

Abstract

The aim of this master thesis is to examine how the media portray a political crisis, and how the crisis will have a negative effect on a politician's political image. This is an interesting problem, because a crisis is estimated to have a negative impact on trust and credibility, which is pivotal for the politician's image. For instance, having trust seems to be fundamental to how constituents place their votes.

Crises and crisis communication is in this thesis viewed in a social constructivist perspective. This refers to a crisis as a social construction, which is constructed through interaction between stakeholders and their perceptions. This means that a crisis should be regarded as a multi vocal process that can change at any point.

The thesis is based upon a case study of the accusations of Lars Løkke's financial irregularities in 2014, and it consists of three different analyses; an analysis of the media coverage, an analysis of the portrayal of Løkke's response and the stakeholders' reaction, as well as an analysis of the leading frame in the media. The primary theory used for the analyses consist of crisis communication, political communication, theory of media, and framing. In addition, a great amount of empiric data, consisting of two interviews, 397 coded articles, as well as a selection of other articles and television broadcasts for text analysis.

The focus of the analyses is the different stakeholders' communication in the media; how it influences the crisis' development and scope, along with the crisis-affected politician's image. There is also a focus on the crisis-situation, as we are convinced that a crisis cannot be understood without knowledge of the context. Thus, the thesis aims to show how communication and the context of the crisis can have a negative impact on the political image in a mediated political situation.

Through the analyses, we will show that it is primarily the media, who play a significant role in how the political actor is perceived. As the majority of the population obtains their information through the media, the way politicians are portrayed can have an impact on how the stakeholders view politicians. The political image is often threatened by the media's negative representation of the crisis-affected politician as well as different actors' input to the media, provided that the stakeholders do not accept the politician's communication in the media.

Likewise, through the analysis we will highlight that a crisis can be aggravated if the politician has a history of similar accusations. This is due to the stakeholders believing that the case could have been avoided.