

PROACTIVE SELF-DISCLOSURE OF THREATS:
THE EFFECTS OF VOLUNTARY DISCLOSURE OF CORPORATE ISSUES ON
PERCEIVED ORGANIZATIONAL TRANSPARENCY, CREDIBILITY, AND PERCEIVED
SEVERITY OF ISSUES

Bo Kyung Kim
Dr. Maria Len-Ríos & Dr. Glen T. Cameron, Dissertation Supervisors

ABSTRACT

Guided by the public relations literature of stealing thunder and organizational transparency, this study examined the effects of corporations' self-disclosure claims of their issues via Facebook on audience perceptions. The study used a 3 (information disclosure: voluntary vs. responsive vs. obligatory disclosure) x 2 (referral source: presence vs. absence) mixed-subject design experiment with 142 adult participants (mean age = 35.4). The results showed that regardless of one's prior involvement toward a stimuli brand, the voluntary disclosure of a corporate issue led the participants to perceive that company as more transparent and more credible than either the "responsive" disclosure messages or the "obligatory" disclosure. Notwithstanding, the voluntary, self-disclosure condition, when compared to the obligatory condition, was more effective in reducing participants' perceived severity of the particular issue.

The results theoretically extend the stealing-thunder literature, in a way that public might view a company's disclosure as either volunteered or forced to respond, given that the responsive and the mandatory disclosure of information were essentially the same in responses. The findings also suggest that an organization may strategically use the voluntary information disclosure with their social media platforms, if the strategy can enhance greater transparency and credibility perceptions toward the organization using that strategy and further, mitigate the severity perceptions toward the threats.