

IT'S ALL ABOUT THE MEDIUM: DISSEMINATION OF CRISIS COMMUNICATION AND
THE EFFECTS ON ORGANIZATIONAL REPUTATION

by

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Abstract

As technology advances in social media, crisis management professionals and researchers are charged with revamping or discovering new communication tools to address the dissemination crisis information. Social media provides a platform for open conversations, community, and connectedness among individuals and permits anyone to become the source of information during a time of crisis. Crisis news can be shared and reshared among millions of people without the need of a professional source, such as a journalist. A crisis may disrupt social order to an organization's reputation and legitimacy, but a crisis also provides an opportunity for growth or renewal. Previous literature has analyzed crisis communication affects on organizational reputation through cases studies; however, there is lack of analysis in using an experimental design.

Through an experiment with 207 undergraduate students, this study empirically evaluates the dissemination of crisis communication through Twitter and its effect on organizational communication. Using McLuhan's (1967) concept of the medium is the message, this study highlights past findings, explicates types of crises, and focuses on the medium as a variable (not content of response) of interest to provide groundwork for an experimental inquiry into how the medium itself (as opposed to message content) impacts the efficacy of organizational crisis responses.

A 2x3 experimental design with two research conditions- types of crisis: (1) intentional and (2) unintentional and source types: (1) organization (2) journalist, and (3) friend was used in this study. An online questionnaire was administered through an online survey service to approximately 2,000 undergraduates. Participants were randomized in one of six conditions based on the type of crisis (unintentional and intentional) and the

source (organization/journalist/friend) of the message and directed to read an unintentional or intentional press release. Findings indicated that the perception of responsibility is a valid factor to consider during a possible crisis. Overall, as the previous studies have concluded, the organization is perceived as responsible for the crisis.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to God, my family, my fiancé, and my friends. First and foremost, without my Lord and Savior none of this would be possible. I am forever grateful for my family, my fiancé, and friends who have been a support system throughout this journey. Thank you for every prayer and encouraging word; I love you all. To my parents, you are both my guardian angels on Earth. Thank you covering me with your unconditional love, for the sacrifices you both made, and for believing in me, even when I didn't believe in myself. You two mean the world to me, and I love you.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Background

Social media is emerging as an important tool for organizations to communicate with its stakeholders, including media and publics. A wide range of studies suggest that information sharing networks, such as Twitter, can be very useful in times of crisis by quickly and effectively disseminating relevant news (Vieweg, Hughes, Starbird & Palen, 2010; Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013). “More than 900 million people use Facebook, and there are more than 100 million tweets daily” (Utz et al., 2013). Organizations have acknowledged social media as an important communication channel for areas such as marketing, public relations, and crisis communication (Utz et al., 2013). However, crisis communicators underestimate how quickly news can travel and the impact of the message, both positive and negative. Once a crisis event occurs, social mediated messages have the potential to add fuel to the fire and hurt an organization’s reputation or aid in alleviating the fire by using proper and timely management from the organization’s representatives.

Past studies have examined how practitioners and organizations use social media (e.g., Eyrych, Padman, & Sweetser, 2008; Lariscy, Avery, Sweetser, & Howes, 2009), but lack analysis on how audiences communicate directly and indirectly about organizations during a time of crisis using social media. However, Schultz, Utz, & Göritz’s experimental study in 2011 was the first study to analyze the use of social media in crisis communication and to extend prior research. Their study analyzed the effects of traditional versus social-media strategies on the recipients’ perception of reputation. Their study also analyzed the effects of crisis responses on the recipients’ secondary crisis communications and reactions using

situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), which was extended to consider the role of different media in the study.

Utz, Schultz, & Glocka's (2013) study extended research from Schultz, Utz, & Göritz's (2011) by replicating the strong effect of medium, examining the effects of crisis communication via Facebook, and tested perceived credibility of the medium influences secondary crisis communication and effects of crisis type that are driven by anger. Utz, Schultz, & Glocka's (2013) used the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster as a crisis scenario in their study. They found that a crisis communication via Facebook resulted in a more positive reputation and secondary (newspapers) crisis reactions.

The literature reflects that previous researchers have focused more on message content, with exception of Schultz, Utz, & Göritz's (2011) study and Utz, Schultz, & Glocka's (2013) study, than on effects of source credibility within Twitter. The current study questions how the type of crises and the source of tweet affect retweeting behavior and organizational reputation.

Statement of Problem

The goal of this study is to draw more attention to the need of crisis communication plans to address social media platforms, specifically Twitter, during a time of crisis. To accomplish this, my study aims to examine crisis communication messages disseminated through Twitter and the effects a source (friend/organizations/journalist) have on reputation of an organization. The study also aims to determine if the type of crisis using Twitter as a channel affects an individual's willingness to share crisis communication with others.

Purpose of the Study

The analysis of the simulation and questionnaire gave indication of what variables impact crisis communication using Twitter as a channel of communication.

Recommendations, based on the findings from this study, are for crisis communication practitioners regarding the need to understand the variable of the channel in communicating crisis messages. The findings also indicate that the source matters when addressing audiences during a crisis.

Methodology

As mentioned before, this study attempts to analyze the dissemination of crisis communication and the effect on organizational communication. Twitter was the chosen medium for the purpose of this study. A 2x3 experimental design with two research conditions- types of crisis: (1) intentional and (2) unintentional and source types: (1) organization (2) journalist, and (3) friend was used in this study. An online questionnaire was administered through an online survey service to approximately 2,000 undergraduates requested and chosen from a Midwestern university's population. Approximately 207 of those individuals were used in this study. Those accepting to participate were randomized in one of six conditions based on the type of crisis (unintentional and intentional) and the source (organization/journalist/friend) of the message and directed to read an unintentional or intentional press release. The tweets and the press releases were made as identical as possible except for modifications in each version to appear more authentic. The questionnaire took approximately 10-15 minute to complete and consisted of a series of scales measuring reactions and feelings pertaining to crisis scenario, motivation to retweet the crisis information, perceptions of organizations

reputations and demographics. Participants were thanked and debriefed after they completed the questionnaire.

Hypothesis and Research Questions

- **Hypothesis 1:** Regardless of the source unintentional crisis will have a less negative effect on organizational reputation than intentional crisis.
- **Research Question 1:** Will the type of crisis (intentional/ unintentional) affect the likelihood of retweeting?
- **Research Question 2:** Will the source of tweet (friend/organization/ journalist) affect the likelihood of retweeting?
- **Research Question 3:** Will the source of tweet (friend/organization/ journalist) affect the likelihood of organizational reputation?
- **Research Question 4:** Will the type of crisis (intentional/unintentional) have an effect on organizational reputation?
- **Research Question 5:** Will the crisis types (intentional/unintentional) and the source of tweet (friend/organization/ journalist) emerge on responses to the perception or credibility of the organization?

Significance of the Study

Previous studies have analyzed crisis communication affects on organizational reputation through case studies. However, very few have analyzed crisis communication disseminated through Twitter in an experimental design. Many organizations neglect to address social media as a multifaceted platform that may induce harm or good to their

brand. Most organizations acknowledge that internal and external crises will and do occur; however, do not predict and prepare for an unconventional crisis outside of traditional practices. In fact, some companies have mentioned that they have crisis communication plans, but have not yet incorporated communication protocols for addressing stakeholders through social media. Therefore, crisis managers who are responsible for protecting the reputation and reducing harm for an organization's brand may use this study as an aid in designing a crisis communication plan incorporating social media communication strategies.

Major findings were found in this study. One finding was that the majority of the participants were Midwestern, white students who have never heard of or used Twitter. Another was the sender felt more compelled to share a message of an intentional crisis from a friend and an unintentional from an organization. Significance was found that the perception of responsibility is a valid factor to consider during a possible crisis. Overall, as previous studies have concluded, the organization is perceived as responsible for somewhat responsible for any type of crisis.

Limitations of the Study

Although interesting findings were revealed, there were some limitations that may have affected the outcomes of this study. Undergraduate students provided a convenient sample; however, students may have had difficulty relating to the premises of this study. The student population is an easy to acquire, but at times difficult to assess when examining issues that are perceived as irrelevant issues in their lives.

A second limitation is that the level of crisis appears to not have been perceived as high or strong enough to exert a significant difference between an unintentional and intentional crisis. Contamination of any consumed product by individuals is important; however, the crisis may have been viewed as a quick fix for those responsible for the act. For example, a faulty refrigerator could be fixed or replaced in a matter of a week and a malicious employee could be fired immediately. In retrospect, a crisis involving a collapsed parking garage that is consistently used by the student population may have a stronger impact on the respondents' perceptions, especially if the incident resulted in injuries and loss of personal property. In other words, the strength of the crisis could have influenced a better response to share a crisis message to "followers" on Twitter. A different approach would be to conduct a pre-test before the actual experiment to measure which of six different crisis scenarios emerges as the most impactful crisis to a population.

Another limitation was the majority of the participants did not use Twitter or have never heard of Twitter. This is an interesting finding because previous studies (Starbird and Palen, 2010; Mendoza et al., 2010) found Twitter does play a significant role during a time of crisis. Other research mentioned earlier in this study did, however, note that Facebook was one of the most popular social media platforms of the college-aged audience. However, Twitter may still provide a more timely and efficient avenue for relaying messages across audiences if one has it. This study found that the majority of the participants did not have or have never heard of Twitter.

The final limitation is that participants were unable to identify with the organization. In this study, participants were in a sense asked to be a stakeholder to a fictional organization. Though a good amount of background information of each source

(friend/organization/journalist) was provided for the participants, the information was not enough for them to form a significant relationship. A different approach would be to possibly incorporate more identifiable brands in the experiment or provide more extensive information about the organization.

The following chapter will examine studies and findings involving crisis communication as it pertains to organizational communication, social media, including sharing behaviors, and creditability of the sources disseminating crisis messages.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This review of literature will investigate past studies evaluating organizational crisis communication, social media, Twitter, and retweeting behaviors that could affect an organization's reputation while experiencing a crisis. This literature review begins by discussing crisis communication and the communication goals of professionals, including organizational reputation. The review also addresses significant gaps in previous crisis communication research. Most research has focused on the effects of different crisis response content (i.e., crisis response strategies) and post-crisis outcomes (Benoit, 1995, 1997; Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 1996, 2002, 2007). However, the current study focuses on the medium of response (not content of response) and the type of crisis situation. Using McLuhan's (1967) concept of the medium is the message, this review highlights past findings, explicates types of crises, and focuses on the medium as a variable of interest to provide groundwork for an experimental inquiry into how the medium itself (as opposed to message content) impacts the efficacy of organizational crisis responses. Specifically, the source of tweeted messages and the types of crises will be explored.

Goals and Crisis Communication

Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger (2011) defines "an organizational crisis as a specific, unexpected, and non-routine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten, or are perceived to threaten, an organization's high priority goals"(p.7). Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer (1998) established that most crisis have some degree of surprise,

thus crises are typically unexpected events because they exceed any planning expectations and are not managed routine procedures. However, Coombs (2007) defines a crisis as unpredictable but not unexpected and states, “wise organizations know that crises will befall them; they just do not know when,” (p.3). Crises may disrupt social order to an organization’s reputation and legitimacy, but a crisis also provides an opportunity for growth or renewal to the organization’s reputation or image (Ulmer et al., 2010). Thus, the goal of crisis communication is “to explain the specific event, identify likely consequences and outcomes, and provide specific harm-reducing information to affected communities in an honest, candid, prompt, accurate, and complete manner” (Reynolds & Seeger, 2005, p. 46). This goal is shared by the organization experiencing a crisis that also attempts to manage its reputation before, during, and after crises.

Previous crisis management literature posits that three factors have affects or constraints on communication during a crisis: risk, timing, and control (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). Risk is a factor for a crisis manager or public relations practitioner considering the effect on the legal and social responsibility of the organization by the public. Some factors of risk include competition, personnel, regulations, customers, and products (Barton, 2001). Therefore, the possible risk associated with the crisis is imperative to acknowledge before a response is initiated. Timing, the second factor, controls the flow of communication and the type of information disseminated to the public. Some degree of control, the third factor, is often lost once an organization initially responds to accusations during a crisis (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). A cautious, proactive approach allows the organization to shape the organization’s representations in the media. The following will

address organizational reputation and the effects a crisis can have on an organization's reputation.

Organizational Reputation

Organizations can face severe reputational damage due to a crisis and, in response, organizations must find an effective way to minimize the damage and restore their reputations (Coombs, 2004; Coombs, 2007; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). "Reputational assets can attract customers, generate investment interest, improve financial performance, attract top-employee talent, increase the return on assets, create a competitive advantage and garner positive comments from financial analysts" (Coombs, 2007, p.164). Fombrun (1996) defines reputation as "a perceptual representation of a company's past actions and future prospects that describe the firm's appeal to all of its key constituents" (p.165). Stakeholders form reputations by evaluating organizations based on direct and indirect interactions (Coombs, 2007). Direct interactions form the basic organization-stakeholder relationship, whereas indirect interactions are formed by mediated reports of the organization's treatment of its stakeholders (Coombs, 2007). Mediated reports include comments from other stakeholders. It is more likely stakeholders will build opinions and personal views based on indirect experiences more than direct experiences (Carroll & McCombs, 2003; Coombs, 2007). Therefore, organizational reputations are mostly influenced by information stakeholders receive through first-hand interactions, news media, word-of-mouth, weblogs, Twitter, and social media (Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Schultz, Utz, & Göritz's (2011).

The information received by stakeholders alters perceptions of an organization's responsibility in a crisis situation and correlates to reputational damage (Coombs, 2007; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). Organizations are compelled to manage reputational threats and crises using crisis response strategies based on the type of crisis that occurs. Thus, crisis response strategies serve to aid organizational reputation and defend the image of the organization (Hearit, 1994). The following section reviews the types of crises and strategies organizations may use to protect and restore their reputations.

Types of Crises

Most public relation people or crisis managers deal with public crises even though a crisis can come in many forms (Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 2003). A crisis always involves people and interrupts the normal "chain of command" (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2010; Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 2003). Crisis communication researchers developed the crisis type classification systems to reduce uncertainty once a crisis occurs (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2010; Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg, 2003). Newsom, Turk, & Kruckeberg (2003) classified the different type of crises into three categories: acts of nature, intentional, and unintentional. The acts of nature category include violent crises (i.e. hurricanes) and nonviolent crises (i.e. droughts). Conversely, Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger determined the simplest and most useful approach in categorizing crisis types are to divide crises into only intentional crises and unintentional crises (2010). Intentional crises are designed to cause harm to an organization, such as terrorism, sabotage, workplace violence, and hostile takeovers. Terrorism is at the top of the list as the most urgent intentional crisis. Organizations must now be aware of, and prepare for, acts of terrorism that may disrupt the organizations as

well as the nation (Ulmer et al., 2010). Unintentional crises are generally unforeseeable or unavoidable; for example, natural disasters, product failure, disease outbreaks, and downturns in economy are unintentional crises (Ulmer et al., 2010). The two crisis types, intentional and unintentional, provide a simplistic way for organizations to identify and prepare for the potential crisis.

Crisis Response Strategies

Once an organization identifies the type of crisis, the organization chooses an appropriate crisis response strategy based upon prior reputation and history (Coombs, 2007; Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2010). Damage to an organization can be minimized through the correct use of response strategies. Claeys & Cauberghe (2012) generalized two types of crisis communication strategies: crisis response strategies and crisis timing strategies (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Coombs (2007) developed a list of ten common crisis communication strategies that are grouped into four major crises response strategies, including denial, diminishment, rebuilding, and bolstering. Denial strategies attempt to remove any connection between the crisis and the organization if it is not responsible for the crisis (Coombs, 2007). In a victim crisis for example, a crisis where the organizations have low levels of responsibility, practitioners may use defensive denial strategies (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). Diminishment strategies attempt to reduce negative effects of the crisis. Rebuilding strategies attempt to improve the reputation of the organization. Practitioners may use accommodating rebuilding strategies in order to prevent a crisis, if the degree of responsibility of the organization allows for such action.”(Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). If there is a severe reputational threat, practitioners

may use restoring crisis response strategies, though the responsibility of an organization can contribute to more legal and financial liabilities (Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). Finally, bolstering strategies seek to create positive connections between the organization and the stakeholders (Coombs, 2007).

The second crisis communication strategy is crisis timing. Also known as the “stealing thunder” strategy, it is used when an organization is the first to break the news about its own crisis before another media source. Studies examining the importance of crisis timing strategies found that an organization was viewed as more credible if the organization broke the news first (Williams, Bourgeois, & Croyle, 1993; Arpan and Pompper, 2003; Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Stealing thunder usually involves disclosing negative information concerning the organization before it is released by another entity (Williams, Bourgeois & Croyle, 1993). Organizations might maintain more credibility if it releases information before another source (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). The proactive crisis response, stealing thunder, is considered a timing strategy due to the constant message response. The crisis types and crisis communication responses are framed around theoretical approaches; the following section addresses the most common theoretical responses.

Theoretical Approaches

To better understand the crisis types and appropriate use of strategies, researchers over the past 20 years have developed theoretical and conceptual approaches for responding to crises (Ulmer, Sellnow, & Seeger, 2010). These approaches include corporate apology, image restoration strategies, image repair theory, situational crisis

communication theory (SCCT), and organizational renewal theory. Corporate apologia, image repair, and situational communication theories identify strategies an organization uses to repair its image and reputation after a crisis. “Organizational renewal focuses on learning from the crisis, communicating ethically, and creating a prospective vision” (Ulmer et al., 2010, p. 15).

The situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), constructed by Coombs (2002) links attribution theory and the crisis response strategies. SCCT is the most dominant crisis theory in current literature. According to SCCT, “corporations should use different strategies (deny, diminish, rebuild, and reinforce) to prevent negative crisis effects, depending on the attributed level of crisis responsibility” (Utz, Schultz, & Glocka, 2013, p. 43). The three clusters of crisis types in SCCT (victim cluster, accidental cluster, and preventable cluster) are based on individuals’ attributions of responsibility to an organizational crisis (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). Thus, SCCT provides guidelines to match crisis types with the three clusters of crisis response strategies to restore crisis damage by accounting for level of responsibility (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). Though useful, the SCCT approach focuses on message content, which is not a focus of the current study. However, SCCT does suggest the power of source credibility as a major consideration of crisis communication.

Credibility

A mountain of communication research has firmly established source credibility as a variable that impacts communication outcomes. Credibility critically influences an audience’s judgments, attitudes, and beliefs during a crisis (Yang, Kang, and Johnson,

2010). Recently, credibility of the channel/medium of communication has been suggested to influence selective involvement of the audience with the medium (Metzger, Flangin, Eyal, Lemus, & McCann, 2003). Individual audiences are relying more on specific credible communication mediums for information seeking (Johnson & Kaye, 1998; Kiousis, 2001).

A study conducted by Yang et al. (2010) examined how crisis communication narratives can eventually enhance acceptance of crisis responses by the publics and how crisis communication can possibly elicit favorable reactions. Yang et al. (2010) examined (a) source credibility, (b) salience of crisis narratives, and (c) dialogic communication openness. The medium in this study was blogs as way to present crisis narratives. According to Scoble & Israel (2006), blog audiences constantly check the credibility of bloggers through social cues embedded in regular updates; thus, credibility judgments about bloggers influence audience participation in blog-mediated communication (Yang et al., 2010). The study found that it is crucial to practice effective communication of crisis narratives for enhancement of audience engagement in crisis communication. Results found openness to dialogic communication to have a small direct effect on positive postcrisis perceptions (Yang et al., 2010). Results also found that participants' negative emotions were significantly reduced after they were presented crisis narratives about a company. Thus, Yang et al. (2010) concluded that it is effective to present narratives in crisis communication. Source effects and salience of crisis narratives were found to have minimal effects on postcrisis outcomes.

Source credibility research focuses on perceived trustworthiness and expertise of the communicator by individual audiences who judge communicator's likelihood to provide credible information (Berlo, Lemert, & Mertz, 1969; McCroskey & Richmond, 1996;

Yang et al., 2010). Credibility of the message is the perceived credibility of the message itself (Yang et al., 2010). Medium credibility is the level of trust perceived of a specific medium, such as the Internet, television, and newspapers (Newhagen & Nass, 1989). “A company suffering a crisis must be able to tell a credible story, one that has factual fidelity that can withstand the scrutiny of reporters, governmental investigators, and concerned citizens” (Yang et.al, 2010, p.319). Credibility whether source credibility, message credibility and medium credibility can play an important role once a crisis occurs, especially in crisis communication through social media.

Social Media

Social media provides a platform for free expression of ideas, information, and opinions; it also provides an avenue for stealing thunder (Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011). Purcell, Rainie, Mitchell, Rosenstiel, & Olmstead, (2010) defined as as a new era of Web-enabled applications that are built around user-generated content, such as blogs and social networking sites. Some examples of social media include Facebook, MySpace, and Twitter. Duggan & Smith (2013) found that about 73% of adults online use a social network of some kind. Facebook remains the dominant social network with 71% of online adults users (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Publics are increasingly considering the Internet as the most reliable source for news, especially ideal for generating timely communication, unique information, and interactive conversations (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Taylor & Perry, 2005; Liu, Austin, & Jin, 2011). Purcell et al. in 2010 found that “75 per cent of online news consumers in the United States receive some of their news via email or posts on social networking sites such as Facebook” (Purcell et al., 2010; Hermida et al., p.3).

Social media is an important aspect of human communication through encompassing characteristics such as “openness, conversation, community, and connectedness” (Veil et al., 2011, p. 110). Individuals provide user-generated media by simultaneously contributing opinions, insights, experiences and perspectives (Marken, 2007; Veil et al., 2011). The word-of-mouth spread through social media can “alter the landscape of public information” (Baron & Philbin, 2009, p.12). About “92% of communication practitioners surveyed believe that blogs and social media now influence mainstream news coverage” (Solis, 2009, p.24) yet another survey reflected only 13% have social media incorporated in their organizations crisis plans (Russell Herder & Ethos Business Law, 2009). Another survey from 2009 only found 29% of U.S. companies had social media policies (Chung, C., & Austria, K. (2010). This gap between social media consumption and organizational readiness to use social media calls for an increased incorporation of social media in an organization’s crisis communication plan.

Identifying Opinion Leaders in Social Media

Identifying opinion leaders is imperative to understanding the dynamics between mediated messages and wider public behavior. One dissertation (Kim, 2007) delivered a critical analysis in identifying opinion leaders by assessing the characteristics of opinion leaders in social networks. Numerous methods and instruments have been used in previous research. Three existing scales include: (a) the Market Marven scale composed by Goldsmith et al. (2006), (b) Goldsmith and De Witt’s (2003) Predictive validity of Flynn, Goldsmith, and Eastman (1996b), and (c) the Traoldahl and Van Dan (1965) Perceived Opinion Leadership scale. The scales primarily identify opinion leaders through self-rating

as well as how others define an individual as an opinion leader. The current study draws from previous scales to measure key dimensions of opinion leadership in regards to social media-facilitated messages.

Social Media in Organizational Crisis Communication

The emergence of social media challenges contemporary public relations practice and crisis communications, though “many of the best practices used in traditional media are likely to remain effective in the domain of social” (Freberg, 2012, p.418, Baron & Philbin, 2009). Several studies have examined how social media functions during crises. Social media directly and indirectly affect an organization and publics during crises. Social media plays a significant role in social construction of crises and social deconstruction of crises by corporate actors (Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011). Social media increases during a time of crisis, particularly during initial crisis event (Thelwall & Stuart, 2007; Liu, Austin & Jin, 2011). Social media provides an avenue for emotional support with active publics and a way to band together, share information, and demand resolution (Stephens & Malone, 2009; Liu, Austin, & Jin, 2011). Social media in some cases is regarded as credible, interactive, and dialogic, referring to the ease of relaying messages from large audiences and recipients (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Schultz, 2011). Twitter, an instantaneous microblogging service, is one social medium of particular interest.

Twitter

Social media networks, including Twitter, are seen as more efficient communication tools for building relationships than classic media (Kent, Taylor & White, 2003; Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010; White & Raman, 2000; Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011). Twitter is one of the

latest social media phenomena to attract attention from communicators and public affairs professionals (Baron & Philbin, 2009). About 18% of online adults currently use Twitter, and adoption levels are higher among younger adults and African-Americans” (Duggan & Smith, 2013). Twitter is a service that allows users to publish and exchange short messages within 140 characters, in real-time, to large groups of “followers” (Jansen & Zhang, 2009). Once the message is posted, anyone may view that message and if he/she may share the post with other users. Twitter users may choose to post tweets through e-mails, SMS text messages, smartphones, and other web-based services, which enables the dissemination of breaking-news directly from the source to be widely shared among individuals using social media.

Several studies have researched the influence Twitter has on word-of-mouth for organizational brands and reputation management. A study from Janson et al. (2009) stated there were numerous possibilities to use Twitter for branding efforts and customer relations. Janson’s et al.’s study analyzed more than 150,000 microblogging postings as a form of word-of-mouth to spread opinions concerning brands. The study found 19% of microblogs mentioned a brand, 20% expressed opinions about the brand, and of the opinions, 50% were positive and 33% were negative toward the company or product (2009). The study concluded that microblogs have an effect on brand image and awareness; therefore, organizations should proactively incorporate marketing strategies to manage microblogging sites, such as Twitter.

Another study by Asur and Bernardo (2010) evaluated the task of predicting box-office revenues for movies based on Twitter communication among users. Movie buzz surrounding different movies as well as changes over time, viral marketing, and pre-release

hype on Twitter were all assessment goals for the study. How positive and negative opinions are formed and how they influence people were assessed as well using text classifications to distinguish negative posts from positive post. Asur and Bernardo created a linear regression model from 3 million tweets to predict box-office revenues prior to the release of a new movie. The results concluded that there was a strong correlation between the success or failure of a movie and the amount of social media the movie receives. In this case, tweets improved successful movie outcomes.

Retweeting and Sharing Behavior

One of the most popular functions of Twitter is the ability to retweet information. A retweet is information originally posted by one user and forwarded to another user (Asur & Huberman, 2010). Links and posts relating to interesting topics are popular to retweet.

A study by An et al. (2011) emphasized the significance of messages spread when they found that messages from journalists were repeated via social media an average of 15.5 times, creating an increased reach to audiences. Hermida, Fletcher, Korell, & Logan (2012) examined Canadian social media spaces and news consumptions. They found a significant number of media users value filtering news through personal networks over the professional judgments of news organizations or journalists. The results suggested that networked publics are affecting the traditional roles of journalists and editors as moderators of public discourse. Olmstead et al. (2011) said, "Understanding not only what content users will want to consume but also what content they are likely to pass along may be a key to how stories are put together and even what stories get covered in the first place" (p. 1).

Twitter has been found to be a useful instrument during a time of crisis. Starbird & Palen's 2010 study analyzing the role of retweets in emergency-related information found Twitter users retweet using an informal recommendation system to pass and recommend information they feel is important to other people. They reported that over 10% tweets and retweets about the Spring 2009 Red River flooding and the Oklahoma fires were sent by people geographically close to one another and to the event (Starbird and Palen, 2010). Mendoza et al. (2010) examined the Twitter use during a particular emergency situation by characterizing Twitter as an information source and analyzing the issues of veracity, confirmed truths and false rumors on Twitter. They found that tweets in crisis situations described common/global topics and false rumors tend to be questioned more than confirmed truths (Mendoza, Poleté, & Castillo, 2010). Their findings raise the question of whether the medium matters when addressing false rumors and confirmed truths, which pertains to the focus of this study. The following section examines the concept of determining whether the medium itself, as opposed to message content, affects communication outcomes.

The Medium is the Message

Marshall McLuhan (1967) was the first to coin the concept of "the message is the medium." The concept consists of a central idea that "changes in communication technology inevitably produce profound changes in both culture and social order" (Baran, 2009, p. 219). McLuhan proclaimed that new media potentially influences a new experience of ourselves more than the specific content of the messages transmitted (Shultz et al., 2011). McLuhan also coined the terms "global village" and "the extensions of man."

Global village refers to the instantaneous new form of social organization that would inevitably emerge as electronic media that advances/combines into “one great social, political and cultural system” (Baran, 2009, p. 220). The term, extension of man, is “the idea that sight, hearing, and touch are extended through time and space” (Baran, 2009, p. 220). In regard to Twitter, tweets from users potentially influence recipients. According to Slater and Rouner (2002), the purposes of a message recipient are critically influence audience engagement in a message. Thus, the recipient engages in the message once needs and purposes are aligned creating an attitudinal and behavioral effect (Slater & Rouner, 2002; Yang et al., 2010).

Schultz, Utz, & Göritz’s (2011) experimental study was the first study to analyze the use of social media in crisis communication and to extend prior research. The study analyzed the effects of traditional versus social-media strategies on the recipients’ perception of reputation. The study analyzed the effects of crisis responses on the recipients’ secondary crisis communications and reactions using situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), which was extended to consider the role of different media in the study.

Schultz et al. (2011) followed McLuhan’s (1967) “the medium is the message,” which posits, “technology has the potential to directly determine its usage and effects” (p. 22). Schultz et al. (2011) examined crisis communication strategy and medium effects on organizational reputation, as well as secondary crisis communication and secondary crisis reactions. The experiment analyzed three media: newspaper, blog, and Twitter, and three responses from those media: information, apology, and sympathy. They defined secondary communication as the recipients’ intention to tell friends about crisis, share information

about crisis, and leave comments about the crisis (Schultz et al., 2011). The experiment also analyzed the recipients' willingness to boycott the organization and to persuade others to boycott. The researchers sent out a link to the online experiment through email to panel members (respondents). The participants viewed screenshots of a fictional crisis scenario involving carmaker Mercedes Benz. According to the fictional scenario, there were thousands of accidents, and ten people died as a result of faulty spark plugs. The participants then answered questions concerning secondary crisis communication, organizational reputation, and demographics.

Schultz et al. (2011) found that the medium from which the message transpired mattered more than the actual message. They also found that secondary crisis communication was highest in the newspaper condition because individuals discuss newspaper articles more than blogs or tweets (Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011). Their results concluded that Twitter users were important to target for successful crisis communication because of their likelihood to share messages over blog users and non-users of social media. "Moreover, crisis communication via Twitter led to less negative crisis reactions than blogs and newspaper articles" (Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011, p. 25).

Liu, Austin, and Jin's (2011) study evaluating social-mediated crisis communication theory noted previous crisis studies have not examined effects of crisis information sources. Liu, Austin, and Jin (2011) examined the effects of crisis information form and source using a 3×2 within-subjects design, wherein for each of the two variables each participant received each of the conditions. The first factor, crisis information form, was tested by: "word-of-mouth communication (WOM) vs. social media (SM) vs. traditional

media (TM)” (Liu et al., 2011, p. 348). The second factor, source, was tested using third-party versus the organization.

They found publics are more likely to accept defensive and evasive crisis responses directly from the organization experiencing the crisis; however, publics are more likely to accept an organization’s supportive responses from a third party (Liu et al., 2011). Also, “publics are most likely to accept accommodative crisis responses when they learn about the crisis from the organization experiencing the crisis via word-of-mouth, while they are least likely to accept these responses when the crisis information is delivered from the organization via traditional media” (Liu et al., 2011, p. 350). Thus, their study indicated that form and source of the crisis response controls publics’ acceptance of crisis messages disseminated from “traditional media, social media, and word-of-mouth” (Liu et al., 2011, p. 351).

Both the Schultz et al. (2011) and Liu, Austin, and Jin’s (2011) studies provided a guideline for the methods section of this study. Both studies closely examine the importance of the medium, medium source, and sharing of information among publics.

In sum, the literature reflects that previous researchers have focused more on message content than on effects of source credibility within the social medium of Twitter. The current project questions how types of crises and source of Twitter messaging affects retweeting behavior and perceptual outcomes including effects on organizational reputation.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

Previous literature suggests stakeholders are less negative when organizations are victimized by intentional crises. Therefore, the current study expects less negative outcomes on organizational reputation for intentional crisis regardless of source. The hypothesis was predicted as followed:

H1: Regardless of source, intentional crisis will have less negative effect on organizational reputation than unintentional crisis.

However, very little is known about how type of crisis and source affects outcomes an organizational reputation and retweeting behaviors. Thus, the following questions are proposed:

RQ1: Will type of crisis (intentional/unintentional) affect likelihood of retweeting?

RQ2: Will source message (friend, organization, journalist) affect likelihood of retweeting?

RQ3: Will source message (friend, organization, journalist) impact organizational reputation?

RQ4: Will the type of crisis (intentional/unintentional) have an effect on organizational reputation?

RQ5: Will crisis types (intentional/unintentional) and source of tweet (friends, organization, journalist) interact in ways that affect Organizational reputation?

Chapter 3: Methodology

Content analyses and case studies have been the dominant method used for analyzing crisis communication. Schultz, Utz, & Göritz's (2011), using an experimented design, determined the effects of traditional versus social media effects perceptions of reputation primarily as secondary crisis communication. This chapter presents the methods and procedures, which are guided by Schultz et al. (2011) in an experimental design used to answer the research questions and hypothesis of this study. This study employs an experimental 2 x 3 factorial design. The independent variables are (a) type of crisis (unintentional and intentional) and (b) source of tweet (friend/organization/journalist). The dependent variables are (a) Organizational reputation and (b) retweeting behavior.

Sampling/Participants

To analyze the effect of crisis communication forms, an online questionnaire was administered through an online survey service. Online surveys have gained traction with researchers as a quick and convenient way to understand a large population (Kreps, 2011). The subjects for this study were recruited from an undergraduate population at a large Midwestern university. Approximately 2,000 of 17,408 undergraduates, were chosen at random from the main university's campus and satellite campuses, were sent a link to the questionnaire through email. The questionnaire was administered over a six day period. The target sample of undergraduates generally has familiarity with using social media such as Twitter. Those accepting an invitation to participate were randomized into one of six

conditions based on the type of crisis (unintentional and intentional) and source of the message (friend/organization/journalist).

Independent Variables

The independent variables in this study are crisis type (intentional and unintentional) and source of the tweet (organizational, journalist, and friend). The two crises provide a useful and simplistic way to dichotomize potential situations. Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer (2011) define intentional crisis as acts designed to harm an organization and unintentional as acts of unforeseeable events. The two crisis scenarios used for this study center around a fictional popular east coast coffee shop, Coffee Café. The hypothetical unintentional crisis type is the result of malfunctioning refrigerator, and the intentional crisis type is the result of a malicious act from an employee of Coffee Café. The goal of the subject matter for each type of crisis was to provide a realistic and relatable scenario for a target population of undergraduate students.

The second independent variable is source of the tweet- friend, organization, or journalist. The Internet is increasingly becoming the most reliable source for news for generating timely communication. (Seltzer & Mitrook, 2007; Taylor & Perry, 2005; Liu, Austin, & Jin, 2011). Therefore, many individuals are initially seeking information from the Internet, especially on social media sites. Attribution theory posits that consumers will make an effort to evaluate the news if the message provides an accurate representation, but the message will be discounted and will not be persuasive message if it lacks in credibility (Brown, Broderick, & Lee, 2007). However, behavioral influences are higher when the credibility of the source is high than when it is low (e.g., Dholakia & Sternthal,

1977; Bansal & Voyer, 2000). Thus, source credibility repeatedly has been shown to affect perceptions.

Dependent Variables

The dependent variables measured for this study are organizational reputation and likelihood to retweet. An organization is only as good as its reputation and image among its stakeholders, such as consumers. Thus, credibility plays a significant role in judgment from the consumers in regard to reputation. Credibility has been used measure organizational reputation, however, one cannot measure creditability based one single item or question, therefore, organizational reputation is measured using a modified version of McCroskey (1999) source credibility scale (Appendix A). A series of scales are used to indicate the degree of perceived trustworthiness, expertise, and responsibility of the organization. The participants indicated their agreement with the statements using numeric values on a “1” to “5” scale anchored by bi-polar statements. Ordinal scales measuring level of agreement scales “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” were also used. The items in this factor assess the degree to which participants felt the organization’s news release, were dishonest/honest, untrustworthy/trustworthy, and insincere/sincere, see Appendix B.

The second dependent variable is the likelihood to retweet the crisis message. Vieweg, Hughes, Starbird & Palen (2010) found that Twitter users use the retweet as an informal recommendation system to pass important information for others to know. Participants were asked if they would retweet the specific unintentional crisis message or an intentional crisis messages to which they were exposed. Participants were also asked about their general level of Twitter use. Measuring retweeting behavior allowed for

comparing Twitter, the source, and likelihood of retweeting. Moreover, retweeting behavior on organizational reputation could be assessed. See Appendix C.

Instrumentation/Materials

Schultz, Utz, & Göritz's (2011) and Yang et al.'s (2010) experimental designs are used as a guideline for this study's experimental procedure. Schultz, Utz, & Göritz (2011) used a design that examined medium versus reaction, and Yang et al. (2010) examined the salience of crisis narratives, blogger credibility, and openness to dialogic communication designs. As stated previously, the current experiment use a 2x3 design with two research conditions- types of crisis: (1) intentional and (2) unintentional and source types: (1) organization (2) journalist, and (3) friend. Intentional and unintentional crisis may yield different reactions. Table 3.1 illustrates the six separate conditions of the experiment.

Table 3.1 Experimental Design

	Organization	Journalist	Friend
Intentional	A	B	C
Unintentional	D	E	F

The two type of crisis mirrored one another with the exception of what caused the crisis. The crises were centered on a fictional east coast coffee shop, Coffee Café, located on or near several university campuses. The intentional crisis scenario is sabotage at the

workplace. An employee maliciously contaminates coffee from Coffee Café location on an east coast university. The unintentional crisis is a product failure. A faulty refrigerator used to house cold products at the same Coffee Café location introduces E.Coli and Salmonella in to the products causing cases of food poisoning. Tweets from a friend (Figure 3.1), Coffee Café (organization) (Figure 3.2), or journalist (Figure 3.3) with messages within the 140-character limits featured a link to a press release pertaining to the unintentional crisis or intentional crisis. Tweets included the link to a press release from Coffee Café. See Appendix D.

Procedure

Using simulated Twitter posts, a 2 (unintentional, intentional) x 3 (friend, organization, journalist) participants were randomly sorted into one of six conditions. Participants received an email consisting of a link to an online simulation and questionnaire that took approximately 10-15 minute to complete. In compliance with the Institutional Review Boards protocol, an online briefing occurred before the experiment.

Once participants agreed to participate, they randomly were assigned to a condition and (see Appendix A) read an instructional page featuring background information about the source of a tweet (organization, journalist or friend). Participants were then directed to read an unintentional press release or an intentional press release from one of three sources (see Appendix D). The presentation of the tweets and press releases were similar except for the source information (avatar and user name). The wording of the press releases and tweets was slightly modified in each version to appear more authentic to each crisis. Last, participants' completed an online questionnaire consisting of a series of scales

measuring reactions and feelings pertaining to crisis scenario, motivation to retweet the crisis information, perceptions of the organization's reputation and demographics.

Participants were thanked and debriefed.

Statistical Manipulations

Hypothesis 1 for this study states regardless of source an unintentional crisis will have less negative effect on organizational reputation than an intentional crisis.

Organizational reputation is measured using 14 items ranked on 1-to-5 scales anchored by bi-polar statements. Therefore, organizational reputation was statistically measured using a T-test between the independent variables intentional and unintentional. A series of t-test statistics determined if there were any effects on all the dependent measures (likelihood to retweet) and manipulation of crisis type. Research question 1 asked if type of crisis affect likelihood of retweeting. A t-test assessed question one.

Research questions 1 and 2: will source of message (friend/organization/journalist) affect likelihood of retweeting and will source of message impact organizational reputation, were both statistically measured using a chi-square independence test. The chi-square tested the independence of source and organizational reputation for research question 2 and source and crisis type for research questions 2 and 3.

To check the validity of manipulations of the two independent variables, two manipulation check items were included to determine whether could recall source and crisis type. To address research question 4 (will interactions between source and crisis type emerge?) an ANOVA test was used to find question relationships between each crisis

type and source of information followed with a post-hoc analysis for all six conditions (Tukey).

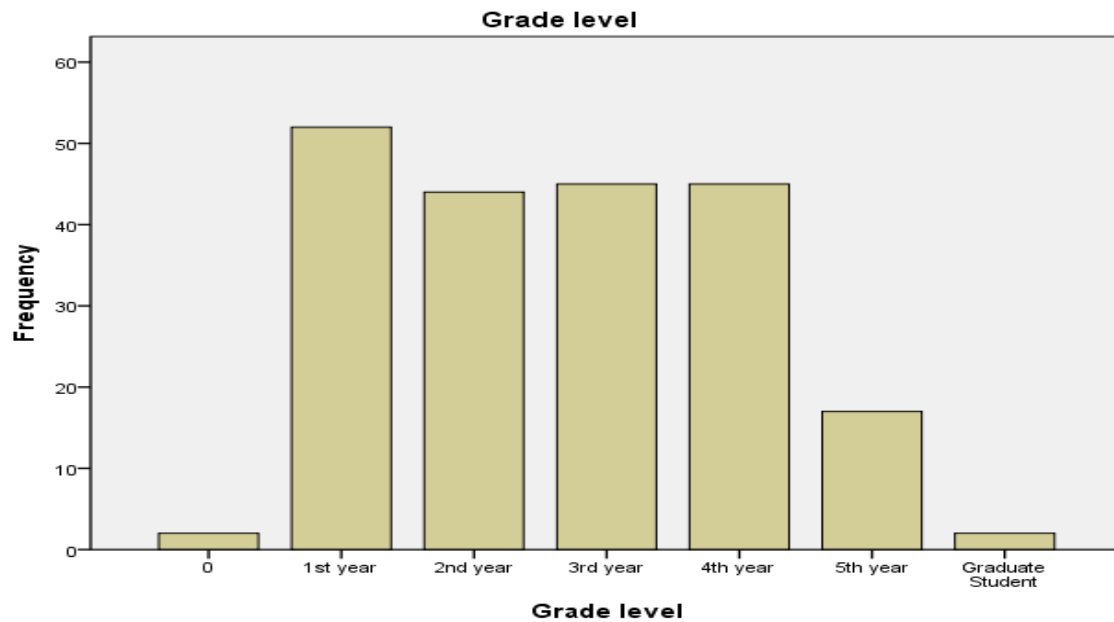
Chapter 4: Results

This chapter presents the findings of a quantitative experimental design comparing independent variables source of tweet and type of crisis to dependent variables retweeting behavior and organizational reputation. Alpha was set at .05 level and a series of Pearson's Chi-Square correlations and ANOVAs were used to correlate the independent variables (source of tweet- friend/organization/ journalist) and type of crisis- intentional/unintentional) and dependent variables (organizational reputation and retweeting behavior). This study consisted of two-tailed tests. In addition to answering the study's hypothesis and research questions, this chapter will address the relationship between respondents' demographics and retweeting behaviors.

Demographics

We employed an experimental design to test my hypothesis and research questions. The questionnaire was administered over a six day period and altogether 207 students participating in the study (103 females and 102 males, 2=0). The majority of the participants indicated they were white (82%), while 2% indicated Black, 9% indicated Hispanic, 4% indicated Asian, and only one indicated Native/ Island Pacific. Regarding year in school, first year students composed 25% of the respondents in comparison to 17% percent of fifth year students, while the other respondents were about were spread evenly across second, third, and fourth year in school as seen on Figure 4.1. Regarding student status, approximately 196 (94%) students were domestic students, and nine (4%) students were international students.

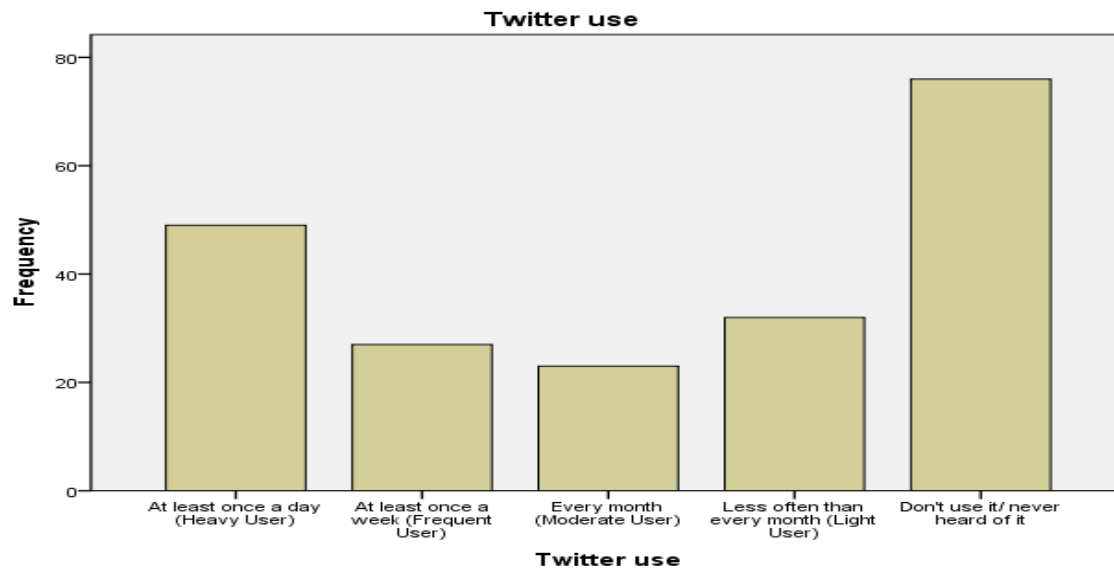
Figure 4.1 Year in School



Twitter Use

Participants were asked to indicate their average level of Twitter. Figure 4.2 illustrates respondents reported 1% “at least once a day (frequently)”, 13% “at least once a week (sometimes)”, 11% “every month (occasionally)”, 15% “less often than every month”(rarely), and 36% don’t use it/ never heard of it.

Figure 4.2 Twitter Use



Respondents willingness to retweet information resulted, 75 (36%) of respondents said “yes”, whereas 130 (62%) of respondents said “no”, seen in Figure 4.3. Frequency tables were also run to determine how often respondents retweet information from a friend (Figure 4.4), organization (Figure 4.5), and journalist (Figure 4.6). Approximately 40% would not retweet information from a friend, 47% would not retweet information from an organization, whereas 51% indicated they would never retweet information from a journalist. However of those who would retweet more information, more respondents would retweet information from a friend rather than from an organization and journalist.

Figure 4.3 Willingness to Retweet Information

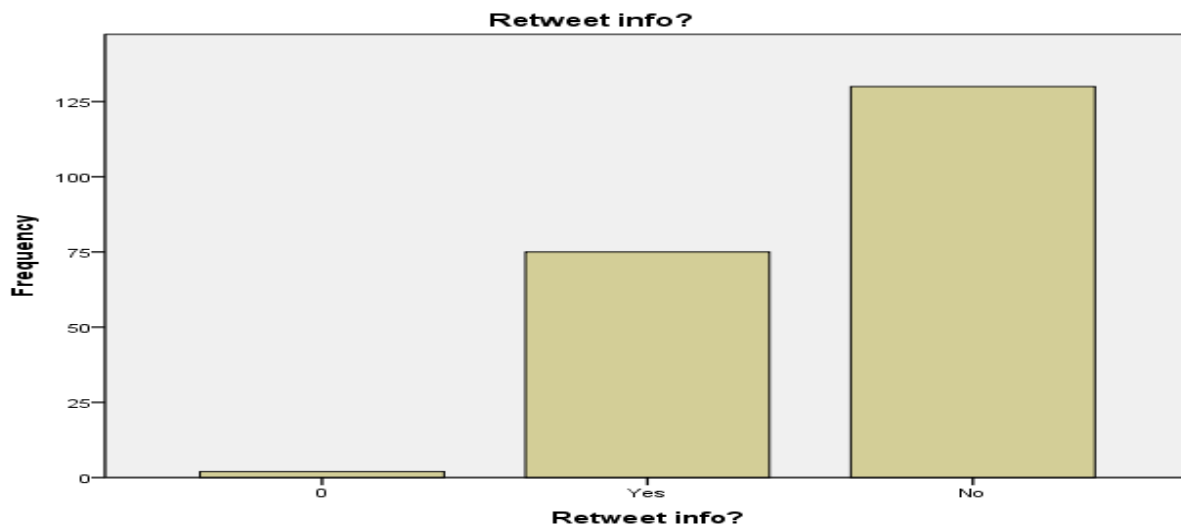


Figure 4.4 Willingness to Retweet from a Friend

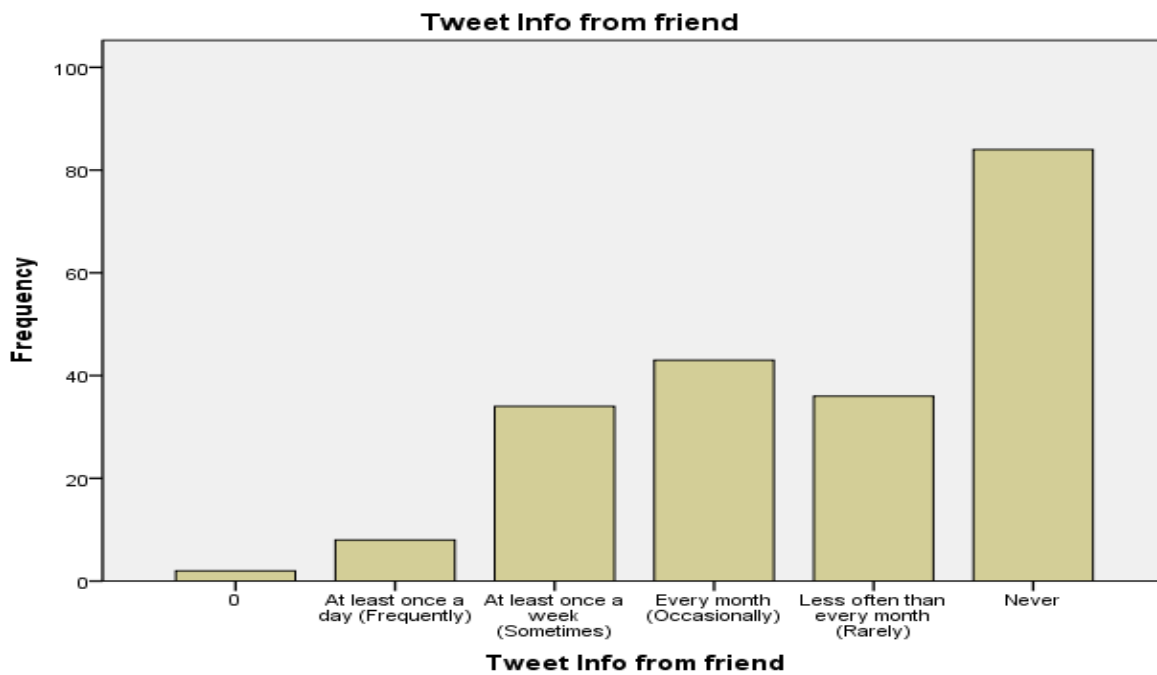


Figure 4.5 Willingness to Retweet from an Organization

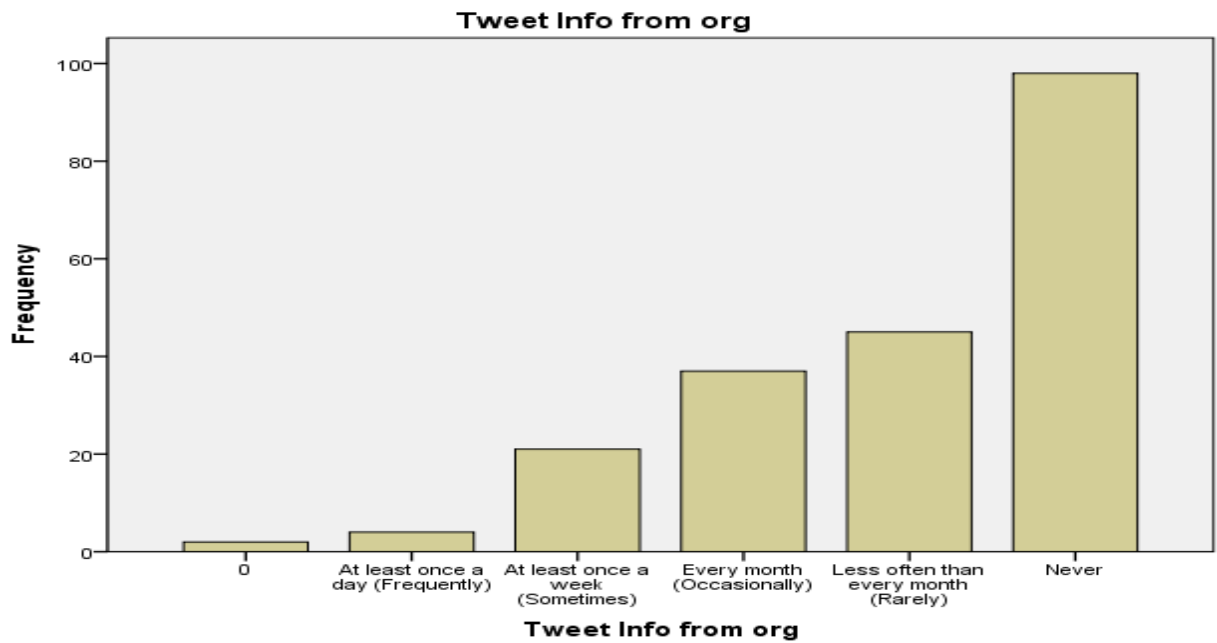
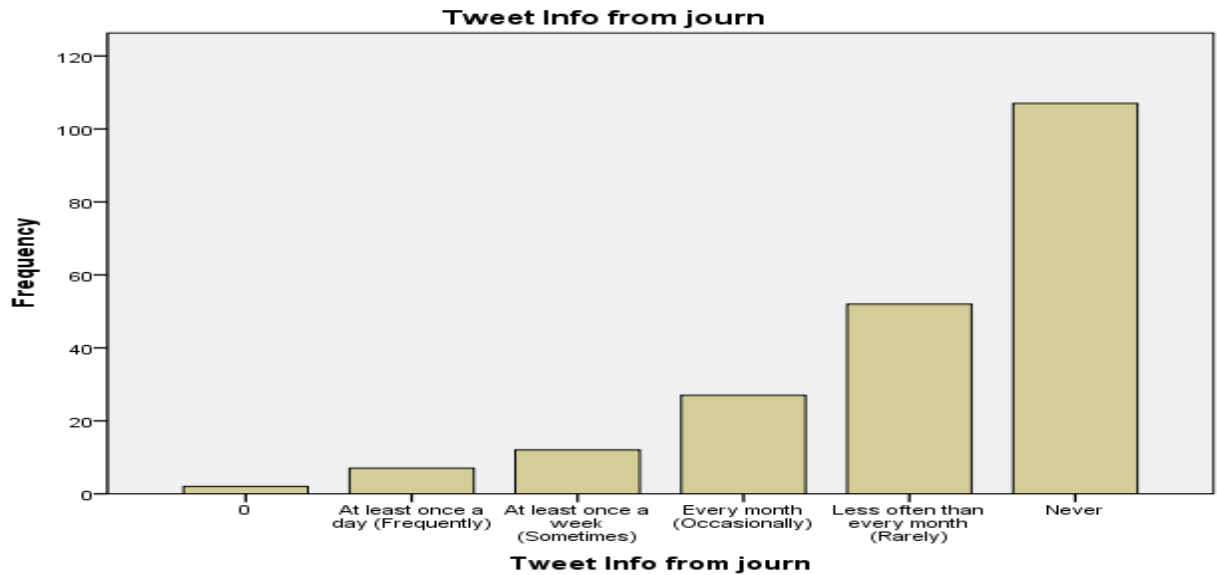


Figure 4.6 Willingness to retweet from a Journalist



Data Cleaning

A removal of outliers including removing incomplete questionnaires, adjustment of group scales, recoding for reverse variables, and examining high-low splits was performed to performed to ensure validity of results. Approximately 2,000 emails were sent to students across a Midwestern university campus; results indicated a total 275 people started the questionnaire. Any incomplete data was removed from the sample set, which was then reduced 207 respondents.

Several of the scales for the questions were reversed coded to properly analyze and compare results. Questions and statements that were presented as a negative statement were reversed and recoded to match the remaining questions that were stated as a positive. For example, an “accusation statement that Coffee Café is responsible for the contamination is misguided” included a five-point Likert scale with nominal polar ends “1”= “strongly agree” to “5” = “strongly disagree” was switched to “5”= “strongly agree” viewed as positive and “1”= “strongly disagree” as a negative. High scores “5” were changed to be viewed as a low score, and scores “1” were changed as a high score for bipolar scales as well.

To correctly analyze hypothesis 1 regardless of the source of an unintentional crisis will have less negative effects on organizational reputation than intentional crisis people who were exposed to intentional tweets from a friend/organization/journalist were collapsed together and all who were exposed to unintentional tweets from a friend, organization, and journalist were collapsed together. To examine research question 1 will the type of crisis (intentional/ unintentional) affect likelihood of retweeting, both the intentional and unintentional crisis tweets were collapsed and then recoded into a new

variable. Tweets from each source (friend, organization, journalist) were collapsed and recoded into a new category to answer both research questions two and three will source of tweet (organizational/journalist/friend) affect likelihood of retweeting and will the source of a tweet (organizational/ journalist/ friend) affect likelihood of organizational reputation.

Organizational reputation was measured by a total of 14 items including accusation statements, “The accusations that Coffee Café is responsible for the contamination is correct”, “The accusations that Coffee Café is responsible for the contamination is reasonable”, “The accusations that Coffee Café is responsible for the contamination is misguided” and perception questions, “I think the press release from Coffee Café was informed,” regarding the press releases. The three accusation statements were collapsed to create the variable “responsibility,” and six of the perception questions were collapsed to create variables “expertise” and “trust.” The last variable tested the local aspect of organizational reputation by including a single scaled item “I think Coffee Café was...concerned about the public’s interest.” All four variables, responsibility, expertise, trust, and concerned about the public interest will be used to measure organizational reputation.

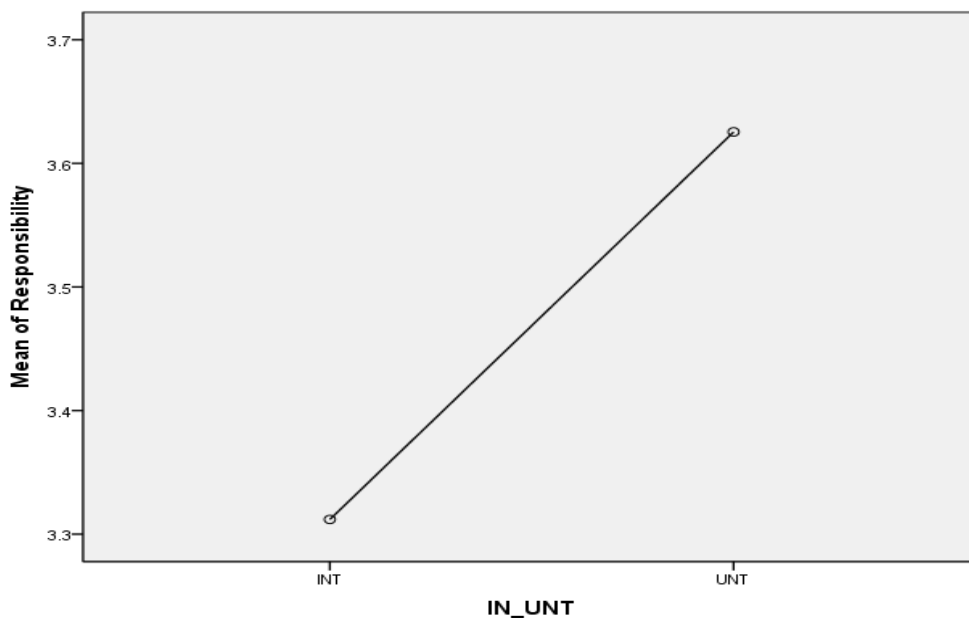
Finally, research question 5 “will crisis types (intentional/unintentional) and source of tweet (FOJ) emerge on their responses to the perception or credibility responses” was collapsed and recoded those into six groups: (1) Int_Friend, (2) Int_Org, (3) Int_Journ, (4) Un_Friend, (5) Un_Org, and (6)Un_Journ.

Data Analysis

Hypothesis 1: Regardless of the source an unintentional crisis will have less negative effect on organizational reputation than intentional crisis.

The first hypothesis expresses a non-directional approach that regardless of the source unintentional crisis will have less negative effect on organizational reputation than an intentional crisis. A T-test was run on the sum of the two variables of organizational reputation “responsibility” and the new variable of both the unintentional and intentional tweets. Table 4.1 and Figure 4.7 indicate there was a moderate significant difference in the mean scores for the organizational reputation variable “responsibility” and variable intentional ($M=3.63$, $SD=.688$) and unintentional ($M=3.31$, $SD=.781$) tweets; $t(204) = -3.04$, $p=.003$.

Figure 4.7 Organizational Responsibility and Intentional/ Unintentional Crisis



Organizational reputation variables “expertise” and “trust” were also measured against source of tweet but no statistical significance was found between variables. Organizational reputation “expertise” variable and combined variable intentional ($M=3.81$, $SD=.694$) and unintentional ($M=3.93$, $SD=.625$) tweets show no significance; $t(204) = -1.304$, $p > .05$. Organizational reputation variable trust variable and combined variable intentional ($M=3.44$, $SD=.646$) and unintentional ($M=3.52$, $SD=.740$) tweets show no significance; $t(204) = -1.304$, $p > .05$.

Research Question 1: Will the type of crisis (intentional/ unintentional) affect the likelihood of retweeting?

Research question one states will the type of crisis (intentional/ unintentional) affect likelihood of retweeting. To measure research question one, crisis types (intentional and unintentional) was collapsed into one variable and the respondents’ willingness to retweet an intentional and unintentional crisis message was collapsed into a second variable. A Pearson’s Chi-square (χ^2) was run to measure the impact of type crisis (intentional/ unintentional) by the intention to retweet the message. There was not a statistical significant difference between types of crisis and willingness to retweet both intentional and unintentional crisis message, [$\chi^2(1, N=207)=.46$, $p > .05$]. Our data indicates that the type of crisis has no impact on the willingness to retweet a message.

**Research Question 2: Will the source of tweet (organization/journalist/
friend) affect the likelihood of retweeting?**

Research question two states will the source of tweet (organization/journalist/friend) affect the likelihood of retweeting. The source of tweet was collapsed into one variable and compared to the respondents' willingness to retweet a crisis message. A Pearson Chi-square (X^2) was conducted to compare the impact of source of tweet by the intention to retweet the message. There was not a significant difference between the source of the tweet and the intention to retweet the message, [$\chi^2(2, N=207)=4.18, p >.05$].

An initial analysis of the data indicated that 76 respondents indicated they never use Twitter. To determine if their existing behavior not using Twitter played a role in their non-willingness to retweet a message, a further analysis was conducted eliminating those respondents (N= 131). However, after running a pair of subsequent Pearson Chi-squares (X^2), the source of the Tweet (friend/organization/journalist) and the type of crisis (intentional/ unintentional) still did not impact their willingness to retweet the message used in this study [$\chi^2 (2, N=131) =.006, p >.05$].

**Research Question 3: Will the source of the tweet (organization/ journalist/
friend) affect the likelihood of organizational reputation?**

Research question three examined the effect of the source of tweet and the likelihood of organizational reputation. The source of tweet was collapsed into one variable and compared to the respondents' perception of the organizations, reputation. An ANOVA was conducted to compare the means of the impact of source of tweet by the effects on organizational reputation. There was not a significant difference between the source of the

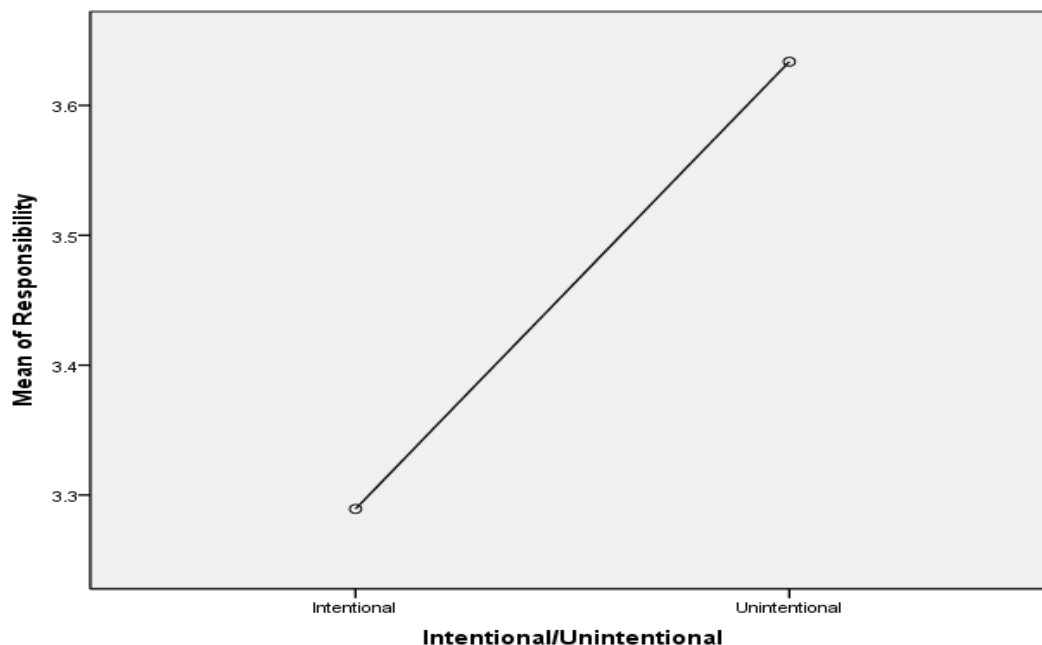
tweet and organizational reputation. The organizational reputation “expertise” variable was compared to variable friend ($M=3.82$, $SD=.73$), organization ($M=3.86$, $SD=.646$), journalist ($M=3.9$, $SD=.60$) tweets also show no significance; $F(2, .210, 90.72)=.23$, $p>.05$. The organizational reputation “trust” variable combined with variable friend ($M=3.47$, $SD=.74$), organization ($M=3.45$, $SD=.73$), journalist ($M=3.5$, $SD=.57$) tweets shows no significance; $F(.07, .075, 98.15)=.078$, $p>.05$. The organizational reputation “responsibility” variable compared with the variable friend ($M=3.38$, $SD=.79$), organization ($M=3.53$, $SD=.71$), journalist ($M=3.4$, $SD=.744$) tweets shows no significant differences; $F(2, .728, 115.75)=.64$, $p>.05$. Organizational reputation “concerned about public interest” variable compared with the variable friend ($M=4.15$, $SD=.84$), organization ($M=4.05$, $SD=.84$), journalist ($M=4.05$, $SD=.74$) tweets also shows no significant differences; $F(2, 1.79, 132.72)=.138$, $p>.05$.

Research Question 4: Will the type of crisis (intentional/unintentional) have an effect on organizational reputation?

Research question four examines the effects of type of crisis on organizational reputation. A one-way between-subjects ANOVA was conducted to compare the impact of crisis on the effects of organizational reputation. A statistical significance $p=.001$ was found between the crisis type intentional ($M=3.28$, $SD=.76$), unintentional ($M=3.63$, $SD=.69$), and the organizational reputation “responsibility” $F(1, 6.13, 110.35)=11.39$. No significance was found between the crisis type intentional ($M=3.78$, $SD=.70$) unintentional ($M=3.9$, $SD=.61$), and organizational reputation “expertise” $F(1, 1.13, 89.80)=2.58$, $p>.05$. No significance crisis type intentional ($M=3.41$, $SD=.63$), unintentional ($M=3.54$, $SD=.74$),

and organizational reputation “trust” $F(1, .83, 97.39)=1.75, p >.05$. Organizational reputation “concerned about public interest” variable compared with the crisis types intentional ($M=4.08, SD=.79$), unintentional ($M=4.00, SD=.81$), also showed no significance; $F(1, .29, 133.22) =.448, p>.05$.

Figure 4.8 Mean of Responsibility and Intentional/ Unintentional Crisis



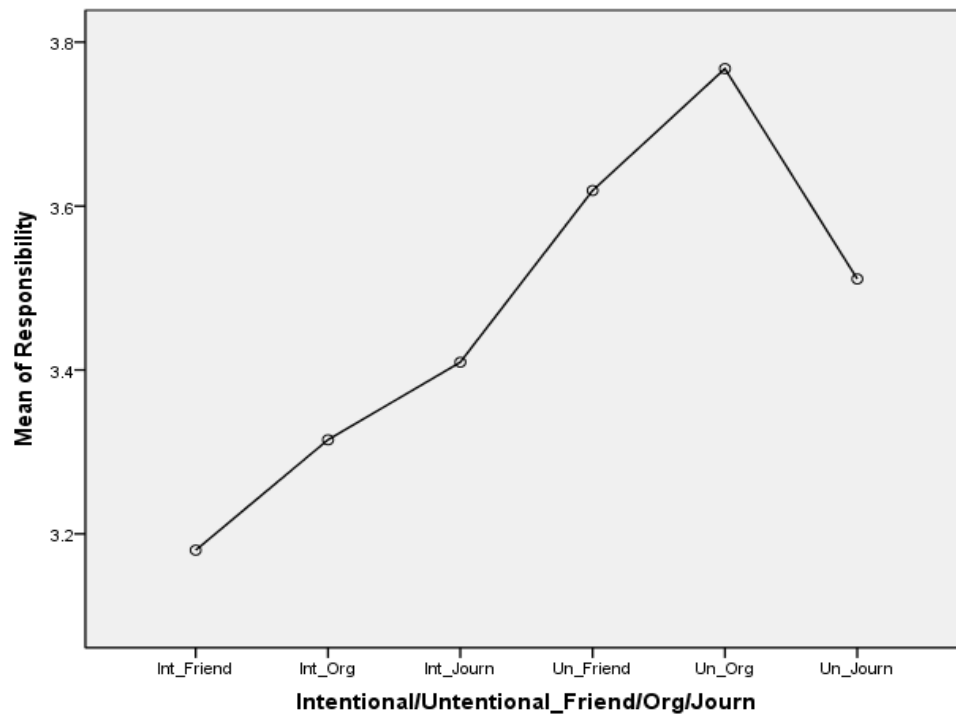
Research Question 5: Will the crisis types (intentional/unintentional) and the source of tweet (friends, organization, journalist) interact in ways that affect organizational reputation?

Research question five examines perception or credibility responses crisis types (intentional/unintentional) and sources of tweet (FOJ). The source of tweet and type of crisis was collapsed and recoded into six groups: (1) Int_Friend, (2) Int_Org, (3) Int_Journ,

(4) Un_Friend, (5) Un_Org, and (6)Un_Journ. A one-way between subjects ANOVA was performed to compare the six groups against the four variables of organizational reputation expertise, trust, interest in the publics' well-being, and responsibility. There was not a significant difference between the six groups' expertise [$F(5, 1.76, 88.42)=.799, p>.05$], trust [$F(5, 3.13, 94.81)=.256, p>.05$], and interest in the publics' interest [$F(5, 3.98, 129.52)=1.23, p >.05$].

However, there is a $p = .015$ significant difference in "responsibility" of the organizational reputation. A Post Hoc test, specifically the Tukey Range test, was performed to identify the specific group of significance. The group intentional friend (Int_Friend) ($M=3.18, SD=.86$) compared to the unintentional organization (Un_Org) ($M=3.77, SD=.69$). An overall significant finding had an "omnibus" $F(5, 7.83, 108.44)= 2.88$.

Figure 4.9 Mean of Responsibility versus Intentional/ Unintentional (Friend/ Organziatation/Journalist)



Chapter 5: Discussion

The purpose of this study was to determine the effects of disseminated crisis communication on organizational reputation, and if the medium itself rather than the context alters the perceptions of organizational reputation. The specific areas analyzed were independent variable crisis types (unintentional/intentional) and the source of tweet (friend, organization, and journalism) and two dependent variables (retweeting behavior and organizational reputation.)

The hypothesis of the study predicted that regardless of the source an unintentional crisis would have a less negative effect on organizational reputation than intentional crisis. The hypothesis was found partially supported. A difference of means test was applied to compare the variables within organizational reputation, “responsibility”, “trust”, and “expertise,” and collapsed crisis types (unintentional and intentional). Results indicated that no significance was found between “trust” and “expertise” on organizational reputation. This finding is due to only a slight variance between the means of both intentional and unintentional crisis types.

However, results did indicate a statistically significant difference when comparing the mean of the organizational variable “responsibility” and the type of crisis. After reading the allotted tweet and press release, respondents perceived Coffee Café as responsible in both intentional and unintentional crisis conditions. Although only moderately significant, the significance found that the perception of responsibility is a valid factor to consider during a possible crisis. Perception is a fundamental component in a time of crisis defined in previous research, particularly Benoit’s (1997) image restoration or discourse theory.

His image restoration theory outlines strategies for organizations to employ to mitigate damage to reputation once a crisis has occurred. The two components that must be present in an attack to the image are: (1) the accused is held responsible for the action, and (2) the act is considered offensive. Benoit believes one must assume the audience disapproves of the act; therefore, since the Coffee Café organization is perceived accountable for both intentional and unintentional crisis, the next step is to employ crisis communication strategies noted earlier in this paper.

Another moderate significant difference was found in research question 5, which examined the emergence of interaction between the source of a tweet and crisis types. To analyze the interaction, the source of the tweet and the type of crisis were collapsed and recoded into six groups (1) Int_Friend, (2) Int_Org, (3) Int_Journ, (4) Un_Friend, (5) Un_Org, and (6) Un_Journ and compared to the four variables within organizational reputation-expertise, trust, interest in the publics' well-being, and responsibility. Results revealed, once again, that the perception of responsibility was held significantly different over other variables in organizational reputation, specifically for those who saw an intentional friend tweet and the unintentional organization tweet. Receiving an intentional crisis message from a friend establishes a more appealing story as compared to the tweets from the a journalist or organization. The same may be concluded for those receiving the unintentional message from an organization.

A significant finding was found while analyzing the research questions and hypothesis from this study. Though the participants read a tweet or press release from a friend or journalist, a third of the participants believed the organization sent the tweet.

This finding concludes that the organization is viewed as responsible though another source sent the message.

The purpose of research questions 1 and 2 was to examine the effects of retweeting behavior compared to the type of crisis and the source of tweet. The participants who were exposed to the intentional and unintentional tweets were asked their willingness to retweet this message. Results revealed that the crisis type (intentional/unintentional) or the source of tweet (friend/organization/journalist) had virtually no impact on participants' willingness to retweet the crisis message. Interestingly enough, the majority of participants indicated they would not retweet the crisis message from Coffee Café, regardless of whether the message was from a friend, organization, or journalist.

There are several explanations for why the crisis type and source of tweet was not found to affect retweeting behavior. One explanation is that the majority of participants did not use Twitter or had never heard of it. Based on this finding, individuals who had never heard of or used Twitter, were filtered, and the same test was rerun. However, the retest of means with the removal of all respondents who did not use Twitter still yielded an insignificant impact on their willingness to retweet. Another explanation for this finding might be that level of crisis was perceived as too low to reveal a significant difference. The fictional organization (Coffee Café) and crises (a malicious employee and faulty refrigeration) possibly were perceived as unrealistic. Therefore, the majority of respondents felt no need share possible insignificant information with others.

Research questions three and four attempted to analyze the effects of type of crisis (intentional/unintentional) and the source of crisis (journalist/organization/friend) on organizational reputation. The credibility of an organization's reputation is difficult to

address by simply asking “are you creditable?,” thus using several items used as a summation of reputation has been shown to be in best practice. Nevertheless, even using established scales, no significance relationship was found between the organizational reputation source of crisis and the type of crisis. The results yielded high means, which means they trusted and believed the press releases to reflect expertise and responsibility of Coffee Café. On a local level, Coffee Café was concerned about the publics’ interest as reflected by the strong agreement from the scales. The intentional and unintentional crises were viewed almost similarly, thus creating no difference in perception or feeling toward Coffee Café.

Limitations/Future Research

Although interesting findings were revealed, there were some limitations that may have limited the outcomes of this study. Undergraduate students provided a convenient sample; however, students may have had difficulty relating to the premises of this study. The student population is an easy to acquire but at times difficult to assess when examining issues that are perceived as irrelevant issues in their lives. The majority of the participants was mid-western, white students who have never heard or used Twitter.

One limitation is that the level of crisis was not perceived as high or strong enough to exert a significant difference between an unintentional and intentional crisis. Contamination of any consumed product by individuals is important; however, the crisis may have been viewed as a quick fix for those responsible for the act. For example, a faulty refrigerator could be fixed or replaced in a matter of a week and a malicious employee could be fired immediately. In retrospect, a crisis involving a collapsed parking garage that

is consistently used by the student population may have a stronger impact on the respondents' perceptions, especially if the incident resulted in injuries and loss of personal property. In other words, the strength of the crisis could have influenced a better response to share a crisis message to "followers" on Twitter. A different approach would be to conduct a pre-test before the actual experiment to measure which of six different crisis scenarios emerges as the most impactful crisis to a population.

Another limitation was the majority of the participants did not use Twitter or have never heard of Twitter. This is very difficult to conclude based on previous studies (Starbird and Palen, 2010; Mendoza et al., 2010) that found Twitter does play a significant role during a time of crisis. Other research mentioned earlier in this study did, however, note that Facebook was one of the most popular social media platforms. However, Twitter may still provide a more timely and efficient avenue for relaying messages across audiences if one has it. This study found that the majority of the participants did not have or have never heard of Twitter.

The final limitation is that participants were unable to identify with the organization. In this study, participants were in a sense asked to be a stakeholder to a fictional organization. Though a good amount of background information of each source (friend/organization/journalist) was provided for the participants, the information was not enough for them to form a significant relationship. A different approach would be to possibly incorporate more identifiable brands in the experiment or provide more extensive information about the organization.

Implications

This study is applicable for crisis managers who are responsible for protecting the reputation and reducing harm for an organization's brand. Many organizations neglect to address social media as a multifaceted platform that may induce harm or good to their brand. Most organizations acknowledge that internal and external crises will and do occur, however, do not predict and prepare for unconventional crisis outside of traditional practices. In fact, some companies have mentioned that they have crisis communication plans, but have not yet incorporated communication protocols for addressing stakeholders through social media.

A recent example of an ill prepared plan to address social media was a cruise line that treated social media as a way to interject promotional deals while ships were experiencing technical problems. There was no display of compassion, empathy regarding the publics' feelings toward the crisis, which is one of the best practices of risk and crisis communication identified by researchers with the National Center for Food Protection and Defense (NCFPD), a US Department of Homeland Security Center of Excellence (Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011). The cruise line was held responsible for the occurrences and left customers dissatisfied and disappointed with the company. The cruise line did not respond appropriately, which directly affected an increase in the perceived responsibility. Therefore, further justifying the significance in this study that perception of responsibility in a crisis is hand in hand with the perceptions of an organization's reputation.

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Appendix A: Measuring Organizational Reputation

Responsibility:

The accusations that Coffee Café is responsible for the contamination is **correct**.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

The accusations that Coffee Café is responsible for the contamination is **reasonable**.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

The accusations that Coffee Café is responsible for the contamination is **misguided**.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Expertise:

I think the press release from Coffee Café was... **informed**.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I think the press release from Coffee Café was... **inaccurate.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Trust:

I think the press release from Coffee Café was...**truthful.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

In general, Coffee Café press release was...

Unfair 1 2 3 4 5 **Fair**

Honest 1 2 3 4 5 Dishonest

Biased 1 2 3 4 5 Unbiased

Single Item Measure:

Is concerned about the public interest 1 2 3 4 5 Is not concerned about the public interest

Appendix B: Measuring Perceptions of Press Releases

I think the press release from Coffee Café was... **Informed.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I think the press release from Coffee Café was... **Sensible.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I think the press release from Coffee Café was... **Irrational.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I think the press release from Coffee Café was... **Inaccurate.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I think the press release from Coffee Café was... **Truthful.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

I think the press release from Coffee Café was... **Immoral.**

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

In general, Coffee Café press release was...

- **Unfair 1 2 3 4 5 Fair**
- **Tells the whole story 1 2 3 4 5 Does not tell the whole story**
- **Accurate 1 2 3 4 5 Inaccurate**
- **Concerned about the community's well being 1 2 3 4 5 Not concerned about the communities well being**
- **Can be trusted 1 2 3 4 5 Cannot be trusted**
- **Is concerned about the public interest 1 2 3 4 5 Is not concerned about the public interest**
- **Factual 1 2 3 4 5 Opinionated**

•

Appendix C: Measuring Tweeting Behavior

Would you be willing to retweet this message?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐

The tweet you read was from which source?

- ☐ Friend
- ☐ Journalist
- ☐ Organization

What is the level of your typical Twitter use?

- ☐ At least once a day (Heavy User)
- ☐ At least once a week (Frequent User)
- ☐ Every month (Moderate User)
- ☐ Less often than every month (Light User)
- ☐ Don't use it/ never heard of it

In the case of Coffee Café, would you retweet the information?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

How often do you retweet information from a friend?

- ☐ At least once a day (Frequently)
- ☐ At least once a week (Sometimes)
- ☐ Every month (Occasionally)
- ☐ Less often than every month
- ☐ Never (Rarely)

How often do you retweet information from an organization?

- ☐ At least once a day (Frequently)
- ☐ At least once a week (Sometimes)
- ☐ Every month (Occasionally)
- ☐ Less often than every month
- ☐ Never (Rarely)

How often do you retweet information from a journalist?

- ☐ At least once a day (Frequently)
- ☐ At least once a week (Sometimes)
- ☐ Every month (Occasionally)
- ☐ Less often than every month
- ☐ Never (Rarely)

Appendix D: Press Releases

Unintentional Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jane Doe

Date: January 20, 2013

PRESS RELEASE

Investigation Update

Recently, we discovered faulty refrigeration equipment introduced E.Coli and Salmonella in cold products used in coffee we serve to customers every day. Several students developed food poisoning as a result of this isolated incident at an east coast location on a university campus.

We sincerely apologize for this incident, we thank members of the university community and franchise owner who quickly alerted us and allowed us to take immediate action.

The café will remain closed until it is completely cleaned and examined from top to bottom for any problems. We have auditors in our stores everyday making sure our stores are clean and that we are providing quality service to our customers. The safety and the trust of our customers are important to us.

We want to thank you for your patience during this matter and we assure you that we are taking every possible action to ensure the safety of our locations. Thank you for hanging in there with us as we work to regain your trust.

We will do our part to keep you updated as the investigation continues.

Jane Doe

Jane Doe

Vice President, Communications

Coffee Café, LLC

Intentional Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jane Doe

Date: January 20, 2013

PRESS RELEASE

Investigation Update

Recently, we discovered a Coffee Café team member maliciously introduced E. coli and Salmonella to cold products used in coffee we serve to customers every day. Several students developed food poisoning as a result of this isolated incident at an east coast location on a university campus.

We sincerely apologize for this incident, we thank members of the university community and franchise owner who quickly alerted us and allowed us to take immediate action.

The café will remain closed until it is completely cleaned and examined from top to bottom for any problems. We have auditors in our stores everyday making sure our stores are clean and that we are providing quality service to our customers. The safety and the trust of our customers are important to us.

We want to thank you for your patience during this matter and we assure you that we are taking every possible action to ensure the safety of our locations. Thank you for hanging in there with us as we work to regain your trust.

We will do our part to keep you updated as the investigation continues.

Jane Doe

Jane Doe

Vice President, Communications
Coffee Café, LLC

Appendix E: Tweets

Friend

This is your friend who you are in regular contact with weekly. This friend is known to spread “news worthy” articles covering various topics.

Intentional



Unintentional



Organization (Coffee Café)

Coffee Café Corporation is an American coffee company and coffeehouse chain based in Richmond, Virginia with 400 locations in the United States often on or near universities campuses.

Intentional



Unintentional



Journalist

This journalist is a well-known news reporter for the local news station. The reporter often posts consumer reports and constantly post updates about local businesses.

Intentional



Unintentional



Appendix F: Questionnaire

Q1 Thank you for your interest in this questionnaire. All information will be kept confidential and no identifying information will be gathered or included with your responses. Your participation in the research is voluntary and you may withdraw from the study at any time with no penalty. The study will only take about 10-15 minutes. Once again, thank you for helping me with this study. Your responses will help ensure the completion of my graduate degree at Kansas State University!

Q2 On the next screen you will be shown a Tweet about an issue that occurred on a college campus. The Tweet is written by one of the following sources. Take a minute to familiarize yourself with how you should try to think about the source of the Tweet.

Friend This is your friend who you are in regular contact with weekly. This friend is known to spread “news worthy” articles covering various topics.

Organization (Coffee Café) Coffee Café Corporation is an American coffee company and coffeehouse chain based in Richmond, Virginia with 400 locations in the United States often on or near universities campuses.

Journalist This journalist is a well-known news reporter for the local news station. The reporter often posts consumer reports and constantly posts updates about local businesses.

Q107 Would you be willing to retweet this message?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q75 Would you be willing to retweet this message?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q77 Would you be willing to retweet this message?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q65 Would you be willing to retweet this message?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q67 Would you be willing to retweet this message?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q69 Would you be willing to retweet this message?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q104 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jane Doe

Date: January 20, 2013

PRESS RELEASE Investigation Update

Recently, we discovered a Coffee Café team member maliciously introduced E. coli and Salmonella to cold products used in coffee we serve to customers every day. Several students developed food poisoning as a result of this isolated incident at an east coast location on a university campus. We sincerely apologize for this incident, we thank members of the university community and franchise owner who quickly alerted us and allowed us to take immediate action. The café will remain closed until it is completely cleaned and examined from top to bottom for any problems. We have auditors in our stores everyday making sure our stores are clean and that we are providing quality service to our customers. The safety and the trust of our customers are important to us. We want to thank you for your patience during this matter and we assure you that we are taking every possible action to ensure the safety of our locations. Thank you for hanging in there with us as we work to regain your trust. We will do our part to keep you updated as the investigation continues.

Jane Doe

Jane Doe Vice President, Communications Coffee Café, LLC

Q10 FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jane Doe

Date: January 20, 2013

PRESS RELEASE Investigation Update

Recently, we discovered faulty refrigeration equipment introduced E.Coli and Salmonella, in cold products used in coffee we serve to customers every day. Several students developed food poisoning as a result of this isolated incident at an east coast location on a university campus. We sincerely apologize for this incident, we thank members of the university community and franchise owner who quickly alerted us and allowed us to take immediate action. The café will remain closed until it is completely cleaned and examined from top to bottom for any problems. We have auditors in our stores everyday making sure our stores are clean and that we are providing quality service to our customers. The safety and the trust of our customers are important to us. We want to thank you for your patience during this matter and we assure you that we are taking every possible action to ensure the safety of our locations. Thank you for hanging in there with us as we work to regain your trust.

We will do our part to keep you updated as the investigation continues.

Jane Doe Vice President, Communications Coffee Café, LLC

Q11 The tweet you read was from which source?

- ☐ Friend
- ☐ Journalist
- ☐ Organization

Q12 What is the level of your typical Twitter use?

- ☐ At least once a day (Heavy User)
- ☐ At least once a week (Frequent User)
- ☐ Every month (Moderate User)
- ☐ Less often than every month (Light User)
- ☐ Don't use it/ never heard of it

Q13 The accusations that Coffee Café is responsible for the contamination is correct.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Q14 The accusations that Coffee Café is responsible for the contamination is reasonable.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Q15 The accusations that Coffee Café is responsible for the contamination is misguided.

- ☐ Strongly Disagree
- ☐ Disagree
- ☐ Neither Agree nor Disagree
- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Strongly Agree

Q16 I think the press release from Coffee Café was...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Informed	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q17 I think the press release from Coffee Café was...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Sensible	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q18 I think the press release from Coffee Café was...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Irrational	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q19 I think the press release from Coffee Café was...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Inaccurate	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q20 As an organization Coffee Café is...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Truthful	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q21 As an organization Coffee Café is...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Dishonest	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q22 As an organization Coffee Café is...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Trustworthy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q23 As an organization Coffee Café is...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Immoral	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q24 In general, Coffee Café's press release was...

	1	2	3	4	5
Select one.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q25 In general, Coffee Café's press release was...

	1	2	3	4	5
Select one.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q26 In general, Coffee Café's press release was...

	1	2	3	4	5
Select one.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q27 In general, Coffee Café's press release was...

	1	2	3	4	5
Select one.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q28 In general, Coffee Café's press release was...

	1	2	3	4	5
Select one.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q29 In general, Coffee Café's press release was...

	1	2	3	4	5
Select one.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q30 In general, Coffee Café's press release was...

	1	2	3	4	5
Select one.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q31 In general, Coffee Café's press release was...

	1	2	3	4	5
Select one.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q32 In the case of Coffee Café, would you retweet the information?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q33 Select one.

	At least once a day (Frequently)	At least once a week (Sometimes)	Every month (Occasionally)	Less often than every month (Rarely)	Never
How often do you retweet information from a friend?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q34 Select one.

	At least once a day (Frequently)	At least once a week (Sometimes)	Every month (Occasionally)	Less often than every month (Rarely)	Never
How often do you retweet information from a journalist?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q35 Select one.

	At least once a day (Frequently)	At least once a week (Sometimes)	Every month (Occasionally)	Less often than every month (Rarely)	Never
How often do you retweet information from an organization?	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

Q36 Gender

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

Q37 Please indicate grade level.

- ☐ 1st year
- ☐ 2nd year
- ☐ 3rd year
- ☐ 4th year
- ☐ 5th year
- ☐ Graduate Student

Q38 Race

- ☐ White
- ☐ African-American
- ☐ Hispanic
- ☐ Asian
- ☐ Native/ Island Pacific

Q39 Please indicate your status as a student.

- ☐ Domestic Student
- ☐ International Student

Q108 The objective of this study is to examine if the medium/source of a crisis message disseminated through social media has an effect on organizational reputation. The ultimate goal is to express the importance of preparing crisis communication plans in response to crisis communication disseminated across social media. Once again, thank you for taking the time to complete my questionnaire. If you have any questions about the research, you may email me, Ambrosia Franklin, afrank1@ksu.edu. If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a participant in this research project, please contact Kansas State University, Institutional Review Board (IRB), at (785) 532-3224. The IRB number is 7111.

