

Content Analysis of Image Restoration Theory in the Film Sully 2016

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ABSTRACT

Aside from entertainment, a film can also be considered a form of communication. Films based on true stories have gained popularity among the general public due to their curiosity about what actually happened. Viewers of true-story films want to see how the main character solves the problems or crisis portrayed in the film and find inspiration and motivation for their own lives. This research aims to examine the content of Image Restoration Theory in the film Sully. This study employs a qualitative descriptive method, utilizing data collection techniques involving document analysis and literature review. The findings of this research reveal that in the film Sully have several Image Repair Strategies content that employed by the main character, Sully, in the post-Hudson River incident moments. There are 1 Reduction of Offensiveness strategy, 3 Denial strategies, and 1 Corrective Action strategy within the Image Repair Strategies component. It was also found that Sully did not employ Evasion of Responsibility and Mortification strategies, indicating his confidence that he did not commit the alleged mistakes.

KEYWORDS

Film; Crisis; Sully; Image Restoration Theory; Content Analysis

INTRODUCTION

Film has become an integral part of daily social life. Aside from entertainment, a film can also be considered a form of communication. According to Effendy, film is an audio-visual medium used to convey a message to a group of people gathered in a specific place. There are numerous film genres, each to capture the attention of a particular audience towards the content or issues depicted in the film.

Films based on true stories have gained popularity among the general public due to their curiosity about what happened. In his article titled 'Why Are Films Based on Real Life Events So Damn Successful?' (2020), Marcos Spalding explains why films based on true stories are so successful. He suggests that people feel that the main character in such films represents the average person who faces challenges in life. Viewers of true-story films want to see how the main character solves the problems portrayed in the film and find inspiration and motivation for their own lives.

One such film based on a true story is "Sully." "Sully" is a film produced by Warner Bros. Studios and directed by the renowned Clint Eastwood in 2016. The film stars Tom Hanks as the main character, portraying Captain Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger, the pilot in the story. "Sully" was released in the same year as other popular Hollywood films, including "La La Land," "Suicide Squad," "Captain America: Civil War," and others. "Sully" also ranks among the Top 25 films by U.S./Canada Box Office Earned in 2016, alongside

other popular films mentioned above, and is one of the top 2 films based on a true story, along with "The Revenant."

The film tells the story of Captain Chesley 'Sully' Sullenberger, who successfully landed his plane on the Hudson River in New York, United States, in an emergency. On January 15, 2009, US Airways Flight 1549 flew an Airbus A320-214 from LaGuardia Airport in New York at 3:24 PM EST (Eastern Standard Time). The pilot in charge of flying the plane was Captain Chesley Sullenberger (Sully), accompanied by First Officer Jeffrey Skiles. However, shortly after takeoff, just three minutes into the flight, the plane struck a flock of birds, damaging both engines. With limited time, Captain Sully decided to land the plane on the Hudson River and successfully saved all 155 passengers and crew on board (IMDB, 2016).

Following this incident, the media and the American public hailed Captain Sully as a hero and an aviation safety icon. However, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB) was tasked with investigating whether the plane could return to the airport, as a water landing was a high-risk option. After simulations conducted during the hearings, the results indicated that the plane's engines were still functional and had enough power to return to LaGuardia Airport. This statement threatened Captain Sully's reputation and career as a pilot.

After a series of computer simulations and voice recordings, Sully and Jeff sought to prove they did not have the time or options to reach the nearest airport. They demonstrated that landing on the Hudson River was the only option and explained that they had followed proper safety procedures. Ultimately, the investigation concluded that Captain Sully's decision was correct, and he was a hero who had successfully navigated an extremely dangerous situation with courage and professionalism.

The content of Image Restoration Theory is evident in the film "Sully," especially when Sully goes through the days following the emergency landing on the Hudson River, during which he has to face interviews with the NTSB that ultimately lead to a hearing to determine the fate of his career as a pilot.

Image Restoration Theory (also known as Image Repair Theory) was proposed by William Benoit in 1995. This theory focuses on how individuals and organizations employ strategies to repair and maintain their damaged reputation or public image when faced with perceived wrongdoing or a crisis. The theory provides a framework for understanding persuasive communication strategies individuals or organizations use when responding to accusations or negative perceptions.

Benoit identified five leading strategies that individuals or organizations can use to restore their image: denial, evasion of responsibility, reduction of offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification. These strategies involve various techniques, such as denying the alleged actions, shifting blame, minimizing the severity of the violation, demonstrating steps taken to rectify the situation, or expressing regret and seeking forgiveness.

In "Sully," the application of Image Restoration Theory is visible, particularly when Sully undergoes the post-emergency landing interviews with the NTSB, which ultimately leads to a hearing to determine the future of his pilot career.

Based on the above information, the researcher aims to determine which Image Restoration Theory strategies Sully used to clear his name after the emergency landing on the Hudson River and whether these strategies were effective.

METHOD



This qualitative descriptive study uses an Elo & Kyngas model content analysis approach. The study analyzes two types of data: primary data and secondary data. Preliminary data in this research is the film "Sully," released on September 9, 2016, with a duration of 96 minutes. From the total duration, the researcher identified five sequences of scenes that were deemed to contain content related to image restoration theory. Meanwhile, secondary data in this research was obtained from journals, articles, books, and other sources.

The data analysis technique in this research involves an inductive content analysis approach following the Elo & Kyngas model, which entails recording important codes. Regarding the research's reliability test, the researcher employs data triangulation, which involves cross-checking data from various sources using various methods and over different periods.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This research investigates image restoration content in the film "Sully" (2016). The methodology employed by the researcher in this study is content analysis. This analysis will identify explicit and implicit messages conveyed in the scenes of the film "Sully."

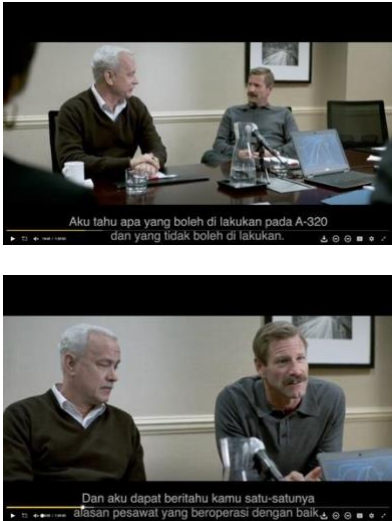
Table 1. Scene Snippets of Framing the Narrative of Events (Reduction of Offensiveness)

Visual	Scene Synopsis	Dialog
	<p>Sully and Jeff attended a closed-door meeting with the NTSB following the emergency landing on the Hudson River. The NTSB considered the incident an accident, but Sully refuted this claim.</p>	<p>Charles: Today, we begin with our Operations and Human Performance investigation of the U.S. Air Flight 1549 crash. Sully: Water landing. Charles: Captain? Sully: This was not a crash. It was not a ditching. We knew what we were executing—a forced water landing.</p>
		

In this sequence of scenes, Sully refutes the NTSB's statement that the Hudson River incident was an avoidable accident. Sully firmly frames the narrative of the "water landing." The reframing of the narrative by Sully in this sequence falls under the strategy of "Reduction of Offensiveness." Sully's assertive expression can be interpreted as his rejection of any tarnishing of his reputation as a pilot with 40 years of experience. In this

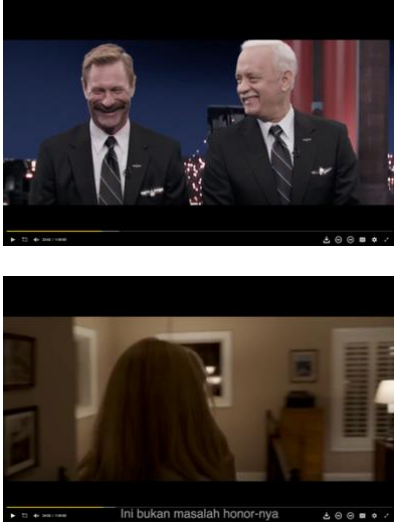
sequence, the image restoration content is evident through Sully's direct rebuttal and reframing of the NTSB's narrative.

Table 2. Scene Snippets of Denying the Incident (Denial)

Visual	Scene Synopsis	Dialog
	<p>In another closed-door meeting with the NTSB following the emergency landing on the Hudson River, Jeff, the co-pilot, defended Sully by presenting facts about Sully's professional actions as a senior pilot during the incident. Jeff also convinced the NTSB that Sully's actions ensured their survival, allowing them to be present at the closed-door meeting that day.</p>	<p>Jeff: Okay. Then there is the most essential fact. There are only two people who know what happened in the cockpit that day, and I'm one of them.</p> <p>Charles: And we appreciate your perspective...</p> <p>Jeff: Why do you think we're even here today? It's because Captain Sullenberger did not head back to LaGuardia. Look, I just finished training on the A320, and I can tell you that the only reason the plane operated as well as it did, that the aircraft could land anywhere, is because Captain Sullenberger turned on the Auxiliary Power Unit.</p> <p>Elizabeth: He was simply following the QRH...</p> <p>Jeff: No. He wasn't following the proper procedure at all. And I know, because I had the QRH in my hands. He switched on the APU immediately after engine roll back. According to Airbus, that's the fifteenth thing on the list to do. Fifteenth. If he'd followed the damn rules, we'd all be dead. Maybe that's the part you don't like. You're not used to having answers to your guesses.</p>

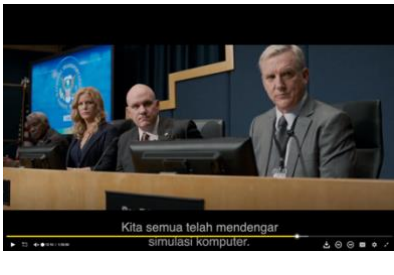
In this sequence of scenes, Jeff highlights Sully's professionalism in handling the emergency on the plane, specifically by activating the Auxiliary Power Unit (APU), a type of small turbine with various functions, particularly in large aircraft as a source of electrical power and pneumatic tasks on the ground and during flight (Damanik & Janfris, 2020). Jeff confidently adds that the pilots would have run out of time if Sully had followed the Quick Reference Handbook (QRH) instructions, which indicate APU activation as the 15th step. Jeff vehemently denies the statements made by the NTSB that pinned the pilots down during the emergency landing incident. This falls under the strategy of "Denial." Jeff's annoyed expression and raised tone of voice also imply his dissatisfaction when the NTSB continuously cornered him and Sully regarding their actions during the incident.

Table 3. Scene Snippets of Taking a Repairing Action (Corrective Action)

Visual	Scene Synopsis	Dialog
	<p>Sully and the cabin crew attended an invitation to appear on a television station for an interview on a talk show. Afterward, he explained to his wife why he and the cabin crew attended the interview.</p>	<p>Sully: Jeff was relaxed and funny. He should be getting all our interview requests. Lorraine: Are they paying you for all this media stuff, at least? Sully: It's news, Lorr. No payment necessary.</p>

After appearing publicly, Sully calls his worried and anxious wife, who inquires about her husband's well-being and questions whether the other cabin crew members are compensated for what the media has portrayed. Sully calmly states that his public appearance is not motivated by seeking honor or compensation. The film does not explicitly elaborate on his reasons for appearing in public. Implicitly, this scene illustrates that Sully has chosen to take action by appearing in public, which can be interpreted as an act of confidence. Sully wants to demonstrate that he and the cabin crew did the right thing and there is no reason for them to hide from the American public. While not directly aimed at addressing the consequences of the allegations and preventing the incident's recurrence, Sully's actions fall under the "Corrective Action" strategy. It is evident that the individual facing the crisis (Sully) takes responsibility and is committed to improving the situation.

Table 4. Scene Snippets of Denying the Incident (Denial)

Visual	Scene Synopsis	Dialog
	<p>The day of the final NTSB hearing regarding the Hudson River incident finally arrived. Sully and Jeff attended the hearing, beginning with listening to the NTSB's explanation of the investigation results, including data and computer simulations that suggested Sully's fault because the simulations successfully showed that the</p>	<p>Sully: Can we get serious now? Charles: Captain? Sully: We've heard about the computer simulations and now we're watching actual sims, and I find it hard to believe you're still not taking into account the human factor.</p>



pilots could have safely landed the plane at the nearest airport. However, Sully opposed this conclusion and explained, using logic and human behavior in facing critical situations.

Charles: Human-piloted simulations show that you could have made it back to the airport.

Sully: No. They don't. These pilots are not reacting like human beings. Like people who are experiencing this for the first time.

Charles: They may not be reacting like you did, but...

Sully: Immediately after the bird strike, they're turning for the airport. Just as in the computer sims, correct?

Charles: That is correct.

Sully: They obviously knew the turn and exactly what heading to fly. They didn't run a check or switch on the APU...


Charles: They had the same parameters you faced...

Sully: No one warned us. No one said, you're about to lose both engines... at a lower altitude than any jet in history. But be cool. Turn back for LaGuardia like you're going out to pick up the goddamn milk.

This was a dual engine loss at 2,800 feet followed by an immediate water landing. With 155 souls on board. No one has ever even trained for an incident like that. No one.

During the final hearing on the Hudson River incident, Sully attentively listened to all the data and simulations when the plane lost its engines. The dialogue "Can we get serious now?" can be interpreted as Sully's frustration with the presented simulations. He is disappointed that the NTSB continues to overlook the most crucial factor, which is human judgment. Sully then firmly and confidently rebuts and calmly explains that in the simulations presented, the factor of human decision-making was not considered at all. According to him, humans need time to analyze an event and make decisions. In this sequence of scenes, there is a "Denial" strategy, where Sully directly refutes what the simulations have shown.

Table 5. Scene Snippets of Denying the Incident (Denial)

Visual	Scene Synopsis	Dialog
	<p>Still, within the series of final NTSB hearings regarding the Hudson River incident, Sully refutes the landing at Teterboro Airport because the events in the simulation did not make sense. This was due to their rapid maneuvering based on the instructions before the simulation. Captain Sully felt he was not given enough time for analysis and decision-making during the emergency landing and felt cornered during the hearing.</p>	<p>Sully: And the Teterboro landing, with the unrealistic bank angle... this wasn't the Blue Angels up there. I'd like to know how many times the pilot practiced that maneuver before he actually pulled it off. I'm not questioning the pilots. They're good pilots. But they've clearly been instructed to head to the airports immediately after the bird strike. You have allowed no time for analysis and decision making. And with these sims, you have taken all the humanity out of the cockpit. How much time did these pilots spend making their plans for this event? Hours, days? (beat) You're looking for human error...? Then, make it human. Please ask them how many practice runs they had... Elizabeth: 17.</p>

Continuing from Sully's objection in the previous scene, this sequence has a "Denial" strategy. Sully, who has had a four-decade career as a pilot, finds the simulations presented unreasonable because, based on his experience, he understands that the maneuvers shown in the simulations are complicated to perform. Implicitly, Sully seems to doubt that these simulations were only practiced once due to the complexity of the maneuvering technique. Thanks to his experience, Sully can confidently and assertively question this.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Crisis can occur in both organizations and individuals. Sully experienced a crisis following his decision to make an emergency landing on the Hudson River. When the crisis peaked, particularly from the NTSB, Sully realized the need to develop an appropriate strategy to restore his image.

The content of the Image Restoration Theory, specifically the Image Repair Strategies, is evident in the film "Sully" through refutation, reframing of the narrative, and Sully's assumption of responsibility in the days following the Hudson River incident. As explained by Benoit in the Reduction of Offensiveness strategy, an individual accused of wrongdoing may attempt to reduce the negative feelings associated with their behavior

(justification). The accused can emphasize the message they want to convey to minimize the negative impact of their actions on the audience, strengthening the positive influence on the accused. The accused can also reduce the perceived insult from the actions and use transcendence to place their actions in a broader and more desirable context. Additionally, the accused may counterattack the accuser, arguing that their actions were correct to reduce the impact of the accusation.

These strategies are evident in the film's first sequence when Sully changes the narrative that the Hudson River incident was not an accident. He insists that it was a "forced" water landing after careful calculation, given his extensive experience as a senior pilot. In this sequence, Sully appears very confident in his actions. His four-decade-long career as a pilot has made him an expert in assessing situations and making the right decisions, which is essential to establish his firm and confident stance in opposing the NTSB's accusations.

Another strategy is Denial, where someone accused of wrongdoing can directly deny the action or claim that they did not do it, even stating that the intention of their actions was for the greater good. This strategy is evident in the second sequence when Jeff vigorously defends Sully's actions during the incident. The NTSB believes that what Sully did was ordinary and could easily be copied from the Quick Reference Handbook (QRH). Jeff refutes this statement and explains that the steps were on page 15 of the QRH. If Sully had followed the steps as per the QRH, they would not have faced the situation they did on that day. Jeff's role in denying the NTSB's statement is crucial in building a firm and confident impression on both crew members who genuinely experienced the incident.

Denial is also evident in the fourth sequence when Sully denies the results of the computer simulation presented by the NTSB. He argues that the simulation the NTSB offers is entirely different from what happened in reality. In the simulation, the pilot participants were informed of what would happen and how to handle it. However, no one warned Sully that his plane would lose its engines due to bird strikes. No one guided him to make decisions, and he believed it required additional time to calculate the possibilities. According to Sully, this made the simulation invalid.

In the fifth sequence, to reinforce his refutation of the computer simulation, Sully presents his thoughts on the unrealistic bank angle in the simulation directed toward Teterboro Airport. As a seasoned professional pilot, Sully can quickly identify that the displayed runway was incredibly challenging. Thus, he uses his reasoning to question how often the pilot participants practiced maneuvering at such a difficult angle. After learning that the simulation pilots practiced 17 times, Sully uses this information to deny further that in the real-world scenario, the pilots only had one chance to decide life and death.

Moving on to the next strategy, according to Benoit, an accused individual can offer corrective action as part of the Image Repair Strategies. The accused can show to rectify the damage done and/or take steps to prevent the recurrence of the error. Although Sully's actions in the third sequence do not directly prevent the recurrence of the error, appearing on television can be seen as an attempt to meet people and assert that he is

right, therefore not needing to hide from the public. This step can be interpreted as an image-repairing action. If the public initially assumed that Sully made a mistake, seeing him brave enough to appear and provide clarifications may lead the public to reconsider whether Sully made a mistake.

"Sully" is closely related to the content of Image Restoration Theory through the actions and interactions of the main character, Sully, during the post-Hudson River incident moments. These post-incident moments include the initial conflict, described in the closed meeting between Sully and Jeff with the NTSB, the formulation of image restoration strategies during the days' Sully awaited the final NTSB hearing, and the delivery of messages and denial of accusations to improve his image on the day of the final hearing. Image Restoration Theory content is evident through refutation, reframing of the narrative, and Sully's sense of responsibility in the days following the Hudson River incident.

The presented image restoration content is not displayed explicitly. Still, the codes Sully shows in his actions appear structured and well-prepared during the post-incident period, before the hearing, and in delivering his message during the final hearing with the NTSB. The strategies employed by Sully in restoring his image were highly effective, as evidenced by his victory in the hearing against the NTSB.

CONCLUSION

The findings of this research reveal that in the film Sully have several Image Repair Strategies content that employed by the main character, Sully, in the post-Hudson River incident moments. There are 1 Reduction of Offensiveness strategy, 3 Denial strategies, and 1 Corrective Action strategy within the Image Repair Strategies component. It was also found that Sully did not employ Evasion of Responsibility and Mortification strategies, indicating his confidence that he did not commit the alleged mistakes.

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