

A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF FACTUAL CORRECTION REQUESTS FOR CORPORATE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

This thesis attempts to illuminate the potential conflict and understanding how the crisis managers at public companies attempt to reach journalists to request corrections for factual errors published in the news media. A case study was conducted on Tesla Motors and its interaction with *The New York Times*. Tesla Motors' CEO Elon Musk confronted *The New York Times* on social media to mitigate a reputation risk following allegedly erroneous facts about Tesla Model S published in an article. In-depth phone interviews of five journalists were also conducted to understand their experiences with crisis managers and their responses to correction requests. The results indicate that active involvement of company's executive leadership on social media and the availability of proof of data logs of media interaction with company's goods and services can help bolster the credibility of their messaging and mitigating the reputation risk in times of conflict with the media. The journalist participants interviewed indicated that their response to correction requests depended strongly on the method of contact used by crisis managers. The findings of this thesis support the crisis communication notion of taking preventive steps, such logging provable data, before media interaction and draw the benefits of having a credible presence on the social media for the company and its executive team.