

DOCTORAL THESIS

Audiences' evaluation process in organizational crisis: a study of consumers in Hong Kong

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Audiences' Evaluation Process in Organizational Crisis:
A Study of Consumers in Hong Kong

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Abstract

This dissertation investigates consumers' evaluation process of organizational crisis. Specifically, consumers' cognitive appraisal, emotional reactions, and behavioral intentions towards organizations that are involved in crisis are studied. This dissertation is consisted of two studies. They are used to supplement each other. The first study adopted a quantitative approach (an experimental study), whereas the second, qualitative (an interview study). In the experiment, 418 subjects participated. The basic approach used in the experiments consisted of asking each participant to read a scenario describing a crisis and the corporate crisis response(s). The three independent variables were: Causal attribution, Degree of crisis severity and Corporate crisis responses. They are manipulated to various levels to constitute a 2 x 2 x 6 between-subject design. The dependent variables included participants' (1) judgment of corporate responsibility for the crisis; (2) impression/ perception about the company; (3) emotion towards the company; (4) expectation of corporate crisis responses; (5) degree of satisfaction of organizational crisis response; (6) degree of trust on the company; and finally, (7) consumption intention. The interview study involved interviewing with 31 subjects on their evaluation of the real case of the China Airlines crash occurred in Hong Kong. The triangulation of the two studies showed consistency and interesting findings. All in all, it was found that consumers' (1) judgment of organizational responsibility for causing the crisis, which was found to be directly affected by their causal attribution, perceived degree of crisis seriousness, and organizational crisis response; as well as (2) their evaluation of organizational crisis response were the two main concerns in the evaluation process. Particularly, consumers' judgment of organizational responsibility for causing the crisis was found to determine their subsequent reactions including impression / perception about the organization, emotions towards the organization, degree of trust on the organization, and degree of satisfaction on organizational crisis response. Results deriving from MANOVA, path analyses, and the interview data were further discussed in the subsequent chapters in this dissertation. A conceptual model depicting consumers' evaluation process in organizational crises was derived at the end of this dissertation. Possible cultural characteristics of Hong Kong consumers were also identified. Theoretical and practical implications of the findings were discussed.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION.....	i
ABSTRACT.....	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	iii
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	v
LIST OF TABLES.....	viii
LIST OF FIGURES.....	ix
CHAPTER 1—Audience’s Evaluation Process in Organizational Crisis: A Study of Consumers in Hong Kong.....	1
CHAPTER 2—Studies on Organizational Crisis.....	4
2.1. Organizational Crisis.....	4
2.1.1. Organizational Crisis Defined.....	4
2.1.2. Types of Crises and Crisis Categorization.....	6
2.2. Crisis Communication Research.....	8
2.2.1. Crisis Management and Crisis Communication.....	8
2.2.2. An Overview of the Historical Development of Organizational Crisis Studies.....	9
2.3. SYSTEMS THEORY.....	16
2.3.1. Characteristics of a System.....	16
2.3.2. Conceptualizing Organizations as Systems.....	17
2.3.3. Organizational Crisis Communication Under the Framework of Systems Theory.....	21
CHAPTER 3—Analytic Framework of Consumers’ Evaluation Process in Organizational Crises in Hong Kong.....	28
3.1. Audience-oriented Crisis Communication Study.....	28
3.1.1. Causal Attribution Theories.....	28
3.1.2. Causal Attribution and Judgement of Responsibility in the Context of Organizational Crisis.....	34
3.2. Organizational Responses in Times of Crisis.....	39
3.2.1. Typology of Image Restoration Responses.....	39

3.2.2. Conceptualizing and Framing Organizational Crisis Responses.....	46
CHAPTER 4—An Experimental Study Examining Audience’s Evaluation Process of Organizational Crisis.....	52
4.1. Overview of the Quantitative and Qualitative Approaches.....	52
4.1.1. Hypotheses, Research Questions, and Hypothesized Model In Study 1.....	52
4.1.2. Methodology of Study 1.....	65
4.1.3. Primary Experiment.....	69
4.2. Results of the Experiment Study.....	77
4.2.1. Preliminary Analysis.....	77
4.2.2. Primary Analysis I.....	81
4.2.3. Primary Analysis II.....	94
4.3. Discussion of Study I.....	103
4.3.1. Quantitative Approach to Studying Audiences’ Evaluation Process in an Organizational Crisis.....	103
4.3.2. Results of MANOVA.....	104
4.3.3. Discussion of the Path Analysis Results.....	109
CHAPTER 5—An Interview Study Investigating Audience’s Evaluation Process in Organizational Crisis.....	123
5.1. Overview of the Interview Study.....	123
5.1.1. Research Questions and Methodology of Study 2.....	124
5.2. Results of Study 2.....	130
5.3. Summary of the Two-staged Evaluation Process.....	217
CHAPTER 6—Conclusion.....	226
6.1. An Integrated Model.....	228
6.2. Practical Implications.....	234
6.3. Theoretical Issues.....	235
6.4. Limitations and Suggestions for Future Directions.....	244
REFERENCES.....	246
APPENDIX A—English Version of Pretest Questions.....	274

APPENDIX B—Chinese Version of Pretest Questions.....	283
APPENDIX C—English Version of the Variations in the Manipulations in the Questionnaire.....	291
APPENDIX D—Chinese Version of the Variations in the Manipulations in the Questionnaire.....	307
APPENDIX E—Background Information on China Airlines Plane Crash.....	320
APPENDIX F—Interview Questions.....	329
FOOTNOTE.....	331
CURRICULUM VITAE.....	332