

Examining the Role of Social Presence and Information Source for Strategic Crisis Communication via Social Media

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Purpose

With the increasing use of social media during crises, there are growing needs for strategically utilizing social media for effective crisis communication. This experimental study tests the impact of social presence and crisis information source specifically in a social mediated crisis communication context using a recent Samsung smartphone recall case.

Theoretical Background

Do you allow comments? Does that increase social proximi...

- Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) (Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 1996)

Attributional processes (i.e., who is responsible for crisis events), response strategies, emotional responses, prior attitudes toward organizations, and crisis history influence public responses toward crises

- Social mediated crisis communication (SMCC) model (Jin & Liu, 2010; Liu, Jin, Briones, & Kuch, 2012)

Proposes five additional factors that impact crisis communication practices using social media: crisis origin, message strategy, **message source**, **message form**, and infrastructure. Provides refined ways to better understand how publics consume, create, and distribute crisis information through different media channels including social media

- Perceived Social Presence Online (Lombard & Ditton 1997; Nowak & Biocca, 2003)

Social presence, the feeling of being with others, predicts public's positive attitudes towards organizations, favorable reputation, trust, credibility, and subsequent intention to purchase

connectedness

Research Design

- IV1: High social presence (e.g., chatting functions of website, pictures and videos, immediate reply) vs. Low social presence (e.g., text only, no chatting function) in a Facebook setting
- IV2: Samsung Mobile vs. The Consumer Report - *credible source*
- DV: Reputation, anger, intention to accept and adopt crisis messages, online WOM
- Involvement, social media credibility, social media use were controlled for

Key Findings

- ~~High social presence~~ -> high source credibility & better reputation -> more likelihood of accepting crisis messages and adopting recommended behaviors
- ~~Third party information source~~ -> more anger -> more likelihood of online WOM
- No main effect of social presence on anger - *lots of our responses*
- No main effect of information source on reputation -
- No interaction effects between social presence and message source on anger & reputation -

Limitations & Tips for Future Studies

- Difference contexts (i.e., information form), different crisis origins, difference crisis cases to be explored
- Effects of heightened social presence on various types of emotional responses (fear, sadness, anxiety, etc.)