns large amount of contracts with many high-profile consumer makers, including Apple[®], Dell[®], HP[®], Motorola[®], Nokia[®], and Sony[®]. As the world leading electronics manufacturer, Foxconn[®] operates its factories worldwide with primary installations in Taiwan and China, as well as builds production facilities in the United States and Europe.

Similar to many multinational manufacturers that operate in China, Foxconn[®] views low labor and land cost as factors that increase its competitive edge (Dean, 2007). With a strong workforce of 900,000 workers in China, the company aims to maximize its productivity that

makes employees to work overtimes (SACOM, 2010). According to Dean and Tsai (2010) in The Wall Street Journal, critics say the company “allows employees to work more than the legal number of overtime hours, and that its military-style rigor and repetitive working conditions create excessive stress on workers” (¶ 17). Agence France Press (2011) also said that Foxconn® is accused of treating employees as machines.

The controversy of employee mistreatment actually started early in 2006 when the *Daily Mail* in the United Kingdom alleged that Foxconn® mistreated its employees with long work hour (“The stark reality,” 2006). Apple® responded to the *Daily Mail*'s charge by stating that "Apple is committed to ensuring that working conditions in our supply chain are safe, workers are treated with respect and dignity, and manufacturing processes are environmentally responsible" (Evans, 2006).

Evolution of the Foxconn® Crisis

Early in January 2010, Foxconn® faced the disastrous event regarding employee mistreatment in its host country, China (Table 2-1). According to SACOM (2010), 17 Foxconn® employees tried to commit suicide during January to August, 2010 resulted in 13 deaths and four injuries. The suicides are heavily covered by news media in China and quickly spread overseas through international media. Large amount of related news are reported in its home country, Taiwan because of the issue proximity, and the United States since Apple® and Dell® also were involved as Foxconn®'s major client. As the crisis shifted across the national border, the labor mistreatment issue has transformed into an ethical concern for stakeholders. In the report of Hong Kong based labor activists, Student and Scholars Against Corporate Misbehavior (SACOM) described that:

Other than Foxconn, electronic brands like Apple, Nokia, HP, Dell, Sony, Sony Ericsson, and Motorola, which have placed orders with Foxconn, also bear indispensable

responsibility in the tragedies. All these brands are making huge profit at the cost of the workers. Likewise, we are consuming the blood and tears of the workers, a fact hidden from us by fancy advertisements. (2010, p. 4)

There are even people who compared iPhone® /iPad® with a “blood diamond” (Murray, 2010).

The eleventh suicide in May and media pressure forced the president of Foxconn®, Terry Guo, to face the media and to apologize while he gave a tour to a number of Taiwanese reporters in Foxconn® Shengzhen base, according to the Bloomberg Businessweek (Foreman, 2010).

Meanwhile, the clients of Foxconn®, including Apple®, Dell®, and HP® expressed the concern about the suicides and announced that they are in touch with Foxconn® to investigate the work conditions. As quoted in the report of *The Wall Street Journal*, Apple® said that “we are saddened and upset by the recent suicides at Foxconn®” but they believed that Foxconn® has taken this case seriously (Dean& Tsai, 2010). Unfortunately, the tragedy of Foxconn® didn’t stop after the apology made by its president, Terry Guo. Less than a day after Guo’s visit, a 23 year-old male Foxconn® worker jumped off the dorm to his death and another worker slit his own wrist trying to commit suicide (Foreman, 2010).

Instead of developing efficient strategies to enhance internal employee relations and work conditions, Foxconn® only put suicide-prevention netting around the employee dorm, requested workers to sign the anti-suicide pledge, and to attend an anti-suicide rally. According to Ricadela (2011) in Bloomberg, a group led by Apple®’s Chief Operating Officer Tim Cook visited Foxconn® and met with Foxconn® President Terry Gou in China and provided measures Foxconn® adopted to prevent more death. Apple® also supported its manufacturer by claiming that “Foxconn is not a sweatshop” and repeatedly defended working condition at the company (“Apple boss defends,” 2010, ¶ 2).

After a series of suicides in May, the Chinese government requested censorship on news related to Foxconn[®] since the company, government officials, and some citizens believed that it was the intensive news coverage that led to the continuous employee suicide (Tam, 2010; Chang, 2010; NowNews, 2010). VOA News report published on its Chinese website on May 27, 2010, mentioned that the Chinese government had put restrictions on local news coverage of Foxconn[®] and had asked the media “to only use news stories provided by Xinhua News Agency” (VOA News, 2010; cited in Qi, 2010).

Although the quick actions and strategies the Foxconn[®] adopted were commended by Apple[®], the Foxconn[®] employees’ suicides crisis in China in 2010 has resulted in enormous damage to the company’s reputation (Watts, 2010). According to Oliver (2010) and Peng (2010), both share markets of Foxconn[®] and Hon Hai[®], the parent corporation of Foxconn[®], experienced a recession during the crisis. Protests of anti-labor abuse and anti-Apple[®] products in China and Taiwan were also covered as consequence of a string of suicides. Apple[®] was also criticized and considered to have social responsibility supervising its suppliers. The crisis received less attention among news media with the release of the report jointly produced by 20 universities in Hong Kong, Taiwan, and mainland China. The report called Foxconn[®] factories “labor camps” (SACOM, 2010). In another perspective, Apple[®] (2011) also explained the Foxconn[®] suicide incidents in its Annual supplier report that the measures Foxconn[®] applied immediately after suicides are effectively saving life.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This study aims to investigate the relationship between cross-national crisis life cycle and international newswire coverage based on the study of Howell and Miller (2006). The author is specifically interested in exploring issues, frames and news sources selected to cover Foxconn[®] crisis. The inspirations of relevant research on cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) and media

effects enable this study for constructing hypotheses and research questions. In order to plan efficient crisis communication strategies, Howell and Miller (2006) took advantage of agenda-setting effect of news media and developed a model to predict news coverage in each stage during a crisis. This study borrows their model of news coverage during each crisis stage for managing corporate crisis in an international environment. Based on their study, following are the research questions and hypotheses that this thesis purposes to answer and to support or reject.

RQ1a: How would the news coverage of Foxconn[®] crisis case be explained by Howell and Miller's (2006) model of crisis life cycle and media coverage over time? Dose the model need revision?

Howell and Miller (2006) stated that the number of trigger theme can be distinguished across crisis life cycle. They analyzed the news coverage of the Ansett[®] Airline crisis and identified 10 trigger themes appearing in news content during the crisis. Their research confirmed that the amount of trigger themes in each stage is consistent with the model.

Expanding Howell and Miller's (2006) research, this study hypothesizes that:

H1a: The news coverage of Foxconn[®] crisis in China will gain different levels of attention during five crisis stages in terms of the length and number of articles.

H1b: The news coverage of Foxconn[®] crisis in Taiwan will gain different levels of attentions during five crisis stages in terms of the length and number of articles.

H1c: The news coverage of Foxconn[®] crisis in the United States will gain different levels of attentions during five crisis stages in terms of the length and number of articles.

RQ1b: Are there any differences between the levels of received attention in China, Taiwan and the United States in terms or the length and number of news articles?

H2a: The number of trigger themes/issues that covered in the news of Foxconn[®] crisis in China will differ during five crisis stages.

H2b: The number of trigger themes/issues that covered in the news of Foxconn[®] crisis in Taiwan will differ during five crisis stages.

H2c: The number of trigger themes/issues that covered in the news of Foxconn[®] crisis in the United States will differ during five crisis stages.

RQ 2a: Which themes/issues about Foxconn[®] crisis were covered by the press in China, the United States and Taiwan?

RQ 2b: Are there any differences between the number of trigger themes/issues in China, Taiwan and the United States?

H3: The themes/issues that covered in the news of Foxconn[®] crisis will differ between China, the United States and Taiwan.

The summary of previous research on cross-national crises and news media suggested an interesting path for researchers to examine news contents, tones, and frames of a cross-national crisis in different countries (Freitag, 2001; Molleda, 2010; Valentini & Romenti, 2011; Wang, 2005). Molleda's (2010) and Wang's (2005) studies revealed the difference of news contents regarding cross-national crisis between China and the United States while Valentini and Romenti (2011) considered factors include news practices or media system when covering crisis in Italy. Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) pointed out the five mostly used news frames: (1) attribution of responsibility, (2) conflict, (3) economic consequences, (4) human interest, and (5) morality. An and Grower (2009) borrowed these frames and used them in analyzing 2006 crisis events covered by newspapers in the United States. Attribution of responsibility frames focus on the direct or indirect causal relations between crisis and role of the organizations or individuals. Conflict frames depict the dissent among individuals, groups, or organizations in crisis. Economic frames stress the financial impact of the crisis while frames of human interest focus on the human and emotional aspects. Morality frames examine the behaviors and moral/ethical issues of individuals or organizations that considered are responsible for the crisis. Several studies (An & Gower, 2009; Cho & Gower, 2006; Qi, 2011; Valentini & Romenti, 2011) also applied these five frames as a tool measuring the difference of news coverage between countries. Qi (2011) compared the editorial freedom of major newspapers in China in reporting the 2010

Foxconn[®] crisis by examining the frames and news sources those articles selected in each newspaper. She also suggested that newspapers with more editorial liberty would use greater variety of sources than official news media, which cited primarily official sources (Qi, 2011). As Molleda (2011) stated that international news agencies have different editorial policies regarding the selection of news sources. In his study which analyzing the news coverage of 2007 Mattel's product recalls, Molleda (2011) found Xinhua cited and quoted Chinese sources more often than other news agencies and this explains the use of Chinese sources as a "function of the fact that it is a government-run news agency"(p. 68). In this sense, the news sources and the issues news agencies selected will be analyzed as elements reflect editorial liberty in different media environments.

According to Freedom House (2011), press in China, Taiwan, and the United States enjoy different level of editorial freedom (China ranked as 184, Taiwan ranked as 48, and the United States ranked as 17 out of 194). Therefore, this study assumes and asks:

RQ3: Do the news coverage of China, Taiwan and the United States use different crisis news frames when discussing Foxconn[®] crisis? And if so, which one did they use respectively?

RQ4: Do the news coverage of China, Taiwan, and the United States use different news sources when covering Foxconn[®] crisis? And if so, which one did they use respectively?

H4: The news coverage of Foxconn[®] crisis enjoyed different level of editorial freedom in China, Taiwan, and the United States in terms of news sources and issues covered.

After providing a list of research questions and hypotheses this research is seeking for answers, the methodology of the quantitative content analysis of international newswire coverage will be explained in the next chapter. The methodology section will illustrate the sampling procedure, the statistical measurements of data analysis and an appendix of research instruments to use to answer the stated research questions and hypothesis.

Table 2-1. Timeline: the employee suicide crisis at Foxconn® in 2010

Date	Event
January 23, 2010	Ma Xiangqian, age 19, was found dead in front of his dormitory. The police changed their determination of his death from “sudden death” to “falling from a high building” and finally to suicide
March 11, 2010	Li Hongliang, age 28, jumped from the 5 th floor of the dormitory and died.
March 17, 2010	Tian Yu, an 18 year-old female Foxconn® employee, jumped from the 4 th floor of her dormitory at the Foxconn® Longhus base in Shenzhen and was heavily injured.
March 29, 2010	Liu Zhijun, age 23, jumped from the 14 th floor dormitory and died instantly.
April 6, 2010	Rao Shuqin, an age 18 female worker of Foxconn®, “fell” from the 7 th floor of her dorm. She survived but was also heavily wounded.
April 7, 2010	Ning, an 18 year-old female worker jumped from her dormitory and died.
May 6, 2010	Xin Lu, age 24, jumped off the balcony of his dormitory in Shenzhen and died.
May 11, 2010	Chenming Zhu, a female Foxconn® assembly line worker, aged 24, was dead because she jumped off the 9 th floor of the apartment building that is near Foxconn® plant.
May 14, 2010	Chao Lian, a 21 year-old male, jumped from the 7 th floor and died. The police found four knife wounds in the body and a bloody dagger.
May 21, 2010	Gang Nan, a male employee of Foxconn®, age 21, jumped off the dorm building to his death.
May 25, 2010	Hai Li, a 19 year-old male Foxconn® worker, committed suicide by jumping off the 5 th floor of his dorm in Shenzhen base.
May 25, 2010	Foxconn® requested its employees to sign the “anti-suicide pledge”
May 26, 2010	Terry Guo, Foxconn®’s Taiwanese president visited Foxconn® and apologized for the series of suicides.
May 26, 2010	Customers, including Apple®, Dell®, HP® and Nokia®, express the concern about Foxconn® employee suicide events.
May 26, 2010	He, a 23 year-old Foxconn® worker jumped to his death from a building in the plant. Another worker slit his wrist attempting suicide.
May 28, 2010	Chinese government requested censorship on Foxconn® suicide news stories.
June 8, 2010	Foxconn® confirmed to raise the wage of its workers up to 30 percent.
June 29, 2010	Foxconn® put anti-suicide net around the employee dorms.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This thesis investigates printed newswire coverage of Foxconn[®] employee suicide crisis in 2010, through a quantitative content analysis. According to Babbie (2010), “content analysis is well suited to the study of communications and to answering the classic question of communications research: ‘Who says what, to whom, why, how and with what effect?’” (p. 333).

To answer the research questions and to test the hypotheses, this study collects electronic news articles of major news agencies from three of the most involved countries during the crisis: China, Taiwan, and the United States. Although there are other types of news coverage, such as video and radio transcripts, the main focus of this research is on printed newswire coverage. Those printed news stories from news agencies were chosen for analysis instead of other types of media outlets because of the global reach of newswire services and their important role in the daily activities of multinational media enterprises (McPhail, 2010; Molleda, 2011). News agencies are the major source of international news for regional, national, and local news media worldwide.

Define Foxconn[®] Crisis Stages

In order to examine the difference of newswire coverage in each selected country with crisis life span, a time-series identification of crisis stages was employed according to the definitions of each stage. According to scholars (e.g., Coombs, Fink, and Mitroff) and studies (Combs, 2011; Mitroff, 1996; Howell & Miller, 2006) relevant to crisis life cycle, the Foxconn[®] crisis can be divided into five phases regarding the timeline and the crisis characteristics:

- Phase one:** From January 23, 2010, when first death of Foxconn[®] employee reported, to the end of February.
- Phase two:** From March 2010, the second suicide in Foxconn[®] factory marked as the beginning of prevention and probing stage, to the end of April.

Phase three: The crisis broke out at early May with the death of a Foxconn[®] worker who jumped off the balcony of his dorm. This period ends at the end of May. Altogether six people committed suicides.

Phase four: This stage is longer than others lasting from June to the end of September. In this period, “the organization work to return to normal business operation as soon as possible” (Coombs, p. 8).

Phase five: The establishment of labor union in Foxconn[®] implied that the organization learned its weakness from the crisis. In this period, organization reviewed its crisis management and added to the organization’s memory. This stage is from October to December, 2010.

Sampling

Sample Selection

To answer the three research questions and test the four hypotheses, content analysis is conducted on the news coverage of the Foxconn[®] crisis yielded by China, Taiwan, and the United States. For those news agencies, providing news contents and newswire services to other news organizations are their main business purpose. With foreign correspondents, news agencies generate and exchange news information regarding the events occurred abroad. The national and international news reached audiences through one or more of major international news agencies whether in print or electronic form; therefore, to set the news agenda for other media outlets nationally and internationally (Golan, 2006; Sterling, 2003).

Three of the influential news agencies with different national roots and editorial positions in the three involved countries were selected for analysis. Chinese Xinhua, Taiwanese Central News Agency (CNA), and U.S. Associated Press (AP) were chosen as different news sources reflected three media systems and level of press freedom. According to the studies of world media system (e.g., Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Hachten & Scotton; Yin, 2008), the media in the United States is classified as Western concept with some characteristics from both revolutionary and developmental systems. Chinese media system is identified somewhere between communist

and developmental concepts while press in Taiwan enjoys the relatively freer environment among Asian countries and is recognized to be similar to the Western concept. The level of press freedom performed differently between these three countries: the press in United States is the freest among the three and the media in Taiwan are also free and ranked as 47 out of 196; while Chinese press marked as not free (Freedom House, 2011).

“The idea of choosing international news agencies with different editorial orientations was to capture the nuance of the flow of global news, which goes hand-in-hand with the main claims of the CNCS theory,” Molleda explained (2011, p. 62). The materials for analysis include Chinese language news from CNA, and English language news from AP and Xinhua. The author was going to use articles in their native language for better understanding of the editorial positions in each country selected and considering the agenda-setting effect on national public. The gathering of Xinhua’s English news is an exception, since the author is unable to have access to Xinhua’s database and its English news has equal quality of Chinese news. The author therefore turned to LexisNexis to search for English version of news from Xinhua general news service.

Sample Profile

The news articles were generated from three major international and national news agencies selected. The author has considered the suggestions in Qi’s (2011) study, excluding news articles containing the key word “Foxconn[®]” but not focusing on the crisis, as well as the news digests of the week and Foxconn[®]’s business plan. There are total 162 news articles usable for analysis through three separate searches (Xinhua, N = 40; CNA, N = 90; AP, N = 32).

China: Xinhua News Agency. Xinhua news agency is China’s leading integrated news company. It is listed as one of the major global news agencies following Reuters, Associated Press, Agence France Press, Bloomberg, and Dow Jones. For the reason that Xinhua is tightly

controlled by the Chinese government, the news agency is considered as a mouthpiece of the Chinese government. As McPhail (2010) mentioned, Xinhua serves as a gatekeeper of both foreign news entering China and news source for reporting events in the People's Republic of China. The author chose Xinhua News Agency as one of the sample sources not only for its international prominence, but also for its position to represents the current news practice in China. According to Qi (2011), Chinese government has put censorship on Foxconn® crisis in May and requested Chinese news media to use Xinhua's report as the only news source when covering the crisis. There are total of 67 news stories from Xinhua, already excluded articles contain the key word "Foxconn®" but not focusing on the crisis, such as Foxconn®'s business plan as well as the news digests of the week.

Taiwan: Central News Agency (CNA). CNA is Taiwan's major semi-official news agency. It received part of its funding from government and serves as a role of nonprofit organization. Although CNA is not important as other international news agencies, for example, Associated Press, Reuters, and Xinhua, it still plays a significant role as foreign correspondent in Taiwan and reporting international news to news organizations in Taiwan. The author gathered news coverage of Foxconn® crisis through CAN's database and the search resulted in 91 Chinese articles that already excluded articles not focusing on the crisis, as well as the news digests of the week and Foxconn®'s business plan.

The United States: Associated Press (AP). AP is viewed as the second largest global news agency, according to McPhail (2010). It gained prominence from its establishment in the mid-1800s for the purpose of news cooperation. Serves as a nonprofit organization, AP represents a news center of news in the United States and a premier wire-service corporation in North America. Its global video news, APTN, focuses on reporting events in different time zone

and provides video footage of important news by satellite to news organizations worldwide. To collect news articles from AP, the author did a search on LexisNexis by entering key word “Foxconn[®]” and refined time range from January to December, 2010. There are a total of 44 news articles appeared and 33 of them are selected as sample of AP because they pertained to the studied crisis. As aforementioned, articles yielded from this search that have no relations with the crisis, belong to news digest and described Foxconn[®] business plan, have already excluded.

Coding Sheet Construction

The coding sheet is designed to facilitate the content analysis of news covering the Foxconn[®] crisis in 2010 (Appendix A). Variables or questions in the coding sheet are developed based on the coding framework of Howell and Miller (2006), five common news frames indicated by Semetko and Valkenburg (2000) and coding elements from Qi (2011) and Wang (2005). The coding sheet consists of four major categories, including: basic information, main themes/issues focus, and news frames. The basic information category included elements such as the name of the news agency and the identification of phase number of the Foxconn[®] crisis which defined by the author at the beginning of this chapter. In this category, the coders will be asked to count words of the news articles both in Chinese and English. According to online discussions on translation related forum, the ratio of Chinese characters and English words is approximately 1.5:1. The author translated ten Chinese news into English by Google Translate and the ratios are about the same as mentioned. In order to compare the number of the words of news in Chinese and English, Chinese news stories will be translated into English by Google Translate only for coding the story length.

Twenty articles were selected by the researcher throughout the Foxconn[®] crisis life cycle. The trigger themes that were identified by the researcher according to the list of issues that transnational corporations (TNCs) would face during a corporate crisis were proposed by

Molleda (2011). He pointed out that there will be one or a combination of those organizational and contextual issues: (1) employee treatment, (2) workplace safety, (3) corporate decisions, policies, and performance, (4) living and natural ecosystems, (5) community well-being, (6) cultural clash, (7) strategic communications, (8) home and host government and legal systems, and (9) international relations. The 10 trigger themes/issues are developed to examine the difference a press focus in China, Taiwan and the United States: Foxconn[®]'s labor mistreatment accusation, Foxconn[®]'s financial performance (decline of Foxconn[®]'s share price), media environment in China, Apple[®]'s consumer-market Impact, Apple[®]'s responsibility for supervising its suppliers, Reactions of Foxconn[®]'s customers (e.g., Apple[®], Dell[®], and HP[®]), activist group, Foxconn[®]'s reactions toward crisis, Chinese government reactions toward crisis, Taiwanese government reactions toward crisis and the result of investigations. In the third category, news frames, variables were adopted from Qi (2011) and Hong (2007). In order to compare the five frames, Qi (2011) developed the sub-frames, presented as questions on coding sheet, made each major frame mutually exclusive. If the news article has one or more than one sub-frames, the certain frame is presented. The news sources coding elements are identified based on the researches of Qi (2011), Molleda (2005) and Wang(2005).

Pretest and Inter-coder Reliability

The pretest was conducted to test the inter-coder reliability for coding instrument. Ten percent of the news stories ($N = 16$) were randomly selected from the news sample and coded by author and another graduate student separately. The consistency and inconsistency of the coding decision were assessed between the two coders. The inter-coder reliability coefficient was calculated by using Holsti's (1969) formula to develop and confirm the internal validity of the final coding sheet. A high level of the inter-coder reliability coefficient (0.875) was confirmed among the coders regarding coding decision.

Data Analysis

SPSS 17.0 was used to analyze the data collected through the content analysis of news articles selected as samples. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were run to examine the sample articles' distribution with different crisis stages and variable characteristics. Cross-tabulations were tested to find the relationship between nominal variables. Multivariate Analyses of Variance (ANOVA) tests were conducted to analyze the potential associations between studied variables. (Table. 3-1)

Table 3-1. The explanation of statistical tests for each hypothesis and research question

Hypothesis or Research Question	Descriptive and/or Statistical Tests
RQ1a How would the news coverage of Foxconn® crisis case be explained by Howell and Miller's (2006) model of crisis life cycle and media coverage over time? Dose the model need revision?	Frequencies/Timeline
H1a The news coverage of Foxconn® crisis in China will gain different levels of attention during five crisis stages in terms of the length and number of articles.	Frequencies/One-Way ANOVA
H1b The news coverage of Foxconn® crisis in Taiwan will gain different levels of attention during five crisis stages in terms of the length and number of articles.	Frequencies/ One-Way ANOVA
H1c The news coverage of Foxconn® crisis in the United States will gain different levels of attention during five crisis stages in terms of the length and number of articles.	Frequencies/ One-Way ANOVA
RQ1b Are there any differences between the levels of received attention in China, Taiwan and the United States in terms or the length and number of news articles?	One-Way ANOVA
H2a The number of trigger themes/issues that covered in the news of Foxconn® crisis in China will differ during five crisis stages.	Frequencies/ One-Way ANOVA
H2b The number of trigger themes/issues that covered in the news of Foxconn® crisis in Taiwan will differ during five crisis stages.	Frequencies/ One-Way ANOVA
H2c The number of trigger themes/issues that covered in the news of Foxconn® crisis in the United States will differ during five crisis stages.	Frequencies/ One-Way ANOVA
RQ2a Which themes/issues about Foxconn® crisis were covered by the press in China, the United States and Taiwan?	Frequencies/ Cross tabulation and Chi-Square/Correlation
RQ2b Are there any differences between the number of trigger themes/issues in China, Taiwan and the United States?	One-Way ANOVA
H3 The themes/issues that covered in the news of Foxconn® crisis will differ between China, the United States and Taiwan.	Frequencies/Cross tabulation and Chi-Square
RQ3 Do the news coverage of China, Taiwan and the United States use different crisis news frames when discussing Foxconn® crisis? And if so, which one did they use respectively?	Frequencies/Cross tabulation and Chi-Square

Table 3-1. Continued

Hypothesis or Research Question		Descriptive and/or Statistical Tests
RQ4	Does the news coverage of China, Taiwan, and the United States use different news sources when covering the Foxconn [®] crisis? And if so, which one did they use respectively?	Frequencies/Cross tabulation and Chi-Square
H4	The news coverage of Foxconn [®] crisis enjoyed different level of editorial freedom in China, Taiwan, and the United States in terms of news sources and issues covered.	Frequency/ One-Way ANOVA

CHAPTER 4 FINDINGS

Research Question 1a

According to the model provided by Howell and Miller (2006), the number of the trigger themes covered, the number of articles, and the length of news stories should differ during five stages. The model predicts that the media coverage will peak in the second stage and will decrease throughout the rest of the crisis life cycle. They also noted that news media content has various patterns in different crisis stages, such as the number and the type of trigger themes. After examining the results of the Foxconn[®]'s data, this study found that Howell and Miller's (2006) model is able to partially explain the media coverage of the Foxconn[®]'s crisis. However, as a cross-national conflict, the Foxconn[®] crisis provides a different perspective than that of the Ansett[®] Airline crisis, which was considered to have had an impact only within Australia. This study focuses on the impact of Foxconn[®]'s crisis in China, Taiwan and the United States.

Phase One: Signal Detection (Mitroff, 1996)

The result of the Foxconn[®] data shows that the number of articles ($N = 3$) among three news agencies were very few in comparison to the other stages (Figure 5-1). Consistent with the model, news media paid little attention to the Foxconn[®] employee suicides with reporting a small number of news stories. The trigger themes appeared as "Foxconn[®] labor mistreatment," "employee suicide issue," "reactions of Foxconn[®]," "Chinese government reactions," and "investigation or results of labor mistreatment;" which indicates that the news media simply reported the employee suicides as traditional or ordinary news stories. However, there are few trigger themes ($N = 5$) covered in this stage, nor was these statistical significance through ANOVA found between the number of trigger themes and stages. The themes covered by the

news media during this period show that they have not yet arrived but have the potential to becoming a crisis if badly managed.

Phase Two: Preparation and Prevention

In the stage two, the news stories of the Foxconn[®]'s crisis continued covering different trigger themes that existed previously and new trigger issues appeared, such as “labor right concern in China” ($N = 6$). Instead of beginning to focus on one trigger theme, as the model states, the news coverage of the Foxconn[®] crisis explored new suicide related themes; for example, “Apple[®]'s supplier issue,” which tries to identify a possible explanation for the suicides as well as assigning responsibility (Table 5-1).

Even though the number of articles did increase in the second stage because more suicides occurred in April, the coverage of the Foxconn[®]'s crisis showed this from a different angle with the model; as it was considered to be less in comparison to the third and fourth stages. This indicates that the news media paid more attention to Foxconn[®]'s crisis in these two stages than in the second, as the model predicts. In the case of the Foxconn[®]'s crisis, the news media still treated its suicides as ordinary social events until the number of suicides soared in the next stage.

Phase Three: Acute and Containment

This stage is considered a period that trigger issues break out and evolve into an actual crisis. Consistent with the model, the fiscal, physical, or emotional damage to the Foxconnv and its stakeholders was reported in the mass media during this very short and most intense stage. As the model predicts, specific trigger themes of the Foxconn[®]'s crisis were the focus of the news media, and their coverage included extensive discussions of the crisis. In addition to the Foxconn[®] suicides theme (which appeared in 98% of the stories in this stage), the news media focused and lead discussions to the “Foxconn[®] labor mistreatment issue” as an explanation for the series of suicides. Those trigger themes may serve as an important medium for audiences to

understand the crisis. The news stories in this stage also featured trigger themes like “reactions of Foxconn[®]” and “Chinese government;” which discusses responses and strategies taken by Foxconn[®] and the Chinese government to stop the continued suicide attempts among Foxconn[®] workers.

Although the model of Howell and Miller (2006) predicts that the largest amount of article related to will appear in the second stage, the peak of article amount of the Foxconn[®] crisis is in the third stage (Figure 4-1). The high level of coverage reflects the intensity of this stage in the crisis life cycle. There were a total of six people who committed suicide during this stage, which is also the highest number throughout the whole crisis life cycle.

Phase Four: Learning, Damage Containment, and Recovery

In this stage, the attention of news media coverage and the number of news stories on the crisis event is decreasing. While the number of news stories is decreasing, the number of trigger themes covered increased (Figure 4-). This phenomenon is consistent with Howell and Miller’s (2006) model that the crisis will be revisited by news media while investigating the casual relations of the crisis and trigger themes as well as raising stakeholders’ awareness of previous trigger themes. In the Foxconn[®]’s crisis, the 13 trigger themes in the previous stage remain in existence but the main issue reported by the news media was the “labor right concern in China” (Table 4-1). The news media also included a factory strike on Honda Vehicles in China (which is a Japanese car maker) into news stories of the Foxconn[®] suicide crisis in order to bring up the labor right issue in China. The feature of the “activist group” in the news stories increased as well. Foxconn[®] reactions toward crisis were also covered in news reports on themes such as salary increases, additional entertainment facilities in Foxconn[®] plants, and changing management styles. However, the data shows that the issue of the “Foxconn[®] labor mistreatment” was still controversially discussed in this period.

Phase Five: Resolution, Recovery, and Learning

According to the model, mass media in the final stage focuses on the resolution of trigger themes and summarizes the crisis as a caveat for the future. As the model predicts, the Foxconn[®]'s crisis has fewer trigger themes remaining in this stage (Figure 4-2). Although the "Foxconn[®] employee suicide issue" is still covered in over half of the articles in this stage, the news media intended to summarize the crisis as the "Foxconn[®] labor mistreatment" and extended the issues to the labor right concern in China, which moved to the a latent status. The results of Foxconn[®]'s reactions for resolving this crisis were examined as well as the response from Chinese government. Consistent with the model, the number and the length of news stories in this stage is smaller in comparison to the other four stages, which suggests that the news media gave less attention on the Foxconn[®] crisis. The "impact of Foxconn[®]'s business" and "financial performance" was also increasingly covered in nearly 50% of news stories.

Hypothesis 1a

The first hypothesis predicts that the news coverage of the Foxconn[®]'s crisis will gain different amounts of attention in each stage during the crisis life cycle in terms of article length and number. The content analysis evaluated 62 news stories that related to the crisis from Xinhua news agency in China. Although the relationships between news length and crisis stages do not have statistical significance ($df = 4/35, f = .517, p = .724$) through the performance of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), the means of article length show that the first and the final stages tend to have the least amount of words (stage 1, $M = 244$; stage 2, $M = 454$; stage 3, $M = 440.14$; stage, 4 = 400.25: stage, 5, $M = 206.67$). Despite the relationship between article length and the stage, this does not reflect the attention that the crisis draws from the news media. The difference between the number of articles in each of the five stages suggests that the news media in China

devoted greater attention and interest to the Foxconn[®] suicides issue in the third and fourth stages (Figure 4-3).

The ANOVA between number of news stories and stages was unable to run due to the way the data was set-up. Therefore, Cross-tabulations with Chi-Square tests of news agencies and stages are used to further exploring the relationship between the number of articles from selected news agencies and each crisis stage. Significant association was found between these two variables ($X^2 (8, N = 162) = 29.877, p = .000$). (Table 4-2)

Hypothesis 1b

The hypothesis is partially supported, which states that the news coverage of the Foxconn[®]'s crisis in Taiwan will gain different amounts of attention within the five crisis stage through examining the article length and number. A total of ninety-four news stories from the Central News Agency were evaluated and ANOVA was used to find the associations between article length and crisis stages in Taiwan. This relationship was non-significant ($df = 4/85, f = 1.488, p = .213$). However, the number of news stories reveals the difference in attention the Taiwanese media gave to the Foxconn[®] crisis during its whole life cycle. The Central News Agency has the highest number of news stories in the third crisis stage which reflects the intensity of the actual crisis period. The article number in this stage accounts for over half the amount of the reports for the Foxconn[®] crisis from CNA. This shows that the CNA offered more extensive coverage and attention about the crisis in stage three (Figure 4-4). The result of Cross-tabulation with Chi-Square tests also partially supports the hypothesis that there are significant relationships found between news number and crisis stages ($X^2 (8, N = 162) = 29.877, p = .000$). (Table 4-2)

Hypothesis 1c

Hypothesis 1c is partially supported, which foretells the difference of attention from news media will exist between each crisis stage in terms of the article length and number. There are total of thirty-two articles which were coded and analyzed by ANOVA to assess the associations between article length and crisis stage. Although there is no significance found between these two variables ($df = 3/28$, $f = .364$, $p = .779$), the mean of article length in each stage indicates the difference of space the Associated Press gave to the Foxconn[®] crisis (stage 2, $M = 431$; stage 3, $M = 494.67$; stage 4, $M = 540.13$; stage 5, $M = 284$). Concerning the number of articles may reflect the interest of news media on Foxconn[®] crisis, the result of frequency analysis shows that there is no news coverage in the first stage from AP. The highest number of stories occurred in the fourth stage, which indicates that AP has gave more attention to the Foxconn[®] crisis at the stage four (Figure 4-5). The significant association also has found between number of articles from each news agency and crisis stages though Cross-tabulation with Chi-Square tests ($X^2(8, N = 162) = 29.877$, $p = .000$). (Table 4-2)

Research Question 1b

Length of News Articles

As shown in Figure 4-6, there is a clear difference between the length of article from each news agency. The length of the articles is significantly larger in the AP than in Xinhua and CNA ($df = 2/159$, $f = 11.971$, $p = .000$). Although the length of the news coverage might depend on the news resources the organizations have, the expectations of services from different target clients, the larger length of the news coverage also suggests that the news agency might devote greater space to the story; in other words, this phenomenon indicates that the news agency is considered more comprehensive and provides more details about the news events.

Number of News Articles

In terms of total published story frequency by each news agency selected, the CNA has the highest number of news stories followed by Xinhua and AP, in that order (referred to Figure 4-7 for the number of article in three news agencies).

The home news agency of Foxconn[®], CNA, has more coverage about the crisis; whereas the news coverage in China was less than expected. Although the Xinhua coverage was located where the crisis occurred, the Chinese government prohibited the news media from reporting the Foxconn[®] suicides in May. According to CNA (2010), the Chinese government requested the news media in China to limit their coverage and use Xinhua's reports as the only news source when covering the Foxconn[®] crisis. The different number of news articles published in each news agency has revealed the interest and attention that news media paid on the crisis event in certain level.

Hypothesis 2a

The hypothesis predicts a difference between trigger themes/issues that are covered in the news of the Foxconn[®]'s crisis in China will exist between stages in terms of the amount and the types. As shown in Figure 4-8, the number of themes covered in the news stories peaked in the stage three which reflects the intensity of the actual crisis stage. According to the model of Howell and Miller (2006), the news media will isolate one trigger theme as the main explanation of a crisis. Although there are still various themes covered by Xinhua, the results of cross-tabulation of trigger themes and stages show that there are only two themes that dominant in this stage, "employee suicide issue" and "Chinese government reactions". Significant association was found between the theme "employee suicide issue" ($X^2(4, N = 40) = 13.856, p = .008$) and crisis stages. However, the ANOVA analysis reveals that there is no significant relation between number of themes in individual article and its crisis stages ($df = 4/35, f = .327, p = .858$).

Hypothesis 2b

Hypothesis 2b forecasts that the relationship between the number of trigger themes covered by news agency will vary in each crisis stage. There is no significance found between number of trigger themes in each news article and crisis stages in the analysis of ANOVA ($df = 4/ 85$, $f = .433$, $p = .784$).

Even though it is not statistically significant, a small difference in the frequency of themes covered by CNA is visible between each stage. The Figure 5-9 presents the number of themes reported in the news stories from CNA in Taiwan, which reached its highest level in the stage three. The coverage of this stage tends to mirror the intensity of suicides occurring within stage three, that lead the certain trigger themes to become a mature crisis. According to the model of Howell and Miller (2006), the news media content in this stage will focus on specific trigger themes as the crisis prodrome and will also have extensive discussions about crisis. The coverage of the Foxconn[®] crisis from CNA highlighted the themes as “employee suicide issue”, “Foxconn[®] labor mistreatment” and “reactions of Foxconn[®]”, which served as principle explanations of the crisis. The Cross-tabulation with Chi-Square test shows significant relationship between the theme “Financial or business performance” and crisis stages ($X^2 (4, N = 90) = 14.235$, $p = .007$), which is the only theme that is increasingly covered from stage three to stage four.

Hypothesis 2c

While examining the data results, there is no significance found between number of themes that are covered by each news story and crisis stage by performing the result of ANOVA analysis ($df = 3/ 28$, $f = 2.128$, $p = .119$). However, even though there is no statistical significance, the frequency of the number of themes covered in each stage has small visible differences.

Figure 4-10 indicates that the number of themes covered in each stage peaked in both stages three and four in AP. There is no coverage about the Foxconn® crisis from the AP in the first phase, which means that the AP didn't consider the crisis as important to its audience until the second stage. This may be explained by the Foxconn®'s little proximity of to the public in the United States. It's not until stage two which included themes like "financial or business performance" and "Apple®'s responsibility (supplier issue)," which are considered to have more resonance with the American public. Compared to the other three stages, stage five has the least number of themes covered in the news articles from AP.

Research Question 2a

Five main crisis themes were primarily covered by the news media in China, Taiwan and the United States during whole crisis life cycle, and these are: "employee suicide issue," "reactions of Foxconn®," "Foxconn® labor mistreatment," "labor rights concern China" and "Chinese government reactions". The Xinhua news agency of China, the three most important issues by appearance frequency are: (1) employee suicide issue (85%), (2) Foxconn® reactions (50%), and (3) Chinese government reactions (47.5%). For the Taiwanese CNA, the frequencies of three prominent themes are: (1) employee suicide issue (96.7%), (2) Foxconn® reactions (48.9%), and (3) Foxconn® labor mistreatment (41.4%), whereas for the AP in the United States, the top three themes were: (1) Employee suicide issue (84.4%), (2) Foxconn® reactions (71.9%), (3) Foxconn® labor mistreatment (65.6%) and Labor rights concern in China (65.6%). (Table 4-3)

The Cross-tabulation with Chi-Square test was performed to assess the relationships between the themes covered and the three news agencies selected. Significant differences were found between news agencies in terms of the themes "Foxconn® labor mistreatment" ($X^2(2, N=162) = 12.108, p = .002$), "Employee suicide issue" ($X^2(2, N=162) = 7.237, p = .027$), "Labor

right concern in China” ($X^2 (2, N=162) = 23.984, p = .000$), “Financial or business performance” ($X^2 (2, N=162) = 14.106, p = .001$), “Apple®’s responsibility (supplier issue)” ($X^2 (2, N=162) = 7.743, p = .021$), “reactions of Foxconn®’s clients” ($X^2 (2, N=162) = 6.332, p = .042$), “Activist group” ($X^2 (2, N=162) = 40.625, p = .000$), and “Chinese government reactions” ($X^2 (2, N=162) = 10.301, p = .006$) that covered during crisis life cycle.

As shown in Table 4-3, the AP has covered the themes “labor right concern in China”, “Apple®’s responsibility (supplier issue)”, and “reactions of Foxconn®’s clients” much more than the news stories from CNA and Xinhua. The data shows that the AP tends to associate Apple® and companies who consume Foxconn®’s products with the crisis. This association may reflect the proximity of Apple® and Foxconn®’s clients, which American companies accounted for the majority with public in the United States. For the theme “activist group”, the Xinhua didn’t include it throughout the Foxconn® crisis, whereas the AP covered it for over half of its news articles. Among the three news agencies, Xinhua of China gave much more its attention to the “Chinese government reactions” (47.5%) theme. However, the themes that were concerned about fiscal damage gained less coverage in China in terms of the frequency; themes such as “Financial or business performance” and “Foxconn® and Apple® business impact”. The resonance of the Foxconn® crisis with its home country resulted in more coverage of the “reactions of Taiwanese government” in the news stories from Taiwan than the other two.

Research Question 2b

In order to understand how news media in the China, Taiwan and the United States covering the Foxconn® crisis in terms of the number of the themes, ANOVA analysis was performed to assess the relationship between number of trigger themes and three news agencies. This relationship was found significant ($df = 2/ 159, f = 25.038, p = .000$). The Figure 4-11

indicates that the AP has covered more themes of Foxconn® crisis in each news stories, whose Mean is 4.63, followed by CAN (M = 2.94) and Xinhua (M = 2.70).

A correlation with the two-tailed test was performed to further explore the relationship between number of the themes covered and news agencies. Moderate negative correlation was found between number of articles generated from each news agency and the number of themes appeared in an articles ($r = -.423, p < .000$). The correlation indicates that, in a moderate level, the more themes included in a news story, the lesser the number of articles reported (Table 4-4).

Hypothesis 3

The hypothesis three is partially supported, which predicts the difference of themes covered between the news media of three countries involved in the Foxconn® crisis. The Cross-tabulation with Chi-Square tests were used to analyze the possible relationships foretold by this hypothesis. Significances were found between news agencies between eight themes, which are: “Foxconn® labor mistreatment” ($X^2(2, N=162) = 12.108, p = .002$), “Employee suicide issue” ($X^2(2, N=162) = 7.237, p = .027$), “Labor right concern in China” ($X^2(2, N=162) = 23.984, p = .000$), “Financial or business performance” ($X^2(2, N=162) = 14.106, p = .001$), “Apple®’s responsibility (supplier issue)” ($X^2(2, N=162) = 7.743, p = .021$), “reactions of Foxconn®’s clients” ($X^2(2, N=162) = 6.332, p = .042$), “Activist group” ($X^2(2, N=162) = 40.625, p = .000$), and “Chinese government reactions” ($X^2(2, N=162) = 10.301, p = .006$). Some differences can also be found through frequency analysis. (Table 4-3)

The top-three themes that are covered by AP are: (1) Employee suicide issue (84.4%), (2) Foxconn® reactions (71.9%), (3) Foxconn® labor mistreatment (65.6%) and Labor rights concern in China (65.6%). The CNA reported the themes of “employee suicide issue” (96.7%), “Foxconn® reactions” (48.9%), and “Foxconn® labor mistreatment” (41.4%) with the highest frequency. In Xinhua, the first two themes are approximately the same as covered in the AP and

CNA, whereas the third one is “Chinese government reactions” (47.5%) which appeared in nearly half of the news articles from Xinhua. In addition to the differences of the top three themes that are covered in each news agency, there is a significant difference between three news agencies in terms of the theme “activist group”. The AP covered this theme the most frequently while there is no coverage in Xinhua. The AP also had many more news stories including the themes that were related to the Foxconn®’s clients, such as “Apple®’s responsibility (supplier issue)” and “reactions of Foxconn®’s clients”. The theme “Taiwanese government reactions” appeared only in the news coverage from CNA. There is only AP associated the labor strike issue of Honda with Foxconn® employee suicide crisis.

Research Question 3

In terms of the crisis frames used when discussing the Foxconn® crisis, the result of Cross-tabulation analysis shows a significant difference between news agencies (Table 4-5). A significant association was found between frames used and news agencies in the result of Cross-tabulation with Chi-Square tests ($X^2(8, N = 162) = 32.038, p = .000$). In AP, the major frame that was applied in news stories is “economic consequence frame” (37.5%), which followed by “conflict frame” (21.9%) and “moral frame” (21.9%). For the CNA, the news frame that occurs the most is the “responsibility frame” (35.6%); while Xinhua used more “moral frame” (35%) and “human interest frame” (32.5%) to depict the Foxconn® crisis. Within three news agencies, the AP is the only one that didn’t include the “human interest frame”; whereas it used more “conflict frame” than the other two.

Research Question 4

Cross-tabulation results reveal that the news coverage of AP, CNA, and Xinhua differed significantly in terms of sources adopted. Chi-Square tests were performed with cross-tabulation analysis to help evaluate the relationships between sources cited in each of the three news media.

Significant associations were found between the news sources “Chinese government officials” ($X^2(2, N = 162) = 14.514, p = .001$), “activist groups” ($X^2(2, N = 162) = 34.673, p = .000$), “Apple[®] and other clients” ($X^2(2, N = 7.627, p = .022$), “other media” ($X^2(2, N = 162) = 22.587, p = .000$), “Internet user and unidentified” ($X^2(2, N = 162) = 6.248, p = .044$) and three newswire services. In addition, the significance was also found between the number of sources used and news agencies selected ($df = 2/ 161, f = 7.196, p = .001$). According to the result of ANOVA analysis, the AP tends to include more news sources in a news article while Xinhua has the least (Table 4-6).

As shown in Table 5-6, the top three sources AP used are “Foxconn[®]” (65.6%), “Activist group” (46.9%), and “other media” (31.3%), respectively. The highest frequency of sources reported in the news stories from CNA is “Foxconn[®]” (47.8%), follows “other media” (44.4%), “Chinese government officials” (20%) and “researchers” (20%). In Xinhua, except for the source “Foxconn[®]” which appeared in the 57.5% of the news articles, the second highest frequency is the “Chinese government officials”, which also cited in over half of the news stories of Foxconn[®] crisis in China. In the contrast with those sources used frequently in Xinhua’s news, “Activist group”, “Apple[®] and other clients”, “Financial agencies” and “internet user and unidentified” were never adopted in the news article from China. Furthermore, the AP and CNA cited the additional sources from Honda, a Japanese company which has the similar labor issue as Foxconn[®], and other Taiwanese companies operate in China.

Hypothesis 4

This hypothesis forecasts that the level of editorial freedom differed between news agencies of different countries and may reflect on the news sources used, as well as the themes covered. The hypothesis is supported as the clear significances shown in the relationships between number of themes covered ($df = 2/ 161, f = 25.036, p = .000$), and number of sources

used ($df = 2/ 161, f = 7.196, p = .001$) and three news agencies. AP tended to include various sources and different themes in the news coverage of Foxconn[®] crisis while the Xinhua covers less themes and news sources (News sources: AP= 11, CNA= 12, Xinhua= 6). For the news sources used, Xinhua used only six sources to report Foxconn[®] crisis. Among them, “Foxconn[®]” (57.5%) and “Chinese government officials” (52.2%) have appeared in the over half of its news articles. News sources such as “Activist groups”, “Taiwanese government officials”, “Apple[®] and other clients”, “Financial agencies”, and “Internet user and unidentified” have never been cited in the articles of Xinhua news agency.

Post-Hoc Hypothesis

For further exploration into the relationships between data of Foxconn[®] crisis, an additional Cross-tabulation analysis with Chi-Square test was conducted. The relationship between news frames used and crisis stages was found highly significant ($X^2 (16, N = 162) = 43.820, p = .000$). According to the Table 4-7, when covering a cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) as Foxconn[®] crisis, “Conflict frame” (33.3%), “Human interest frame” (33.3%), and “Responsibility frame” (33.3%) were used in the initial stage. “Human interest frame” (50%) was primarily used to cover the crisis in the second stage, while stage three focuses on the “Responsibility frame” (38.4%) and “Moral frame” (22.1%). “Economic consequence frame” with “Moral frame” recurred in both stage four and stage five.

Table 4-1. Theme frequencies in each crisis stage

Themes covered	Stage1		Stage2		Crisis Stages* Stage3		Stage4		Stage5	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Foxconn [®] labor mistreatment	1	33.3%	3	50%	38	44.18%	24	40.6%	2	25%
Employee suicide	3	100%	6	100%	84	98%	50	84.7%	5	62.5%
Labor right concern in China	0	0.0%	1	16.6%	21	24%	25	42.3%	2	25%
Financial performance	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	8	9.3%	19	32.2%	3	37.5%
Foxconn [®] and Apple [®] business impact	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	4.6%	4	6.7%	1	12.5%
Apple [®] 's supplier issue	0	0.0%	2	33.3%	3	3.4%	4	6.7%	0	0.0%
Reactions of Foxconn [®] 's clients	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	6	6.9%	4	6.7%	0	0.0%
Activist group	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	10	11.6%	17	28.8%	0	0.0%
Reaction of Taiwanese company in China	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	4.6	1	1.6%	0	0.0%
Foxconn [®] reactions	3	100%	3	50%	37	43%	40	67.7%	4	50%
Chinese government reactions	1	33.3%	0	0.0%	32	37.2%	11	18.6%	2	25%
Taiwanese government reactions	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	4	4.6%	3	5%	0	0.0%
Investigation or results of labor mistreatment	1	33.3%	1	0.0%	18	20.9%	4	6.7%	0	0.0%
Other	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%	3	5%	0	0.0%

Table 4-2. Cross-tabulation of news agencies and crisis stages

		<i>Crisis Stage</i>						
		Stage1	Stage2	Stage3	Stage4	Stage5	Total	
News Agency	AP	Count	0	1	6	24	1	32
		% within News Agency	.0%	3.1%	18.8%	75.0%	3.1%	100%
		% within Crisis Stage	.0%	16.7%	7.0%	40.7%	12.5%	19.8%
		% of Total	.0%	.6%	3.7%	14.8%	.6%	19.8%
	CNA	Count	1	4	58	23	4	90
		% within News Agency	1.1%	4.4%	64.4%	25.6%	4.4%	100%
		% within Crisis Stage	33.3%	66.7%	67.4%	39.0%	50.0%	55.6%
		% of Total	.6%	2.5%	35.8%	14.2%	2.5%	55.6%
	Xinhua	Count	2	1	22	12	3	40
		% within News Agency	5.0%	2.5%	55.0%	30.0%	7.5%	100%
		% within Crisis Stage	66.7%	16.7%	25.6%	20.3%	37.5%	24.7%
		% of Total	1.2%	.6%	13.6%	7.4%	1.9%	24.7%
Total	Count	3	6	86	59	8	162	
	% within News Agency	1.9%	3.7%	53.1%	36.4%	4.9%	100%	
	% within Crisis Stage	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	
	% of Total	1.9%	3.7%	53.1%	36.4%	4.9%	100%	

Table 4-3. Themes covered in each news agency

Themes covered	News Agencies*					
	AP		CNA		Xinhua	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Foxconn [®] labor mistreatment	21	65.6%	37	41.1%	10	25.0%
Employee suicide issue	27	84.4%	87	96.7%	34	85.0%
Labor right concern in China	21	65.5%	18	20.0%	10	25.0%
Financial or business performance	13	40.6%	14	15.6%	3	7.5%
Foxconn [®] and Apple [®] business impact	2	6.3%	6	6.7%	1	2.5%
Apple [®] 's responsibility (supplier issue)	5	15.6%	3	3.3%	1	2.5%
Reactions of Foxconn [®] 's clients	5	15.6%	4	4.4%	1	2.5%
Activist group	17	53.1%	10	11.1%	0	0.0%
Reaction of Taiwanese company in China	0	0.0%	4	4.4%	1	2.5%
Foxconn [®] reactions	23	71.9%	44	48.9%	20	50.0%
Chinese government reactions	9	28.1%	18	20.0%	19	47.5%
Taiwanese government reactions	0	0.0%	7	7.8%	0	0.0%
Investigation or results of labor mistreatment	3	9.4%	13	14.4%	8	20.0%
Other	3	9.4%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%

Table 4-4. Correlations between news agency and number of themes

		News Agency	Number of Themes
News Agency	Pearson Correlation	1	-.423**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0
	N	162	162
Number of Themes	Pearson Correlation	-.423**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	
	N	162	162

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table 4-5. Frames used by news agencies

Frames	News Agencies*					
	AP		CNA		Xinhua	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Conflict frame	7	21.90%	7	7.80%	3	7.50%
Human interest frame	0	0.00%	13	14.40%	13	32.50%
Economic consequence frame	12	37.50%	19	21.10%	7	17.50%
Responsibility frame	6	18.80%	32	35.60%	3	7.50%
Moral frame	7	21.90%	19	21.10%	14	35.00%
Total	32	100%	90	100%	40	100%

Table 4-6. Source frequencies in the news coverage of three news agencies

News Sources Used	News Agencies*					
	AP		CNA		Xinhua	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Foxconn [®]	21	65.6%	43	47.8%	23	57.5%
Chinese government officials	8	25.0%	18	20.0%	21	52.5%
Taiwanese government officials	0	0.0%	7	7.8%	0	0.0%
Foxconn [®] workers, their families and friends	5	15.6%	11	12.2%	6	15.0%
Activist groups	15	46.9%	9	10.0%	0	0.0%
Researchers	9	28.1%	18	20.0%	8	20.0%
Apple [®] and other clients	5	15.6%	5	5.6%	0	0.0%
Other media	10	31.3%	40	44.4%	1	2.5%
Communities/Residents	2	6.3%	5	5.6%	2	5.0%
Financial agencies	1	3.1%	3	3.3%	0	0.0%
Internet user and unidentified	1	3.1%	10	11.1%	0	0.0%
Others	4	12.5%	4	4.4%	0	0.0%

Table 4-7. Frames used in each crisis stage

Crisis Stage		Article Frame					Total
		Conflict frame	Human interest frame	Economic consequence frame	Responsibility frame	Moral frame	
stage1	Count	1	1	0	1	0	3
	% within Crisis Stage	33.3%	33.3%	.0%	33.3%	.0%	100.0%
stage2	Count	0	3	0	1	2	6
	% within Crisis Stage	.0%	50.0%	.0%	16.7%	33.3%	100.0%
stage3	Count	10	15	9	33	19	86
	% within Crisis Stage	11.6%	17.4%	10.5%	38.4%	22.1%	100.0%
stage4	Count	6	6	25	5	17	59
	% within Crisis Stage	10.2%	10.2%	42.4%	8.5%	28.8%	100.0%
stage5	Count	0	1	4	1	2	8
	% within Crisis Stage	.0%	12.5%	50.0%	12.5%	25.0%	100.0%
Total	Count	17	26	38	41	40	162
	% within Crisis Stage	10.5%	16.0%	23.5%	25.3%	24.7%	100.0%

$(X^2 (16, N = 162) = 43.820, p = .000)$

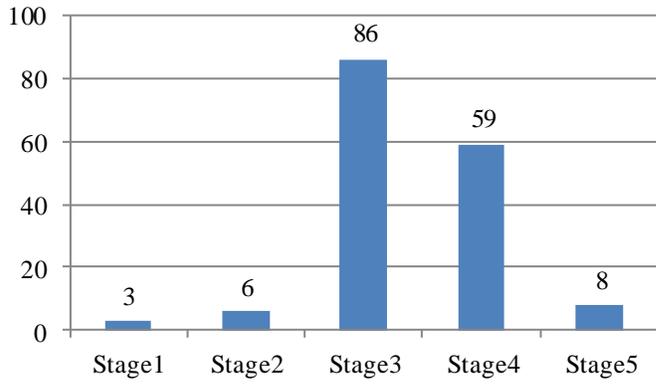


Figure 4-1. News frequency of three agencies by crisis stage.

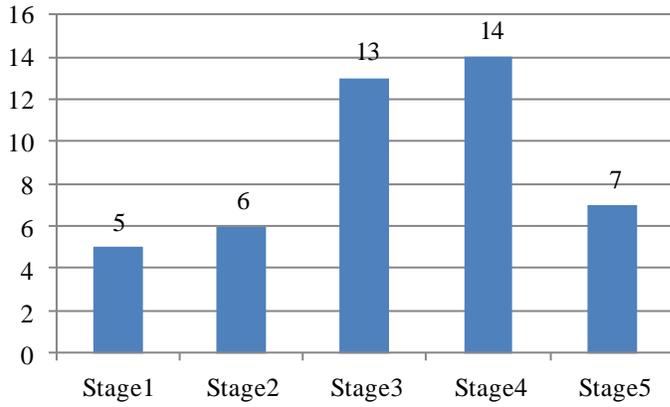


Figure 4-2. The number of themes by stage.

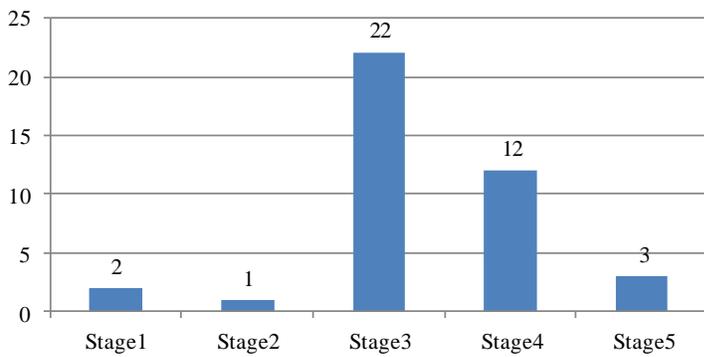


Figure 4-3. News frequencies of Xinhua by crisis stage.

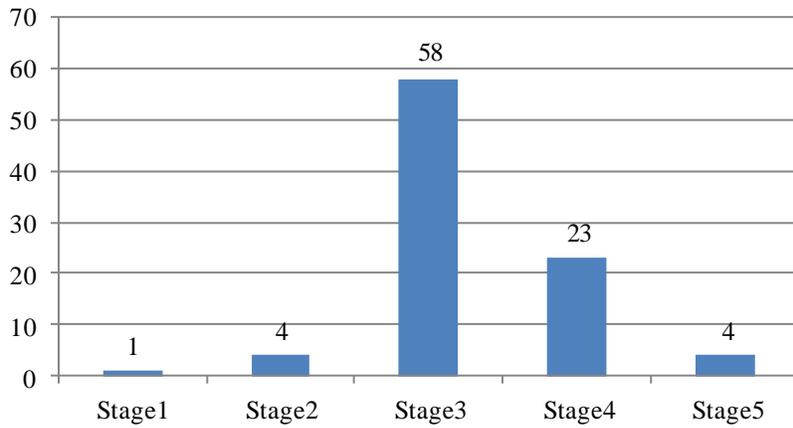


Figure 4-4. News frequency of CNA by crisis stage.

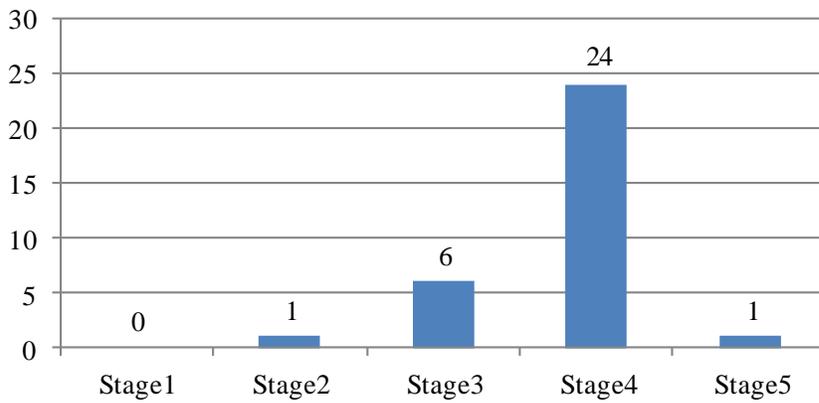


Figure 4-5. News frequencies of AP by crisis stage.

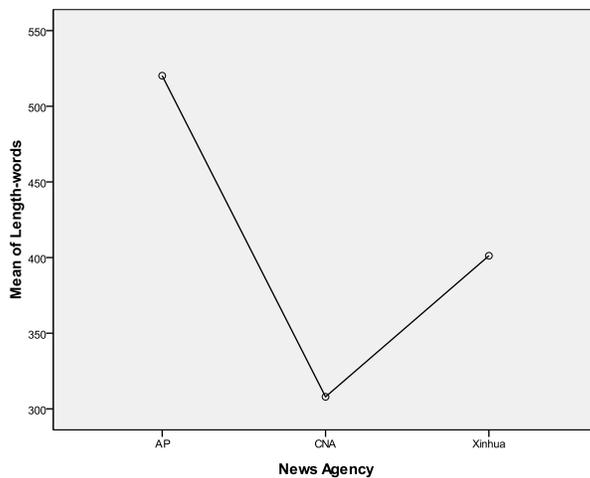


Figure 4-6. The mean of article length of three news agencies.

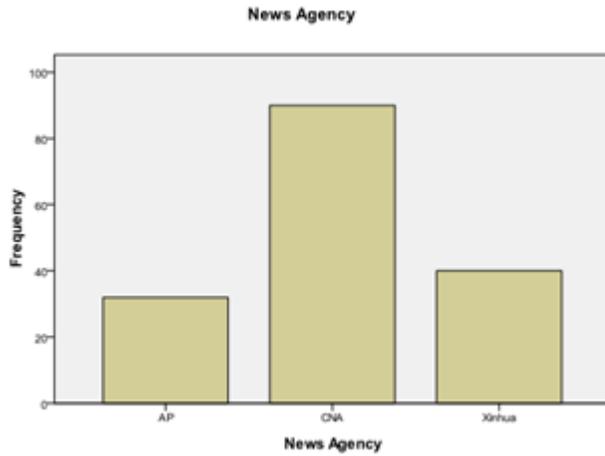


Figure 4-7. The number of article in three news agencies.

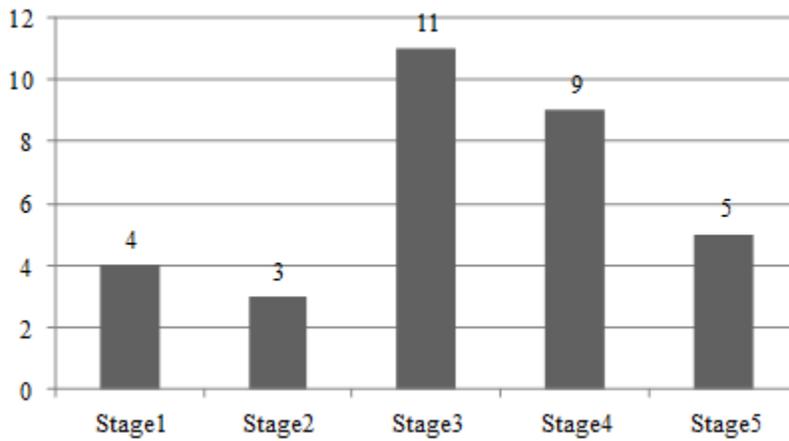


Figure 4-8. The number of themes covered in news articles from Xinhua.

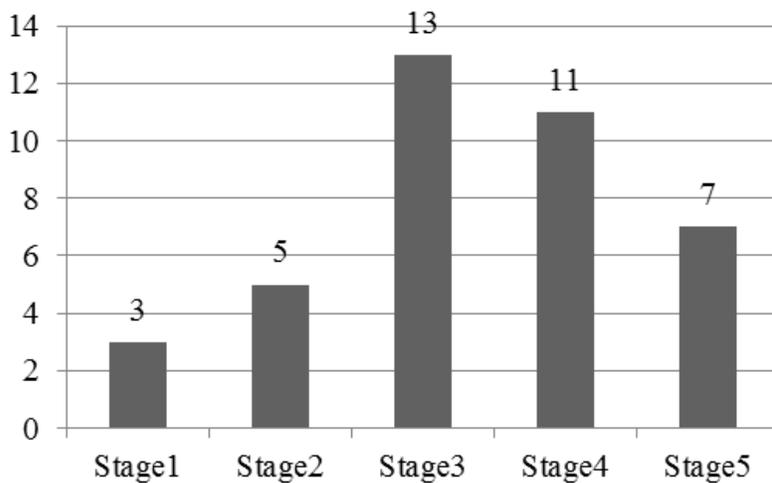


Figure 4-9. The number of themes covered in news articles from CAN.

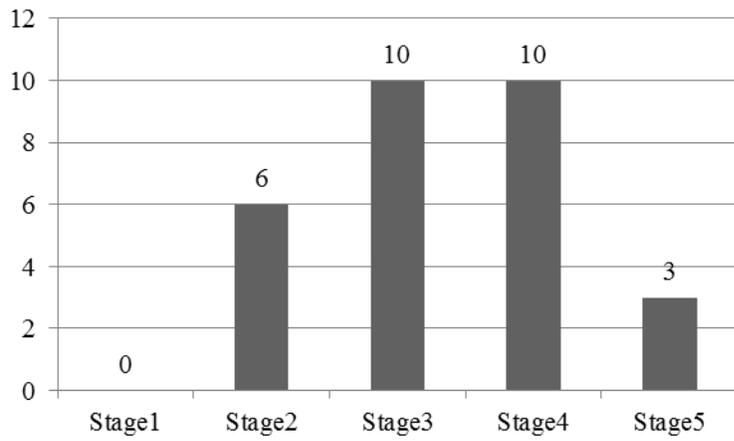


Figure 4-10. The number of themes covered in news articles from AP.

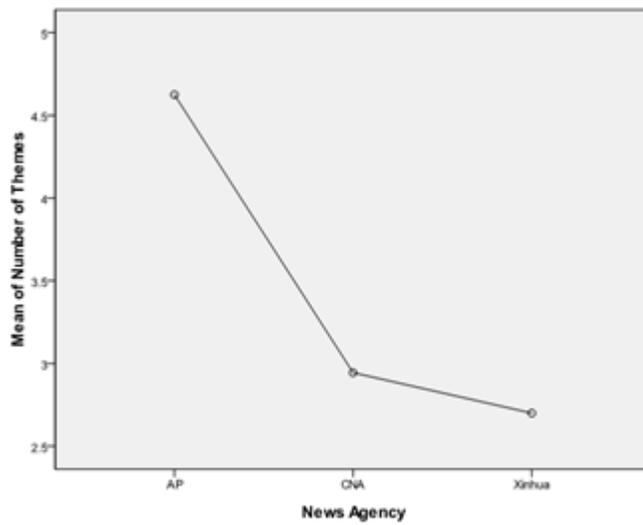


Figure 4-11. The number of themes covered in news agencies.

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

Discussion and Implications of the Media Model for the Crisis Life Cycle

Because the research was based on and aimed to advance the model of relations between media coverage and crisis life cycle, the Foxconn[®] crisis is indicative for testing the model in an international environment. Researchers (Freitag, 2002; Molleda, 2011; Molleda & Quinn, 2004; Valentini & Romenti, 2011) have noted in previous studies that it is important to consider the differences between media systems and cultural contexts. Following the suggestions of those studies (Freitag, 2002; Molleda, 2011; Molleda & Quinn, 2004; Valentini & Romenti, 2011), this study focused on the role of international news agencies for they are influential vehicles and channels that move corporate crises from one place to another in the globe. From the inter-media agenda-setting perspective, international news agencies, such as AP, AFP, CNA, Reuters and Xinhua have largely covered cross-national crises and may have an impact on domestic news reports regarding the crisis (Golan, 2006; Molleda, 2011).

The Howell and Miller (2006) media coverage and crisis life cycle model was the foundation of this study. As it predicts, the differences between news frequencies, number of themes covered, and frames and sources used exist between crisis stages. Although there are some differences, the model has explained and guided the evolution of media coverage in the Foxconn[®] crisis. The content analysis result revealed that the news coverage of the Foxconn[®] suicides peaked in the third stage while the model suggests that the highest level of news frequency should appear in the second phase. Cross-national crisis management should take these various factors into account, including the news practices in the countries involved. As shown in Figure 5-1, the peaks of news coverage are different between AP, and CNA and Xinhua. In AP, news frequency reached the highest level in the fourth phase; while the peak of

news coverage in CNA and Xinhua appeared in stage three. The United States is the least affected country by the Foxconn[®] crisis among the three. According to Freitag (2002), media content of the issue will differ through the news editorial preferences in each country. For the Associated Press, the themes related to Apple[®], other American companies and its economic or fiscal consequences as these are the issues that have the closest proximity to the news agencies and the public in the United States. Therefore, the Associated Press didn't have extensive coverage of the Foxconn[®] crisis until those themes appeared and moved into focus in news media, which is the fourth stage of the crisis.

The theme numbers and the types of the issues covered are also emphasized in this model. As researchers (Howell & Miller, 2006; Mitroff, 1996; Seymour & Moore, 2000) suggested, the key to managing a crisis is to control the message. Stephens, Malone and Bailey (2005) warned that once the organization lacks message management, it relinquishes its control of communication to the media, and the media will dominate the rest of the crisis stages; setting agendas according to their aims and perspectives. Pearson and Clair (1998) also stated that if organizations fail or choose not to respond to trigger themes at the beginning of a crisis, news media may cover rumors instead. On the other hand, if the organizations recognize and can properly implement strategies to those trigger themes, the negative impact can be reduced. In the Foxconn[®] example, although the number of themes didn't follow the predictions in the model, the few themes associated with the specific prodrome were indeed focused on by news media. These themes are "employee suicide issue," "Foxconn[®] labor mistreatment" and "reactions of Foxconn[®]". The intensity of suicides ($N = 6$) at the third stage lead the coverage from simply reporting suicides to labor mistreatment. For example, according to the Central News Agency (2010), a suicide occurred right after the president of Foxocnn visited the company's factory in

China and made an apology for the series of suicides. The reactions and strategies Foxconn[®] adopted to manage the crisis also caught media attention during this period. As reported, the issue that Foxconn[®] requested its employees to sign the “anti-suicide” pledge after a series of suicide brought up extensive discussions in news media as one of the controversial strategies implemented by Foxconn[®]. Central News Agency (2010) also covered a rumor which stated that Foxconn[®] invited monks to do an exorcism on its company plants because of the suicides. In the stage four, the model suggests that mass media coverage “will be driven by criminal and civil charges, government inquiries, litigation, and responses from affected stakeholders” (Howell & Miller, 2006, p. 6). The theme types of Foxconn[®] crisis in stage four are consistent with the model, which are: “labor right concern in China”, “activist group”, and also the “Foxconn[®] reactions” which featured the compensations for the Foxconn[®] workers, such as salary increases. In stage five, the coverage of business performance and business plans means the operation of Foxconn[®] is back to normal and the trigger themes are resolved or the resolution is partially achieved through management actions. The news media summarized the Foxconn[®] crisis as a series of incidents caused by labor mistreatment and extended the issue to the labor right concern in China, which moved into a latent status as suggested in the model. Howell and Miller (2006) noted that if the organization is unable to resolve the themes that evolve to the crisis, then those themes will move into a latent status that may be reactivated by another event and brought back to the focus in the news media. Once the trigger themes are back into prominence, they will have potential to create a new crisis cycle and cause damage to the organizations again.

When developing a crisis management plan, proactive media management is required with clear and concise information released in time to respond to the requests of the media in order to stop the rumors and maintain control of message in crisis stages. Furthermore, since the media

have the powerful ability to communicate and spread news expeditiously while a crisis happens, effective response and good relations with the news media can prevent a crisis from developing.

Scholars (Howell & Miller, 2006; Valentini & Romenti, 2011) indicated that the public will learn the importance of events from the amount of coverage in the news media. The selection of news frames in the information provided by news media is also influential in formatting the public's opinion of the situation and of the company during the crisis. For advancing the model, this study may suggest that there is a trend in the frames chosen by international news media groups that should be integrated into the crisis media model. In the first and second stages, the news media simply describe the trigger themes that have potential to evolve into a crisis from an ordinary social event. Therefore, the "conflict frame" and "human interest frame" might be the frame chosen by many news stories during these two stages. The organizations should be careful to manage any trigger themes with appropriate and timely responses to the events covered in the new content. For stage three, where the crisis actually occurs, the "responsibility frame" and "moral frame" are used to describe the Foxconn® crisis. This suggests the media focus has moved from simply reporting of crisis events to seeking culpability of creating the crisis. In this stage, the organization should also respond to assigning the responsibility and be cautious when applying the strategies to resolve the problems since any reactions of related actors will be under scrutiny. The news media will focus on the use of the "economic consequence frame" and the "moral frame" in the fourth and fifth stages. When these themes are covered, the news media tend to turn their attention to the fiscal damage and business impact of the crisis. Additionally, any investigation of the crisis and any corporate reactions will be reported. In the Foxconn® example, news articles covered the results of strategies adopted by Foxconn® in stage three, such as the protection nets installed around the dormitories, the raising

of salaries and the change management style. The organizations should still keep the message released concisely and avoid the issues and messages that will cause the damages to organization be revisited in the future stories.

The main purpose of the media model of the crisis life cycle is to clearly point out a pattern or trend in the news media as they report crises-related, and to provide as much information as possible for prediction, such as the amount of news coverage, the type of themes, the frames and the sources the news media would use. With this, the PR practitioners and crisis management teams are able to quickly develop and implement effective strategies to control the message and maintain control of media content during crisis.

Discussion and Implications in Practices

According to the results of the data of Foxconn[®]'s crisis, this study may suggest some implications and actions for practitioners based on the media model. In stage 1 and stage 2, the crisis management team should start to monitor the trigger themes that appeared in the news stories and follow the trend of news coverage since those trigger theme may have potential to become a crisis. The actions respond to those trigger themes are also essential; otherwise, the news media may cover rumors to fill out the spaces. As the model predicts, the news media will start to focus on few trigger themes as main explanation for the crisis in stage 3. The crisis management team should treat specific trigger theme carefully in this stage, as well as respond to the media request to maintain good relationship with news media and control of message. Therefore, a proactive media management may be needed with clear and concise information released. In stage 4, although the real crisis stage ends in the stage 3, the crisis management team should still follow up the events, activities and mass media coverage of crisis to date. Keeping record of crisis events and coverage may assist organization to take advantage of previous successful management and to compensate the failures. In stage5, the practitioners should

prevent trigger themes move to latent status which might have potential to damage the organization in other crisis life cycle.

Concerning of the relationship between cross-national conflicts and frequent global information exchange, transnational corporations (TNCs) and organizations that are involved in the crisis should take the news practices and the media environment of different world locations into account for projecting flexible and proactive actions. As described in the literature review chapter, the three international news agencies selected are suitable for an analysis on differences between various media environments in terms of the level of press freedom. According to the Freedom House (2011), the press freedom in China, Taiwan and the United States are “not free”, “free” and “free”, in that order; their ranks being 184, 48, and 17. This ranking also reflects the news coverage of the Foxconn[®] crisis in terms of the coverage frequency, themes covered, frames used and sources cited.

News Frequencies

Through this study, the trend of news frequency provides guidance for practitioners when to release important information and adopt reactions toward the crisis. The trend of news frequency clear points out the peak of the media attention of the crisis and offers an opportunity for organization to release the message in a timely manner.

Close examination of the news articles published by three news agencies in China, Taiwan and the United States, the Central News Agency from Taiwan has the highest coverage of the Foxconn[®] crisis ($NCNA=90 > NXH=40 > NAP=32$). There are three reasons that explain the coverage frequency. Firstly, the CNA and Foxconn[®] headquarters share a home country. As suggested in the cross-national conflict shifting (CNCS) propositions, Molleda (2011) noted that the home news agencies, which have more resonance with the TNC involved, will offer more extensive coverage about the crisis. Compared to Taiwan and China, the United States is neither

the home country of Foxconn[®] nor the location where the crisis occurred. The AP only covered the themes and issues that have some internal relation, including the issues related to American transnational corporations (TNCs); as well as the economic impact, which shows that the AP treated the Foxconn[®] crisis from a global perspective. The amount of coverage from the Xinhua News Agency greatly differs from the CNA even though China is the place where the crisis actually occurred. Although it was not reported in the Xinhua News Agency, the news stories from the CNA and the United States noted that the Chinese government has put censorship on news coverage of the Foxconn[®] crisis in May, 2010 and requested the Chinese media to use only Xinhua's reports when covering the crisis. According to the report of the CNA on May, 28, 2010, the Chinese government prohibited the media from covering the Foxconn[®] suicides because they regarded the media as one of the proponents that encouraged the continued suicide attempts.

Although Yin (2008) noted that the Chinese media are not exactly the same as the original Soviet press model, which lacks any exposés of negative news, and despite that some of the Chinese media allow negative view points by approval from the government, some sensitive issues, such as “politically sensitive” or issues that are associated with “social stability” still will be eliminated from news content. As Freedom House (2011) reported, the media environment in China remained highly repressive in 2010 for some sensitive issues like the imprisonment of the Nobel Prize winner, Liu Xiaobo. It also indicated that the “detailed party directives—which can arrive daily at editors’ desks—also curbed coverage related to public health, environmental accidents, deaths in police custody, and foreign policy” (Freedom House, 2011, p. 7). In the Foxconn[®] crisis example, some themes that are considered “sensitive” are also less covered or are not reported throughout the whole crisis life cycle, such as the theme “activist group”.

Themes Covered

Even covering the same event, the news content will somehow differ in preferences of news agency. In the news from Xinhua, the number of themes covered is less than those included in the AP and the CNA. Despite the fast economic growth and considerable reforms in China, the Chinese social context is still considered under the tight control of the Chinese Communist Party. Any event considered that will affect social stability is censored. In addition to the concerning of social stability, “the government has long implemented disempowering policy toward any forms of activist and advocacy groups” (Wang, 2005, p. 84). Therefore, the news stories from Xinhua didn’t have any coverage of themes like “activist group” while the theme “Chinese government reactions” appeared in over half of the news stories.

Differing from the Xinhua News Agency, the Associated Press covered the themes “labor right concern in China” and “activist group” the most, which at some levels reflect a media practice closer to the social responsibility model. As Hachen and Scotton (2007) stated, media under the social responsibility model should be obligated to “ensure that all voices and views in the community are heard” (p. 22). The themes that have more proximity to the United States’ social context, such as “Apple[®]’s supplier issue”, and “reactions of Foxconn[®]’s clients” receive more exposure in the news from the AP than the CNA and Xinhua. News coverage from the AP often associate Foxconn[®] with Apple[®] as ‘Apple[®]’s supplier’ since Apple[®] is more recognizable for audiences in the United States.

The CNA covered various themes during the five crisis stages. It is the only news agency that covered the reactions from the Taiwanese government, which indicates its proximity with the Taiwanese public. According to the Freedom House report in 2005, Taiwan has one of the freest media environments in East Asia. As Yin (2008) mentioned, “the media in Taiwan are free and powerful” (p. 19); but for the shortcomings, “the press is free, bold and aggressive” (Press

Freedom, 2006, ¶ 5). Taiwanese media are sensational and eager to expose scandals of business corporations, government corruptions and private life of people of high recognition. The themes it reported the most are the “employee suicide issue”, “Foxconn[®] labor mistreatment” and “Foxconn[®] reactions”. Being among the most competitive media environments in Asia, the Taiwanese media tends to cover news with or without grounded sources. For example, while reporting the reactions toward the crisis from Foxconn[®], only Taiwanese media included the rumor of ‘monks and exorcism’ as one of Foxconn[®]’s solutions to the suicides

Frames Used

Similar to the choice of themes, the selection of news frames also differ between news agencies. The AP has more concern about financial impact, which is why they chose themes more like “economic consequence frame” to depict the Foxconn[®] crisis. For CNA, it preferred the “responsibility frame” which is consistent with the previous research (e.g. Press Freedom, 2006; Yin, 2008) that the media in Taiwan serve as an “aggressive” watchdog that is likely to expose things that would have been hidden from public view without investigations by the media. By determining the responsibility and blame of the suicides, the Taiwanese news media took over polices and government officials responsibility by investigating and making judgments. The result of this study found that the Xinhua News Agency as the official news media of China used the “human interest frame” as its major frame. In addition to the proximity of suicides, the media in China tend not to cover the sensitive issues that would lead to conflicts endangering the social stability. Plus, in this case study, the Chinese government limited the news reports of the Foxconn[®] crisis. Even the order of censorship or limitations didn’t covered by the news media in China, a self-censoring atmosphere with invisible regulations affected the selection of news frames when covering the Foxocnn crisis.

Sources Cited

For crisis management team, to know the news sources that preferred by journalists is important. The preferred news sources can serve as another channel for practitioners to release the information which has benefits to the organization.

The use of sources also appeared to be different between three international news agencies. In the Foxconn[®] case study, although all three news agencies used “Foxconn[®]” as the major news source, Xinhua adopted the official news sources from the Chinese government more often; whereas the AP used more news sources from activist groups and the CNA included more sources from other media. As for the number of sources used, the AP and the CNA used a variety of sources including “activist group”, “financial agencies”, “Internet users”, and “Apple[®] and other clients of Foxconn[®]”. The use of news sources reflects the different editorial policies of each news agency (Molleda, 2011). While the other two news agencies are independent of government control that serves as a ‘watchdog’ function to society; Xinhua may be considered as using more news sources from Chinese governments because it is a states-commissioned news agency. Freeman (2000) explained that in a tightly-controlled media environment, the priority of the media is to maintain the stability of society, investigative reporting is discouraged and they are encouraged to rely on official sources. Extremely different from the way Xinhua did in China when covering the Foxconn[®] crisis, the CNA has twice the number of news sources. Among the three, it included the most theme use of “internet user and unidentified” sources. According to Yin (2008), while the Taiwanese press enjoys the freest media environment, some of them are considered to be the source of social chaos that is often accused of making reports of rumors and covering news that is not true.

If the crisis management practitioners are familiar with the media practice in different media systems, they can adjust information that are going to release in different location and to

avoid extra management costs for unnecessary mistakes. Knowing the dynamic nature of media practices in different social and cultural settings helps us to find a clear pattern for news coverage about an event, especially important for cross-national crisis management.

Limitation and Future Research

This research aims to assist both academic studies and practitioners to better understand the trends in news media when covering the crisis throughout its life cycle. While a crisis process is viewed as one continual improvement, understanding and tracking media content change during crisis stages are vital to control the mass-mediated message. This study illustrates and characterizes the content of media coverage from the aspect of cross-national crisis management. To advance the media model developed by Howell and Miller (2006), the research added different components into the original model, such as news frames and sources used. This revised media model of the crisis life cycle provides guidance for when to adopt appropriate strategies as well as the predictions of news media practices to a crisis event.

However, there are some limitations for the research. The media content analysis was limited to the selected news samples retrieved from online databases. Besides, the criteria those databases used for collecting the news may affect the profile of news samples. Thus the result based on these news coverage may not simulate to border media coverage. At the same time, the amount numbers of news articles related to the crisis are also confined by the news agencies selected. Different crises types, the locations involved and the organizational behaviors of each news agencies/newspaper may well influence the coverage of the crisis. Like a double-sided sword in research, these limitations can also act as suggestions for future study in a similar area. In order to refine the media model, these key elements of news practices in local news agencies should be further examined and studied.

Furthermore, the inter-media agenda setting theory has received much attention for explaining its applications to international news coverage to domestic news practices. The question of the gap between coverage from international news agencies and local newspapers in terms of crisis issue selection is still a field needing further exploring. The future research should include possible work of case studies with different sampling methods and samples to test and amend the media model expanded by this research. Testing different samples such as major newspapers is recommended to further improve the result of this study.

Since the research has already considered the differences between media systems as a variable that may affect the outcome of media coverage of a crisis, additional research with a focus on detailed preferences or choice of themes, frames and sources of each media environment are also needed from the perspective of the crisis. Additionally, the model should also be tested for the different types of cross-national crises. For example, there might be a difference in the news practices between the types of mass product recall, a boycott crisis related to human interests or a cultural clash. The differences between the amount of news, themes, frames and sources used for the various types of cross-national crises should be further studied.

Last but not least, the application of this media model should be tested integrated with the crisis management strategies throughout the crisis life cycle. The combination of crisis responses from involved organizations takes a huge step toward to the practical application. The model can be improved by examining the real crisis response situations. After all, the original idea about developing this model was to better understand the news media practices in a crisis and enable crisis management teams to make efficient and well prepared crisis management plans. Thus, it is important to do a case study of the best practices of crisis management. This may provide efficient and practical guidelines for this complicated and dynamic global issue.

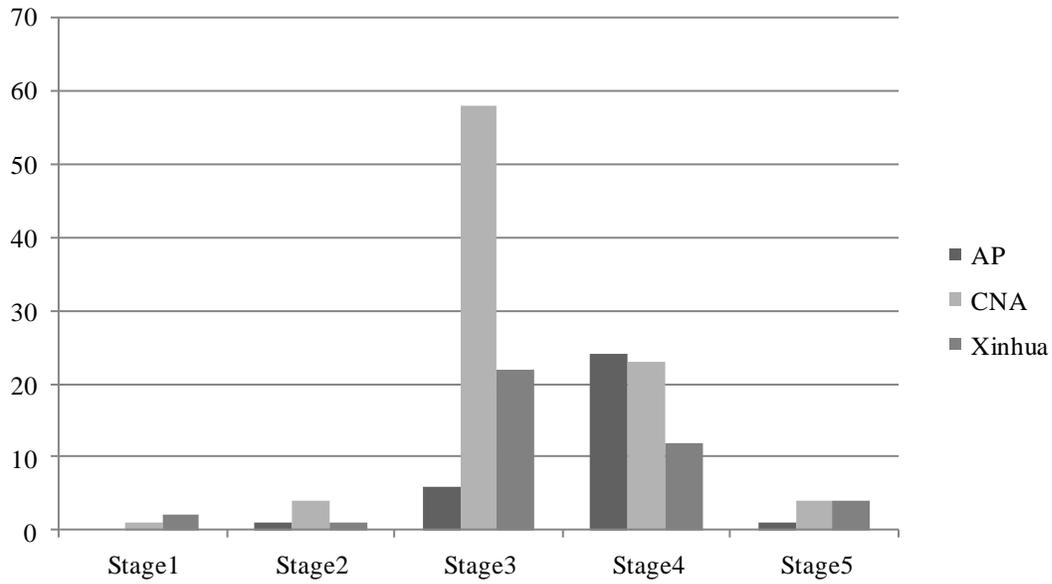


Figure 5-1. News frequency of three agencies by stage.

APPENDIX
CODING SHEET

Column	Variable label	Value Labels	Column Record
1-3	Identification Number	101-300	
4	Coder Identification	1 = Coder 1 2 = Coder 2	
5	Blank		
6	News Agency	1 = AP 2 = CNA 3 = Xinhua	
7	Crisis Stage ¹	1 = Stage 1 2 = Stage 2 3 = Stage 3 4 = Stage 4 5 = Stage 5	
8-11	Length-Words ²	0000-5000	
12	Blank		
13	Foxconn [®] Labor Mistreatment	0 = No 1 = Yes	
14	Employee suicide issue	0 = No 1 = Yes	
15	Labor right concern in China	0 = No 1 = Yes	
16	Financial or business Performance	0 = No 1 = Yes	
17	Foxconn [®] or Apple [®] business market Impact	0 = No 1 = Yes	
18	Apple [®] 's Responsibility (supplier issue)	0 = No 1 = Yes	
19	Reactions of Foxconn [®] 's Clients	0 = No 1 = Yes	
20	Activist Group	0 = No 1 = Yes	
21	Reaction of Taiwanese Company in China	0 = No 1 = Yes	

¹ The coder should follow this instruction according to the stages defined in literature review:

Stage 1: January 23, 2010 to February, 28, 2010

Stage 2: March 1, 2010 to April, 30, 2010

Stage 3: May 1, 2010 to May 31, 2010

Stage 4: June 1, 2010 to September 30

Stage 5: October 1, 2010 to December, 2010

² The number of the words in an article can be calculated both in English and Chinese

22	Foxconn [®] Reactions	0 = No 1 = Yes	
23	Chinese Government Reactions	0 = No 1 = Yes	
24	Taiwanese Government Reactions	0 = No 1 = Yes	
25	Investigation or results of labor mistreatment	0 = No 1 = Yes	
26	Other	0 = No 1 = Yes	
	Identified the “other”		
27-28	Number of Themes	01-98	
29	Blank		
30	Conflict Frame ³	0 = No 1 = Yes	
31	Human Interest Frame ⁴	0 = No 1 = Yes	
32	Economic Consequence Frame ⁵	0 = No 1 = Yes	
33	Responsibility Frame ⁶	0 = No	

³ The conflict frame “emphasizes conflict between individuals, groups, or institutions as a means of capturing audience interest.” If the answers of the following question have one or more “yes”, then the article belongs to conflict frame.

Does the news story emphasize the conflict between Foxconn and its workers?

Does the news story emphasize the conflict between China’s business community and labor community?

⁴ The human interest frame “brings a human face or an emotional angle to the presentation of an event, issue or problem,” which reflects an effort to “personalize the news, dramatize or ‘emotionalize’ the news.” If the answers of the following question have one or more “yes”, then the article is categorized as human interest frame:

Does the news story tell stories of a specific human or humans?

Does the news story have an emotional angle to present to issue in an effort to personalize or dramatize the news event, by using words that express feelings such as a sense of loss and suffering?

⁵ The economic consequences frame highlights “the consequences an event or issue “ will have economically on an individual, group, institution, region, or country;” If the answers of the following question have one or more “yes”, then the article is categorized as economic consequences frame:

Does the story mention the compensation Foxconn[®] gave to the workers who died or were injured at its factories or to their families?

Does the story mention the financial impacts on Foxconn[®] ?

⁶ The responsibility frame attributes accountability of the cause or solution of an issue or problem “to either the government or to an individual or group,” wrote Semetko and Valkenburg. If the answers of the following question have one or more “yes”, then the article is categorized as human interest frame:

Does the news article suggest that the Chinese government is responsible for deaths at Foxconn[®] ?

Does the news article suggest that management of Foxconn[®] is responsible for deaths at Foxconn[®] ?

Does the news article suggest that the victims themselves are responsible for deaths at Foxconn[®] ?

		1 = Yes	
34	Moral Frame ⁷	0 = No 1 = Yes	
35	Blank		
36	Foxconn [®]	0 = No 1 = Yes	
37	Chinese Government Officials	0 = No 1 = Yes	
38	Taiwanese Government Officials	0 = No 1 = Yes	
39	Foxconn [®] Workers, Their families and Friends	0 = No 1 = Yes	
40	Activist Groups	0 = No 1 = Yes	
41	Researchers	0 = No 1 = Yes	
42	Apple [®] and Other Clients	0 = No 1 = Yes	
43	Other Media	0 = No 1 = Yes	
44	Communities/Residents	0 = No 1 = Yes	
45	Financial Agencies	0 = No 1 = Yes	
46	Internet User and Unidentified	0 = No 1 = Yes	
47	Others	0 = No 1 = Yes	
	Identified the “other”		

⁷ The moral frame underscores the “moral prescriptions” of an event, raising the question, often indirectly, of “how to behave.” If the answers of the following question have one or more “yes”, then the article is categorized as moral frame:

Does the news article raise the questions of how the Chinese government should behave?

Does the news article raise the questions of how the management of Foxconn[®] should behave?

Does the news article raise the questions of how Foxconn[®]’s workers should behave?

Does the news article raise the questions of how the Apple[®] should behave?

Does the news article raise the questions of how society should behave?

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Wei-Ling Yang was born in Kaohsiung, Taiwan. She became a Bachelor of Arts in political science with specialization in international relations from the best university in Taiwan, National Taiwan University. With international background, she joined the graduate program of international communication in the College of Journalism and Communication at the University of Florida in fall 2010. In 2012, she graduated and received her master's degree in mass communication in the spring of 2012. Her research interests are international public relations, international communications, media systems, crisis communication and international advertisement.