The Impact of Apology on Organization – Public Relationships and Perceptions of Corporate Social Responsibility

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This study tests Benoit's five image restoration strategies within a single crisis situation to examine how each strategy impacts perceptions of the organization – public relationship and corporate social responsibility. An experiment measures consumers' reactions to the different crisis messages. Results indicate the reducing the offensiveness strategy led to higher perceptions of the organization – public relationship and corporate social responsibility. This study provides a guide for how corporate communicators should develop messages in times of crisis. The study provides clearer evidence of how the messages communicated during a crisis impacts corporate social responsibility and the organization – public relationship.

A crisis is defined as a major occurrence that may have negative outcomes on an organization, its publics, and its good name (Fearn-Banks, 2002). Stakeholders will forgive the organization's part in a crisis if the organization has been a good corporate citizen in the past (Coombs, 2000). Customers also expect more from a company with a good reputation during a crisis (Dean, 2004).

When figuring out how to respond to a crisis, organizations have to be concerned about their organization – public relationships with stakeholders. The crisis may use up all the "goodwill" the public has toward the organization. Benoit's (1995) image restoration theory is one way to examine how an organization can repair an image after a crisis (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000). If the organization has little responsibility for the crisis, a defensive strategy may be employed (deny the event or attack the accuser), and if the organization has a high level of responsibility for the crisis, it should use an accommodative strategy (offer a full apology or seek corrective action) (Coombs, 1998). The image restoration strategy employed should be selected based on the organization – public relationship (Kim, 2002; Coombs, 2000).

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to examine the crisis and the organization's response (e.g., Benoit & Brinson, 1994; Benoit & Lindsey, 1987; Brinson & Benoit, 1996, 1999). The case studies provide "retrospective analysis that can be used to inform future decisions" (Dardis & Haigh, 2009, p. 103). The case studies are useful, but researchers are calling for more prescriptive research focusing more on predictive value and causal inferences (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000; Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2008). The current study focuses on prediction in order to provide practitioners guidelines on how image restoration strategies employed in crisis communication messages impact organization – public relationships and perceptions of corporate social responsibility. Organizations need to understand how the messages they disseminate during a crisis impact stakeholder relationships and perceptions. There are many different strategies an organization can employ, but the strategy may harm the public's perceptions of the relationship and goodwill.

There is limited research examining how the image restoration strategy employed by an organization impacts the organization – public relationships and perceptions of corporate social responsibility. Much of the research employs retrospective case studies to examine the crisis and the organization's response (e.g., Benoit & Brinson, 1994; Benoit & Lindsey, 1987; Brinson & Benoit, 1996, 1999). The case studies provide "retrospective analysis that can be used to inform future decisions" (Dardis & Haigh, 2009, p. 103). The case studies are useful, but researchers are calling for more prescriptive research focusing more on predictive value and causal inferences (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000; Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2008). The current study focuses on prediction in order to provide practitioners guidelines on how image restoration strategies employed in crisis communication messages impact organization – public relationships and perceptions of corporate social responsibility. Organizations need to understand how the messages they disseminate during a crisis impact stakeholder relationships and perceptions. There are many different strategies an organization can employ, but the strategy may harm the public's perceptions of the relationship and goodwill.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Organization – Public Relationships (OPR)
Organization – public relationships are defined as "the state which exists between an organization and its key publics, in which actions of either can impact the economic, social, cultural or political well being of the other" (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998, p. 62). Organizations highlight the relationships they have with their publics in order to have a competitive advantage over their competition (Brunig, DeMiglio, & Embry, 2006). Hung (2005, p. 409-410) states companies have all types of relationships with their publics. These types of relationships are placed on a continuum where one anchor point is "concern for self interest" and the other anchor is "concern for others." Exploitive relationships anchor the "concern for self interest" point and communal relationships would anchor the "concern for others" point.

There are six components to organization – public relationships including: control mutuality (power to influence each other), trust (integrity, dependability, and competence in the other), commitment (want to put effort into having a relationship), satisfaction (positive benefits of the relationship), communal relationships (concerned with welfare of the other party), and exchange relationships (exchange benefits in return for the same) (Hon & Grunig, 1999).

The organization – public relationship dimensions of trust, openness, involvement, commitment, and investment predict customer satisfaction toward an organization (Ledingham & Bruning, 1998), and the company's brand (Kim & Chan-Olmstead, 2005). When an organization communicates with publics during times of conflict, organization – public relationships mediate the impact of the organization's message (Huang, 2001).

Corporate Social Responsibility
One way an organization can protect against the backlash of crisis and nurture the organization – public relationship is through corporate social responsibility practices. Carroll (1999) defines corporate social responsibility as "the social responsibility of business encompasses the economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations that society has of organizations at a given point in time" (p. 283). Definitions for corporate social responsibility vary, but in the end, the organization has to do "good" in the community (Deetz, 2003). Organizations continue to be pressured to provide money to charities, act in environmentally friendly ways, and help solve social problems in the local community (Mohr, Webb, & Harris, 2001). Around $303 billion is spent on corporate social responsibility efforts in the U. S. in 2009 (Giving USA Foundation, 2010).

There are three types of corporate social responsibility activities: moral/ethical (e.g., treating employees fairly and acting responsibly toward the environment), discretionary (e.g., contributing to arts and cultural program, contributing resources to raise social awareness of issues, and supporting children and family issues), and relational (e.g., striving to build long-term relations with its consumers and willing to listen to stakeholders) (David, Kline, & Dai, 2005). Doing "good" is less important to participants and relational and moral practices are more important (David et al., 2005).

Research shows consumers will purchase products from an organization supporting a cause (Ross et al., 1990-1991; Ross et al., 1992). CSR perceptions are moderated by consumers' responses to the type of CSR activity an organization is participating in as well as quality of product (Sen & Bhattacharya, 2001).

Fisk (1986) states organizations should build goodwill through practicing CSR activities prior to times of crisis. Research shows consumers are not as heavily influenced by negative information about a company when they know the company practices corporate social responsibility (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2004; Pfau, Haigh, Simms, & Wigley, 2007). However, stakeholders' have to be aware of the CSR efforts before these actions impact their beliefs and attitudes toward the firm (Sen, Bhattacharya & Korschun, 2006). If Individuals are aware of CSR efforts they "[have a] more positive

company-related association; displayed greater organizational identification with the company; and indicated a greater intent to purchase products, seek employment, and invest in the company than respondents who were unaware of the initiative" (Sen et al., 2006, p. 164).

Image Restoration Strategies
The public may be more forgiving toward the organization if they have a good relationship and they support the organization's corporate social responsibility efforts. Both organization – public relationships and corporate social responsibility have an image component (Kim, 2001; Dowling, 2001). After a crisis, the organization's image will be tarnished. This is when the organization may employ Benoit's strategies to repair its image (Coombs & Schmidt, 2000). Benoit (1995) proposed five major strategies for trying to repair images after a crisis (denial, evade or reduce responsibility, reduce the offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification). The first defense is to deny an undesirable act occurred or that the actor is the one who performed it. One might also shift the blame (another form of denial) to another (Benoit, 1995).

Another defensive strategy is to evade or reduce responsibility for the act. Benoit (1995) lists several ways actors can reduce responsibility. They can use provocation, defeasibility, claim an accident, or state they had good intentions. The actor may claim someone provoked him/her to perform the act. Defeasibility is another option, which is when the actor claims he/she lacked information or ability. A third way to reduce responsibility is to declare the action was an accident. A final way to reduce responsibility is to claim the actor had good intentions when carrying out the act. One example of this is when Sears said it had a policy of preventive maintenance it was accused of performing unnecessary auto repairs (Bradford & Garrett, 1995).

The actor may also try to reduce the offensiveness of the act by using the following strategies: bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attack the accuser, or offer compensation (Benoit, 1995). Bolstering "attempts to improve the accused's reputation in hopes offsetting or making up for the damage to the image from the undesirable act" (Benoit, 1995, p. 73). Minimization attempts to reduce the degree of negative feelings toward the act, thereby reducing the negative feelings toward the actor. "Differentiation and transcendence, in their different ways, attempt to reduce the negative affect associated with the act" (Benoit, 1995, p. 73). The actor may attack the accuser to lessen the sympathy felt by others; and compensation should reduce the perceived severity of the injury. Threat to the image is associated with the function of committing the act; therefore reducing the offensiveness of the act should restore the reputation (Benoit, 1995).

The actor may take corrective action strategy. This is when they fix the problem and promise they will not repeat the action (Benoit, 1995). Finally, the actor might employ the mortification strategy, or apologize, express regret and request forgiveness. These strategies might partially restore the actor's image (Benoit, 1995).

The severity of the crisis and the organization's responsibility should influence the strategy employed. In the case of low responsibility and low severity, an organization should attack the accuser or deny the event (Kim, 2002). In the case of low responsibility and high severity, the organization should offer an excuse (Kim, 2002). In the case of high responsibility and low severity, justification and ingratiation are two strategies employed. When there is high severity and high responsibility, the organization should take corrective action and offer a full apology (Kim, 2002).

The image restoration strategy employed should be selected based on the organization – public relationship (Kim, 2002; Coombs, 2000). If there is not a positive or favorable relationship, the strategies employed have little effect on attitudes toward the organization, and there is a negative perception of the crisis. The relationship history influences how the public perceives the crisis and the image restoration strategy (i.e., attack accuser, denial, excuse, justification, ingratiation, corrective action, and full apology). The initial positive attitudes publics have based on the organization – public relationship will help deflect the negative damage of a crisis.

Research Questions
There is limited research examining how image restoration techniques (denial, reduce offensiveness, corrective action, mortification, and evade responsibility) impact perceptions of the organization – public relationship and corporate social responsibility (Benoit, 1995). For example, if a company employs the denial strategy and denies wrongdoing, or shifts the blame to some else, then the attribution of blame shifts to the other party, strengthening the organization – public relationship and perceptions of corporate social responsibility.

When an organization chooses to apologize (mortification strategy), it should lead to positive perceptions of organization – public relationship and corporate social responsibility because the company says "I'm sorry." These words mean everything in interpersonal relationships, so they may have the same effect on organization – public relationships. However, this does not shift the attribution of blame, so publics may still blame the organization for the crisis. Coombs and Holladay (2008) state "researchers have over-emphasized the use of apology/mortification as the 'best' crisis response" (p. 253).

The reduce offensiveness strategy makes the crisis seem less severe. Individuals' perceptions of corporate social responsibility may be positive because the organization is trying to place the crisis in a different context, and perceptions of the organization – public relationship should not suffer because the organization is trying to make the crisis seem less severe.

If an organization employs the evade responsibility strategy, it may actually have a negative impact on organization – public relationships because the organization is not taking responsibility for its actions. It is unclear how this impacts perceptions of corporate social responsibility.

Organizations often state the problem will not happen again and explain the actions taken to avoid the problems (corrective action) (Benoit, 1995), the organization – public relationship and perceptions of corporate social responsibility should remain strong because the organization has fixed the problem.

There is limited research examining how the strategy used to repair the organization's image impacts the organization – public relationship and perceptions of corporate social responsibility toward the organization. Therefore this study posits the following research questions:

RQ1: Does the image restoration strategy employed impact the organization – public relationship?

RQ2: Does the image restoration strategy employed impact perceptions of corporate social responsibility?

METHOD

Participants
Participants were recruited from introductory communication classes at an eastern university in the USA. A total of 191 participants (mean age = 20.79) completed the one phase study administered via pencil and paper. Students were randomly assigned to one of five treatment conditions. More females participated in the study (70%).

Experimental Materials
A news story was developed for each of Benoit's (1995) five major image restoration strategies (evade responsibility, denial, reduce offensiveness, mortification, corrective action). The scenario consisted of a snack food company named H&D Foods distributing "chocolate lava bars" contaminated with small metal particles. Blue Planet Confections manufactured the bars. This release was based off an actual news release distributed by McKee Foods on behalf of Little Debbie when they recalled Oatmeal Cream pies in the spring of 2007.

There were seven paragraphs in each story. Each story was 270 words in length. The first five paragraphs of each story were standard information available in product recall stories (the name of the product, cause of the recall, distribution dates, and freshness dates). These paragraphs were the same in all five stories. The sixth paragraph of each story was altered to be specific to the image restoration strategy employed. This paragraph included a quote from the president of H&D foods. These were adopted from Dardis and Haigh (2009, p.109).

Corrective Action. "This will not happen again. H&D Foods will work with Blue Planet very closely to fix this problem," stated Michael McKee, president of H&D Foods. "Most of the snacks have been pulled from distribution channels. We are working with Blue Planet to make sure quality control is improved so this does not happen again."

Evade Responsibility. "It is really not our intention to distribute faulty snacks," stated Michael McKee, president of H&D Foods. "We were unaware of the possible contamination of the snacks. Chocolate Lava bars are more affordable because Blue Planet manufactures these snacks for H&D Foods. It was never our intention to have poor quality snacks distributed."

Denial. "It is not our fault that potentially contaminated snacks were distributed," stated Michael McKee, president of H&D Foods. "We trust Blue Planet to take responsibility for their poor quality management. We have issued the recall to protect consumers. We will also be examining the safety of Blue Planet Confections manufacturing snacks on behalf of H&D Foods."

Mortification. "We apologize to our consumers for the lack of quality control at Blue Planet Confections," stated Michael McKee, president of H&D Foods. "The snacks have been pulled from distribution channels. We are sorry consumers have to go through the time and trouble of examining their snacks and contacting us. We ask that our customers forgive H&D for this unfortunate situation."

Reduce Offensiveness. "Consumers have not reported problems," stated Michael McKee, president of H & D Foods. "Most of the snacks have already been pulled from distribution. We are making the recall known to consumers as well as vendors to promote open lines of communication. This is only the second product recall in our 40-year history. We are dedicated to making quality products."

Pretest and Manipulation Check
Pretest. A pretest was conducted to test the news stories. Scale items were developed for each image restoration multiple-dimension strategy. For example, the denial score was computed for the respondents' ratings on the following two questions: H&D foods denied distributing the chocolate lava bars [simple denial], and H&D foods blamed Blue Planet Confections for the poor quality management, which led to the lava bars being distributed [shift the blame]. Similar questions were developed for the other image restoration strategies. These items were not included in the final data analysis because this study was not creating a scale to measure image restoration strategies quantitatively. An ANOVA confirmed those in a particular strategy scored highest on the items matching the strategy used in the story they read.

Manipulation Check. After collecting data (N = 191), a manipulation check was run to examine the differences of the independent variable (image restoration strategy employed in release) on the scale items developed above. A one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) depicted significant difference of the release strategy on the scales produced for each appropriate image restoration strategy: denial items $F_{(4, 184)} = 7.82$, $p = .001$, $\eta 2 = .15$; evade responsibility items $F_{(4, 184)} = 4.15$, $p = .003$, $\eta 2 = .08$; reduce offensiveness items $F_{(4, 184)} = 3.09$, $p = .01$, $\eta 2 = .06$; corrective action $F_{(4, 184)} = 9.39$, $p = .001$, $\eta 2 = .17$; and mortification $F_{(4, 184)} = 11.30$, $p = .001$, $\eta 2 = .19$.

Measures
The independent variable in this study was the image restoration strategy employed in the news release (evade responsibility, denial, reduce offensiveness, mortification, corrective action). The dependent variables were perceptions of organization – public relationship and corporate social responsibility.

OPR was measured using Kim's (2001) organization – public relationship scale. The instrument used included two dimensions: trust (the organization: treats people like me fairly and justly, will be concerned about people like me when making an important decision, takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions, and sound principles guide the organization's behavior) a = .89; commitment (the organization wants to maintain a relationship with people like me, there is a long-lasting bond between the organization and people like me, both the organization and people like me benefit from their relationship, I am pleased with the relationship the organization has established with people like me, and I feel people like me are important) a = .89; community.

All questions are placed on a seven-point, Likert-type scale. Kim's (2001) scale includes a community involvement/social responsibility dimension and a reputation dimension. Because the organization was not local, the community involvement/social responsibility measure was not included in this study. Also, because the corporate social responsibility scale employed included a reputation measure, Kim's (2001) items were not used in this study.

CSR. Participants' perceptions of the image, reputation, and credibility of the organization were also measured. The measures employed were developed by Dowling (2001) and employed by Pfau and colleagues (2007, 2008). Dowling (2001) conceptualized corporate image as a global perception of an organization. "Corporate image . . . represents stakeholders' shared beliefs about what is distinctive, central and enduring about the organization" (p. 215). Dowling's image measure consists of seven 7-interval, Likert-type items. The name of the organization is stated as well as the following: appears to be well managed, appears to have expensive products/services, appears to be technology driven, appears to be innovative, appears to be customer focused, appears to be successful, and appears to be competitive (a = .80).

Dowling (2001, p. 19) viewed corporate reputation as "the attributed values evoked from the person's corporate image." Reputation was measured using four Likert-type items that featured the name of the organization and the following attributes: appears to be an industry leader, appears to be honest, appears to be a good corporate citizen, and appears to be respected (a = .82).

Dowling (2001) considered organizational credibility as an output variable. Image and reputation may affect perceptions of an organization's credibility. Credibility was measured using four Likert-type scales that state the name of the organization and the following outcomes: appears to have confidence, appears to be trustworthy, appears to show support, and appears to have a positive word of mouth (a = .86).

RESULTS

To assess Research Questions 1 and 2, a one-way multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was computed on the dependent variables of: organization – public relationship (dimensions: trust and commitment) and corporate social responsibility (dimensions: image, reputation, and credibility/outcomes).

The omnibus results indicated significant differences for experimental condition Wilks' λ $F(36, 623) = 1.53$, $p < .01$, partial $\eta2 = .08$. Subsequent univariate tests revealed significant differences for the independent variable on the dependent variables: organization – public relationship (trust $F(4, 178) = 3.41$, $p < .01$, $\eta2 = .07$, and commitment $F(4, 178) = 2.75$, $p < .05$, $\eta2 = .06$), and corporate social responsibility (reputation $F(4, 178) = 4.08$, $p < .01$, $\eta2 = .09$, and credibility $F(4, 178) = 4.26$, $p < .01$, $\eta2 = .09$).

Post hoc tests were used to examine the specific differences of image restoration technique on the dependent variables organization – public relationship dimensions (trust and commitment) and corporate social responsibility dimensions (reputation and credibility).

Research Question 1 asked how image restoration techniques would impact perceptions of the organization – public relationship. A Tukey HSD post hoc test was conducted finding significant differences. For the organization – public relationship dimension of trust, those reading the reduce offensiveness release (M = 4.70, SD = .97) had significantly more trust in the relationship than those reading the denial release (M = 3.87, SD = 1.16). For the dimension of commitment, those reading the reduce offensiveness release felt significantly more commitment (M = 4.53, SD = 1.00) than those reading the evade responsibility release (M = 3.74, SD = 1.17). See Table 1 for a complete list of means and standard deviations.

Research Question 2 asked what impact the image restoration technique would have on perceptions of corporate social responsibility. A Tukey HSD post hoc test was conducted finding significant differences between those reading the denial release compared to reading the reduce offensiveness and evade responsibility releases. For the corporate social responsibility dimension of reputation, those reading the reduce offensiveness release had a more positive perception of the organization's reputation (M = 4.81, SD = .98) than those in the deny condition (M = 3.79, SD = 1.27) and evade responsibility condition (M = 3.99, SD = .96).

For the corporate social responsibility dimension of credibility, those reading the reduce offensiveness release (M = 4.72, SD = 1.09) had a more positive perception of credibility than those reading the denial release (M = 3.76, SD = .1.22) and those reading the evade responsibility release (M = 3.75, SD = .99) (See Table 1).

Table 1: *Means and Standard Deviations of Experimental Condition (release) on Dimensions of CSR*

Release Strategy Dependent Variables	Corrective Action (*n* = 40)	Deny (*n* = 39)	Evade Responsibility (*n* = 37)	Mortification (*n* = 37)	Reduce Offensiveness (*n* = 39)
CSR Image	3.84 (1.03)	3.62 (.90)	3.72 (.80)	3.85 (.89)	4.12 (.63)
CSR Reputation	4.23 (1.14)	3.79 (1.27)	3.99 (.96)	4.28 (1.08)	4.81 (.98)
CSR Credibility	4.27 (1.17)	3.77 (1.22)	3.75 (.99)	4.21 (1.09)	4.72 (1.09)
Kim Trust (OPR)	4.45 (1.07)	3.88 (1.16)	4.07 (.97)	4.39 (1.10)	4.70 (.97)
Kim Commitment (OPR)	4.24 (1.15)	3.91 (1.28)	3.74 (1.17)	4.21 (1.12)	4.53 (1.00)

Notes: Means and (standard deviations) of the dependent variables. *Organization – public relationship* was measured using Kim's (2001) relationship scale. The instrument includes two dimensions: trust, commitment. All questions are placed on a seven-point, Likert-type scale. Because the organization was not local, the community involvement/social responsibility measure was left out of the final data analysis. *Measures of corporate social responsibility* - Dowling's (2001) CSR measure has three dimensions: image (consists of seven 7-interval, Likert-type items) reputation (measured using four Likert-type items), credibility (measured using four Likert-type scales).

DISCUSSION

This study expands the literature examining the use of image restoration techniques in times of crisis by examining how the strategy impacts perceptions of the organization – public relationship and corporate social responsibility. This study does not replicate previous research (Bradford & Garrett, 1995; Coombs & Schmidt, 2000). Previous research did not find any differences among image restoration strategies employed. The current study found to reduce the offensiveness strategy works the best to protect perceptions of the organization – public relationship and corporate social responsibility.

Research Question 1 asked how image restoration techniques would impact organization – public relationships. Findings suggest the reduce offensiveness strategy

leads to individuals having higher amounts of trust and commitment in the organization – public relationship. The overall pattern of means indicates the reduce offensiveness technique works best for preserving the organization – public relationship.

Research Question 2 examined how image restoration techniques would impact perceptions of corporate social responsibility. The reducing the offensiveness strategy leads to a more positive perception of the organization's reputation, credibility, and image. The pattern of means indicates employing the strategy of reducing the offensiveness has a more positive impact on publics' perceptions of corporate social responsibility.

Implications
What can public relations professionals or researchers learn from this study? Reduce offensiveness strategy yielded the best results. It protected the organization – public relationship and perceptions of corporate social responsibility. Overall, there were little differences for the strategies (corrective action, denial, evade responsibility, and mortification). One would believe corrective action and mortification would be better strategies for organizations to employ to rebuild the organization – public relationship and perceptions of corporate social responsibility because those strategies include the organization apologize outright. However, this study finds instead of taking responsibility for the actions and being straightforward with crisis communication, it is better to write messages that bolster, minimize, differentiate, transcend, attack the accuser, and offer compensation (all elements of reducing the offensiveness). These findings support previous research. Coombs and Holladay (2008) found crisis managers could "offer compensation and/or express sympathy" in crisis situations where there was moderate responsibility (p. 256). It was not necessary for the organization to always use an apology (mortification strategy) when responsibility of the crisis is unknown. Granted, this study examines a low-involving product recall scenario, and the Coombs and Holladay (2008) study examined a chemical explosion.

Organizations should foster their organization – public relationships through corporate social responsibility practices. When these relationships are strained in times of crisis, organizations should craft external communication messages (news releases) reducing the offensiveness of the crisis. These messages should bolster the organization's image, minimize the negative feelings individuals may have toward the organization and the event, differentiate the crisis by making the act seem less like a crisis, place the crisis in a different context, attack the person who is attacking the organization, and offer compensation (i.e., product refund). Other strategies (corrective action, denial, evade responsibility, and mortification) are not as effective in preserving individuals' perceptions of the organization – public relationship and corporate social responsibility.

Limitations and Future Directions
Limitations for this study include a small sample size. There were roughly 40 subjects in each condition, but a larger sample is always welcome. Another limitation is using only one product. It would have been interesting to use a low-involving product and a high-involving product being recalled to determine if the strategy employed should "match"

the investment of the public. Being able to compare perceptions of the organization – public relationship and corporate social responsibility to a control group might have provided a baseline measurement for the dependent variables.

Future research should examine how image restoration strategies used in times of crisis may change depending on medium (web, TV, etc.,). Messages are processed differently and the techniques might work better via one medium compared to another. More research should also be conducted on producing content specific to each strategy. It is difficult to write a release that encompasses each of Benoit's (1995) sub-categories for each major image restoration strategy. Research needs to examine the minor strategies as well. Future research should also examine the impact of images over a period of time. If there are messages employing multiple strategies by an organization during crisis, this may impact the variables measured in the current study. Maybe different image restoration techniques should be employed at different stages of the crisis.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study adds to the growing body of literature on how image restoration strategies can be used by organizations to repair their images after a crisis. This study examined the impact these strategies have on organization – public relationships and perceptions of corporate social responsibility. There are still many unknowns as to how different strategies can be employed. The strategy might need to differ based on the type of product or type of crisis.

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