

Testing the Role of Corporate Social Responsibility and Crisis Response Messaging In Corporate Reputational Recovery

By Sarah Rosselet

Dr. Glen Cameron, Thesis Supervisor

ABSTRACT

This study is an experiment looking at the effects of CSR efforts and crisis response messaging on corporate reputational recovery, using the lens of the Contingency theory. This study is important because it furthers the body of literature on Contingency theory, as well as fills a gap in the literature as no studies have simultaneously tested the effect of pre-existing CSR efforts and crisis response messaging on reputational recovery. This study is guided by four hypotheses: H₁) Engagement in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) efforts before a crisis situation will positively affect an organization's ability to recover post-crisis; H₂) Accommodative crisis response messages will work best to aid an organization's reputational recovery post-crisis; H₃) The existence of CSR efforts combined with accommodative crisis response messages will achieve the best reputational recovery for an organization post-crisis and H₄) Engagement in CSR efforts will positively affect an organization's perceived reputation before a crisis occurs. These hypotheses will be tested through a 2 x 3 between-subjects factorial design experiment using a simulated pharmaceutical organization in a simulated crisis situation where participants will receive stimuli concerning CSR efforts, the crisis, and the organization's crisis response. A pre-test/post-test model will be used to determine effects on perceived reputation and reputational recovery. Theoretical and practical implications for the study will include further knowledge on the Contingency theory and guidelines for PR practitioners working with corporate organizations, especially in the pharmaceutical industry.