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Corporate crisis advertising: A framework examining the use and effects of corporate advertising before and after crises

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Corporate crisis advertising: A framework examining the use and effects of corporate advertising before and after crises

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ABSTRACT

While corporate advertising has been widely studied as a promotional tool, few studies have examined how it can be used in a corporate crisis situation. In 2013, Kim proposed a conceptual framework for examining stakeholders' evaluation of pre-crisis corporate advertising, using the inoculation and reactance theory. The framework, published in *Journal of Marketing Communications*, suggested that pre-crisis advertising can increase audience resistance towards negative news of an organization and decrease audience resistance towards future corporate advertisements from the organization. The present study expands on Kim's work to develop the corporate crisis advertising (CCA) framework. In addition to the inoculation and reactance effects discussed in Kim's model, CCA aims to discuss the effects of corporate advertising on improving organization's prior reputation based on halo effect, and how post-crisis advertising messages can be evaluated based on crisis theories. Our proposed framework provides a comprehensive view of the use of corporate advertising both before and after a crisis and is useful for organizations to understand the impact of corporate advertising on stakeholders' evaluation of the organization in a crisis situation. Potential applications of CCA are discussed and directions for future research suggested.

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Introduction

Corporate advertising is an important component of marketing communications. It influences the environment in which an organization must operate and increases its visibility and profits by enhancing the organization's reputation as a good citizen (Fox 1986). It also affects the way consumers and pertinent stakeholders think about an organization and issues related to the organization (Pashupati, Arpan, and Nikolaev 2002). Therefore, organizations spend vast amount of money on corporate advertising (Pomering and Johnson 2009).

Over the last few decades, changes in the physical, social, and economic environment have presented more challenges for marketing communications (Schumann, Hathcote, and West 1991). Marketing communications has grown more fast-paced and complicated, and

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stakeholders are becoming increasingly critical of organizations. Scholars have advocated for a greater integration of corporate communication strategies to improve the long-term reputation of organizations (Seeger 2006). While communication strategies are evolving to meet these challenges, the role of corporate advertising has progressively expanded beyond promotional purposes.

Studies suggest that corporate advertising can also protect an organization in times of crises by reinforcing and maintaining positive attitudes toward and images about the organization (Fox 1986). Organizations employ corporate advertising to respond to a crisis or negative scandal in order to reach their audience directly with specific messages unfiltered by an intermediary, like the news media (Smolianov and Aiyeku 2009). Organizations also try to minimize the impact of negative news by exposing an audience first to the news along with counter arguments before the negative news breaks in mass media platforms (i.e. inoculation effects: Easley, Bearden, and Teel 1995; Kim 2013; Pfau 1992). From a crisis communication perspective, 'when an organization steals thunder, it breaks the news about its own crisis before the crisis is discovered by the media or other interested parties' (Arpan and Roskos-Ewolsen 2005, 425).

However, there has been little research on how consumers respond to corporate advertising in a crisis situation (Kim 2013). In order to fill the gap, Kim (2013) proposed a comprehensive conceptual framework of consumer evaluation of corporate advertising in corporate crises. The framework suggests that pre-crisis corporate advertising can confer stakeholders' resistance to negative news in a corporate crisis. The framework also proposed that external factors such as the type of crisis, prior reputation, and individual stakeholder attitude toward the organization can affect the effectiveness of corporate advertising in a crisis setting. Although Kim's framework is useful in understanding the effectiveness of corporate advertising in event of crises, it is limited, in that it does not address how corporate advertising can be used in the post-crisis stage.

The goal of this study is to propose a corporate crisis advertising (CCA) framework examining the comprehensive use of corporate advertising before and after a corporate crisis. We first explain the concept of corporate advertising and its effectiveness in enhancing perception of an organization. Then, we discuss the use of corporate advertising both before and after a corporate crisis and its effects on stakeholders' evaluation of an organization using theoretical frameworks drawn from advertising and crisis communication literature: the inoculation theory (McGuire 1964), the image repair theory (Benoit and Pang 2008), the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) (Coombs 2008), and the reactance theory (Clee and Wicklund 1980). Based on the discussion, we propose a unifying conceptual framework examining the effects of the comprehensive use of corporate advertisements in the event of a corporate crisis.

As the majority of previous studies have explored pre-crisis corporate advertising, the current study is arguably one of the first studies to discuss both pre- and post-crisis corporate advertising in a corporate crisis context. The effectiveness of corporate advertising practices before and after a crisis is presumed to be interdependent and therefore should be discussed concurrently. Previous studies have shown that advertising in times of crisis can result in further consumer backlash if it is mismanaged or misinterpreted (Kinnick 2003). Our study expands prior research by examining whether and to what extent pre-crisis advertising and the types of post-crisis advertisement message affect how stakeholders respond to an organization's promotional communication. We hoped that insights from our discussion can help practitioners manage their promotional communication during a crisis event so they do not further aggravate their stakeholders.

Literature review

Corporate advertising

Corporate advertising refers to types of advertising intended to establish a favorable attitude toward an organization (O'Guinn, Allen, and Semenik 2012). Belch and Belch (2007) argued that corporate advertising constitutes the largest single communication expenditure of organizations. While there are many reasons why organizations engage heavily in corporate advertising, the overarching objective of corporate advertisements is to facilitate and retain positive perceptions of the organization (Fox 1986). Schumann, Hathcote, and West (1991) argue that public concerns such as threats to the environment and social issues like gender equality are the key factors that drive the need for corporate advertising, thereby increasing the prevalence of corporate advertisements to communicate an organization's position in relation to these matters of public concern.

There are two broad categories of corporate advertising: issues advertising and corporate image advertising (Fox 1986; Pashupati, Arpan, and Nikolaev 2002). Issue advertising expresses an organization's views or stance on a particular topic of interest or controversy. A well-known example of issue advertising is the advertising campaign defending the oil industry run by Mobil in the 1970s, which appeared regularly in 14 newspapers and magazines including the *New York Times* and *The Economist* (Ross 1976). While the campaign does not promote an organization directly, it establishes the organization's perspective with regards to a topic of public interest, often favorable to the organization by association. Schumann, Hathcote, and West (1991) found that a number of organizations have employed issue advertising campaigns with successful outcomes. For instance, when Smith-Kline used issue advertising in a dispute with the government to express its point of view, they found that 71% were more likely to side with the organization, and 67% of the audience were more likely to write to congress on behalf of Smith-Kline (see Maier 1985).

Corporate image advertising is more targeted to directly improve public sentiments toward the organization (Wells et al. 2011). For instance, Winters (1986) found that Chevron's corporate social responsibility ads in the 1980s resulted in more positive attitudes and greater intention for purchase in a field study conducted among environmentally conscious participants. Jørgensen and Isaksson (2008) analyzed the use of corporate image advertising by financial institutions and found that a majority of the examined advertisements focused on the theme of improving credibility of the institution in the eyes of their stakeholders. In another paper examining case studies of corporate image advertisements from different organizations and their effectiveness, Schumann, Hathcote, and West (1991) found that eight out of ten organizations reported increased ratings of recognition, image, and overall corporate reputation.

Corporate advertising in crises

A crisis is defined as 'the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders related to health, safety, environmental, and economic issues, and can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative outcomes' (Coombs 2014, 3). Organizations in crises respond through multiple communication channels, using various online and offline communication activities (Coombs 2014). In addition, crisis response efforts generally involve multiple constituent groups of the organization, such as the management, public relations, investment relations, marketing/advertising, and the legal departments. Seeger (2006) argued that consistent and active communication with all relevant stakeholder groups is one of the keys to effective crisis communication.

Of the various communication tools that can be used by organizations to deal with crises, corporate advertising is considered particularly important, in that it allows organizations to present crisis responses in a unified voice with its messages consistent across the many possible communication channels (Coombs 2014,144). Therefore, although we acknowledge the complexity of crisis communication as a joint communication activity, we specifically focus on the use and role of corporate advertising as a primary tool to manage corporate crises.

There have been several instances where corporate advertising was used in crisis settings. For instance, during the pilot strikes in 1998, Northwest Airlines primarily used issue advertising to respond to the crisis, clearly explaining their stance and enabling a successful recovery of its public image (Cowden and Sellnow 2002). In 2010, British Petroleum spent US$93 million on apologetic advertising after the Mexico Gulf oil spill (Bruce 2010). In the same year, Toyota apologized through a corporate image advertising campaign during the 2010 vehicle recalls, assuring that they would do better to meet up to the standards its customers expect of them.

The use of corporate advertising in response to corporate crises has important benefits. Corporate advertising allows an organization to communicate directly with a large audience (Burgoon, Pfau, and Birk 1995). More importantly, the organization's crisis message is not subjected to media framing. Framing refers to the media influencing not only *what* issues are presented to mass audiences, but also *how* these are perceived, and what importance readers should accord them (Durrant et al. 2003). When the news media emphasizes certain attributes of an issue, often negative in a crisis, the public are likely to perceive the crisis negatively (Golan and Wanta 2001). Thus, how the media report a story can have a tremendous impact on the perception of the organization by the public (An and Gower 2009; Iyengar and Simon1993). Because of the high level of control over information being communicated to their stakeholders, corporate advertising can be of great strategic value in a crisis communication context (Burgoon, Pfau, and Birk 1995).

However, corporate advertising used in crisis contexts also has limitations. Because advertising is essentially one-sided and partisan towards its sponsors, the public can become more skeptical toward the message delivered (Obermiller and Spangenberg 1998). The public tend to favor and trust the neutrality of news media reports rather than the crafted messages from an organization (Rinallo and Basuroy 2009). Consumer skepticism toward corporate advertising could be amplified, limiting the effectiveness of corporate advertising in a crisis context. For instance, in the case of BP's corporate advertising campaign after the Mexico Gulf oil spill, the campaign received much criticism from the public, mostly directed at how it was spending so much money on advertising instead of clean-up efforts and compensation for the affected (The Associated Press, June 6, 2010), despite BP adopting an apologetic stance in its corporate advertisements. In addition, the prevalence of advertising messages in today's media environment could result in audience being resistant to advertising messages or ignoring advertisement messages entirely (Baek and Morimoto 2012; Cho and Cheon

2004). Therefore, while corporate advertising has wide reach, how the public respond to such advertisements is a strategic insight into the practice of corporate advertising and how organizations should respond in a crisis. One insight organizations can take away is the need to build strong relational history with stakeholders. Organizations can also overcome consumer skepticism by improving on such relationships through communication and engaging stakeholders through advertising or information dissemination (Shin, Pang, and Kim 2015).

The inoculation effect of pre-crisis advertising

The majority of past studies have discussed the ability of corporate advertising to enhance public attitude or behavior toward the organization (e.g. Wells, Burnett, and Moriarty 2000; Winters 1986). But another important aspect of corporate advertising is its ability to minimize or prevent the erosion of existing good attitudes toward the organization (Pashupati, Arpan, and Nikolaev 2002). *The inoculation theory* (McGuire 1964) discusses such an effect, positing that by exposing an audience to a weak attack on their beliefs, along with counterarguments to the attack message, receivers are stimulated to defend their positive attitudes toward the organization by generating arguments in support of their beliefs. Using a biological analogy, McGuire argued that audiences are made more resistant to negative persuasion by prior exposure to a weakened dose of an attacking virus. Therefore, an inoculated attitude is considered stronger and less susceptible to future attacks (Anderson and McGuire 1965), leading an inoculated audience to be more resistant to the negative impact of attacks against the organization. Past studies have found that inoculation is effective in reducing the damage of negative news in cases of political candidates (Pfau and Burgoon 1988) and negative comparative advertisements (Pfau 1992).

Easley, Bearden, and Teel (1995) applied the inoculation theory to examine the effects of corporate advertising prior to an attack on product quality. They found that the effects of inoculation from corporate advertising are positively associated with the perceived relevance of the advertisement message (i.e. refutation) to the crisis issue. Specifically, the study found that inoculation was effective only when the refutational message (the advertisement) countered the specific issues addressed in the following negative news event (the crisis). Based on the findings, the authors argued that cognitive relevance was critical for the effectiveness of the inoculation effect in corporate advertising. However, subsequent studies on the inoculation effect revealed different insights. Burgoon, Pfau, and Birk (1995) examined the use of advocacy advertisements and found that there were no significant differences between advertisements which used crisis-specific refutation, and advertisements which used non-crisis-specific refutation. Pashupati, Arpan, and Nikolaev (2002) examined the use of corporate image advertising for inoculation toward a subsequent negative news report and found that rather than preserving positive attitudes, corporate advertising resulted in negative attitudes toward the organization. Contrary to what McGuire (1964) and Easley, Bearden and Teel (1995) found, initial attitudes toward the organization emerged as the most potent predicator of final attitudes toward the organization after a crisis threat. This leads to our first proposition:

P1. Pre-crisis corporate advertising would reduce some of the harmful effects from a crisis threat. However, the effectiveness of inoculation advertising will depend on various consumer factors. In particular, pre-crisis advertising would be more effective when consumers see the relevance between the advertisement and the crisis and/or when their initial attitude toward the organization is favorable.

Halo versus velcro effects and the importance of pre-crisis reputation management

In a crisis context, an organization should ideally be able to minimize the impact of negative news events by exposing its audience to a mild attack before a crisis. However, since crises are unpredictable negative events (Coombs 2014), organizations can seldom predict the nature of the crisis before it happens. Therefore, in practice, the use of corporate image advertising in place of issue-specific advertising is more commonly observed before a crisis (Jørgensen and Isaksson 2008). Communicating an organization's socially related behaviors (e.g. environmental responsibility, community philanthropy, fair employment practices, etc.) are examples of how corporate image advertising can contribute to stakeholders' overall attitude toward an organization (Brown and Dacin 1997).

In crisis literature, such an effect is akin to what Coombs and Holladay (2001) described as *the halo effect*. The halo effect describes the protective effect of having favorable prior reputation from reputational damage during a crisis. Corporate image advertising, which aims to enhance stakeholders' attitudes and perception toward an organization, contributes to a favorable reputation. The favorable reputation shields the organization from negative news events as the public are likely to give them the benefit of doubt based on their previous good track record. Therefore, corporate image advertising can be seen as creating this protective aura for organizations, which is beneficial in times of crises. Conversely, *the velcro effect* (Coombs and Holladay 2001) describes the negative effect from having an unfavorable prior reputation which 'attracts and snags additional reputational damage' (335). An organization with a prior bad track record would find that it faces greater scrutiny and criticism during a crisis which impedes their crisis management efforts. The halo and velcro effects could possibly explain why initial attitudes toward the organization is an important indicator of final attitude toward the organization after a crisis threat (Pashupati, Arpan, and Nikolaev 2002). While corporate advertising, or corporate image advertising in particular, works towards creating a positive halo effect for the organization, its inoculation effect could be hindered by the possible velcro effect from unfavorable prior reputation of the organization. Therefore, prior reputation is seen as a possible moderator in the use of corporate image advertisements before a corporate crisis. This leads to the second proposition

P2. The effective use of corporate image advertising before crises will create a positive halo effect, protecting an organization in times of crises.

Crisis theories and post-crisis advertising

Issue advertising is more commonly observed than corporate image advertising in corporate advertisements after a crisis, such as the aforementioned Northwest Airline's (Cowden and Sellnow 2002) and Procter and Gamble's use of crisis response advertisements in the pet food recall crisis (Lancendorfer 2014). Such use of corporate advertising arises when specific issues surface and the organization decides to give a response. This effect cannot be explained by the inoculation theory since post-crisis advertising is not pre-emptive but reactive in nature.

Both Cowden and Sellnow's study (2002) and Lancendorfer's study (2014) examined the use of issue advertising through the theoretical lens of the *image repair theory*, a possible theoretical approach to take in examining effects of post-crisis issue advertisings. The authors argued that image repair strategies could provide guidance in the design of issue advertisements in response to threats to corporate image (i.e. negative news or crises), especially since the organization's response is not subjected to media framing and an accurate reflection of actual organization's crisis stance.

The image repair theory, which has been described as the 'dominant paradigm for examining corporate communication in times of crises' (Dardis and Haigh 2009, 101), asserts that an organization's credibility largely depends on its image. Threats to this image and reputation often necessitate massive efforts to repair it (Benoit and Pang 2008). The image repair theory is divided into five major typologies (Benoit and Pang 2008). They are denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification.

Denial has two variants: simple denial or shifting the blame to another party. The purpose of the latter strategy is to position the accused as the victim. *Evasion of responsibility* consists of four variants: provocation (i.e. one reacts when forced by the target to do so), defeasibility (i.e. one argues its case on the basis of lack of information and control), accident (i.e. the 'accused' states that the accident happened unintentionally), and good intention (i.e. one argues that the offensive act was done with good intentions). *Reducing offensiveness* refers to one's bolstering, which seeks to highlight one's positive traits. Minimization strategy can be used to reduce the severity of the situation. Another strategy for reducing offensiveness is called differentiation, which seeks to reduce offensiveness by suggesting that the act was less offensive than perceived. Other strategies that can be used to reduce offensiveness include transcendence (i.e. seeking to place the situation at a higher level, with more important concerns), attacking the accuser (i.e. seeking to reduce the credibility of the accusations), and compensation strategy (i.e. those responsible decide to offer something of value to the victims). *Corrective action* aims to reassure stakeholders that such crisis situations would not reoccur. Finally, *mortification* occurs when one admits his or her mistake and seeks forgiveness. The image repair typologies can be adapted to explain the range of advocacy – accommodative positions the organization can take during a crisis, and has been widely used to evaluate the persuasiveness of the communications of organizations (Pang, Ho, and Malik 2012).

Another dominant crisis theory (An and Cheng 2010) is the SCCT. Coombs (2008) proposed a set of 10 strategies – attack, denial, scapegoat, excuse, justification, ingratiation, concern, compensation, regret, and apology. These strategies are clustered in three postures: (1) the deny posture, which include attack, denial, and scapegoat; (2) the diminish posture, which include excuse and justification; (3) the deal posture, which include ingratiation, concern, compensation, regret, and apology.

From the organization's perspective, the question of whether or not corporate advertising should be used in a crisis situation is too simplistic. While previous studies have shown that advertising could possibly mitigate the harmful effects of negative events for an organization (Stammerjohan et al. 2005), the present paper argues that it is important to consider the appropriateness of advertising message and the persuasiveness of its communication strategy. This would fall into what Benoit (2015) described as *preventive image repair*. Pang, Ho, and Malik (2012) found that strategies from image repair and SCCT could be clustered into advocacy on one end of the spectrum or accommodative on the other end. For crises where culpability is not immediately known, the strategies used should be advocacy strategies of denial and evading responsibility. For crises where culpability is obvious, the strategies used should be accommodative strategies of corrective action and mortification. Coombs (2008) affirmed that when the organization assumed low responsibility acceptance, the organizations should engage in advocacy stance of deny posture utilizing attack, deny, and scapegoat strategies. When the organization assumed high responsibility acceptance, the organizations should engage in accommodative stance of ingratiation, concern, compensation, regret, and apology strategies. Given these recommendations, we argue that beyond understanding the effects of the act of advertising, crisis strategies can help in determining the specific advertisement message elements that could affect the effectiveness of corporate advertising as a crisis communication tool. This leads to the third proposition.

> **P3**. The effectiveness of post-crisis corporate advertising is influenced by the crisis response strategies. When crisis responsibility is low, advocacy strategies should be used in advertisements. When crisis responsibility is high, accommodative strategies should be used in advertisements.

Consumer reactance to corporate advertising

Our paper has discussed the use of corporate advertising both before (image and inoculation advertising) and after (issue advertising) a corporate crisis event. Another important determinant of the effectiveness of corporate apology is the consumers' resistance to advertisements. The reactance theory posits that people will resist or move away from persuasive messages if the messages threaten or attempt to reduce personal freedom (Worchel and Brehm 1970). According to the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad and Wright 1994), consumers develop hypotheses about how marketers attempt to persuade them. Consumers are more likely to resist commercial messages (i.e. advertising) than non-commercial messages because they tend to believe that the former is self-serving with profit-driven motives, threatening their freedom to make autonomous consumption decisions (Rifon et al. 2004; Szykman, Bloom, and Blazing 2004). In the marketing context, studies have shown that explicit persuasive tactics by sales representatives or advertisements can lead consumers to be more skeptical and resistant, and eventually, to rejection by consumers (Baek and Morimoto 2012; Edwards, Li, and Lee 2002). Clee and Wicklow (1980) described this as 'boomerang effects.'

In a crisis situation where stakeholders are bombarded with negative news about the organization, corporate advertisements communicated under this cloud of animosity are likely to be heavily scrutinized by the audience. Kim (2013) argued that post-crisis corporate advertising can be counterproductive because it may threaten consumers' freedom to form their own judgment on the crisis, creating boomerang effects. Therefore, particularly during events of a corporate crisis, the effectiveness of corporate advertising needs to be considered vis-à-vis how resistant the audience is to communication issued from the organization.

Friestad and Wright (1994) suggest that when consumers are exposed to persuasive messages, they are likely to reference previous knowledge of the agent (e.g. an advertiser or organization). This seems to suggest that consumers' prior knowledge of and attitude toward an organization's practices potentially reduces their reactance to post-crisis corporate advertisements. Lyon and Cameron (2004) examined the organization's prior relationship with its public and found the 'halo effect' in organizations with strong reputations to be usually afforded the benefit of doubt in times of crises. Similarly, Cleeren, Dekimpe, and Helsen (2008) found that both pre-crisis loyalty and familiarity form an important buffer against negative effects on consumer purchase decisions in product-harm crises.

Considering that pre-crisis corporate advertising can enhance stakeholders' knowledge and understanding of an organization and its reputation, we pose the fourth proposition.

P4. Effective use of pre-crisis advertisements would help to build relationships with stakeholders and reduce audience resistance to corporate advertising, resulting in more favorable attitude toward post-crisis corporate advertising.

Development of conceptual framework

Applying the Persuasion Knowledge Model (Friestad and Wright 1994) to the use of corporate advertising, for post-crisis issue advertisements to be effective, consumers' reactance must first be reduced. Kim (2013) proposed a framework of consumer evaluation of corporate advertising in a corporate crisis (See Figure 1). The framework argues that consumers' resistance to corporate advertising during a crisis can be reduced by the inoculation effect of pre-crisis corporate advertising. Kim (2013) further proposed four other external factors, which would affect consumer reactance toward corporate advertisement, namely the impact of crisis, the impact of organization, the impact of media, and the impact of individual differences. Subsequent studies based on Kim's (2013) framework validated the effects of crisis types as a factor affecting advertising credibility (Kim and Choi 2014) and prior attitude toward the organization as a factor affecting attitude toward the advertisement, the organization and purchase intent after a corporate crisis (Kim and Atkinson 2014). These studies extended the effects of external factors beyond the effect of reducing reactance of stakeholders and discuss the effects on stakeholders' attitudes and behavior toward the organization.

As mentioned earlier, Kim's (2013) framework primarily focuses on the use of pre-crisis advertisements and the inoculation effect on reducing consumers' resistance towards corporate advertising and on increasing consumers' resistance toward negative news about the organization. While Kim's framework examines the use of corporate advertising from mainly the reactance perspective, that is whether consumers resist or accept corporate advertisements in a crisis situation, we suggest that it is equally important to examine the persuasiveness of corporate advertisements by evaluating the message of corporate

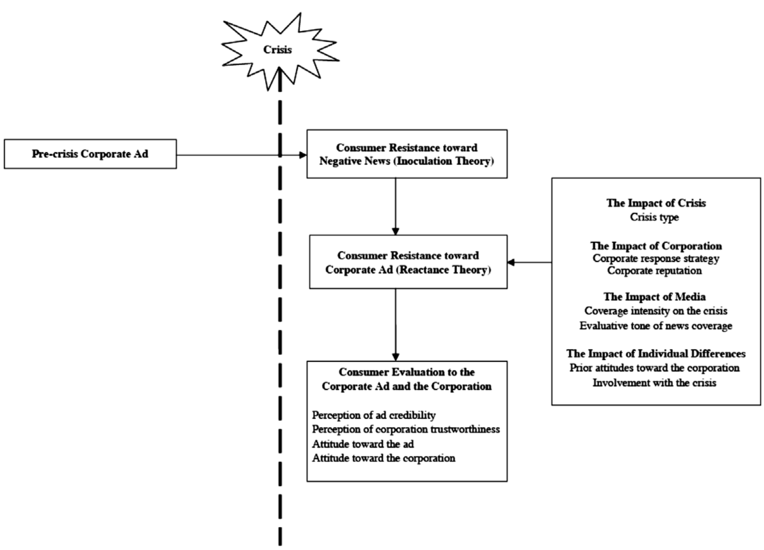

Figure 1. Kim's (2013) model of consumer evaluation to corporate advertising in a corporate crisis (296).

advertisements issued during or after a corporate crisis. In practice, this approach facilitates the consideration of the types of corporate advertising communicated by the organization based on insights from public relations and crisis theories. Indeed, Kim and Choi (2014) too argued 'further investigation on message strategies may offer more practical advice to an organization faced with a crisis' (111).

Based on the insights gained from prior studies on corporate advertising in times of crisis and the five aforementioned theories (i.e. the inoculation theory, the halo vs. velcro effects, the image repair theory, SCCT, and the reactance theory), we propose a unifying framework toward examining the effects of both pre- and post-crisis corporate advertising. Our CCA framework (see Figure 2) expands on Kim's (2013) framework beyond the consideration of consumers' resistance toward corporate advertisement toward evaluating the effectiveness of the use of corporate advertisements from a crisis communication perspective.

As Figure 2 illustrates, our CCA framework posits that both pre- and post-crisis corporate advertising can influence stakeholders' evaluation of the organization after a corporate crisis event. The first part of the CCA framework illustrates the effect of pre-crisis corporate advertising. Pre-crisis corporate advertising manifests in the form of inoculation advertising or corporate image advertising. As mentioned earlier, inoculation advertising can protect an organization from specific attacks in a crisis, thereby resulting in more positive stakeholder evaluation (Easley, Bearden, and Teel 1995) in events of negative news about the organization [P1]. Corporate image advertising can enhance prior stakeholders' attitude toward the organization, creating a halo effect (Coombs and Holladay 2001), which may protect the organization from further reputational damage from crises [P2]. Also, following the reactance theory (Clee and Wicklund 1980) and Kim's proposition (2013), we propose that pre-crisis advertising can reduce audience resistance toward corporate advertisement post crisis, facilitating more effective use of corporate advertisement during a crisis situation [P4].

The second part of the CCA framework illustrates the effects of post-crisis corporate advertising. The persuasiveness of post-crisis advertising depends on its appropriateness from the stakeholders' perspective [P4]. The image repair theory (Benoit and Pang 2008), which suggests five typologies of crisis response (i.e. denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification), is used to evaluate the appropriateness of post-crisis advertisement messages. The SCCT suggests three postures: (1) the deny posture; (2) the diminish posture; and (3) the deal posture, based on responsibility acceptance. For instance, studies have suggested that assuming responsibility and taking more accommodative positions (i.e. corrective action and mortification) is more effective in most crisis situations where culpability of the organization is clear to its stakeholders (Benoit and

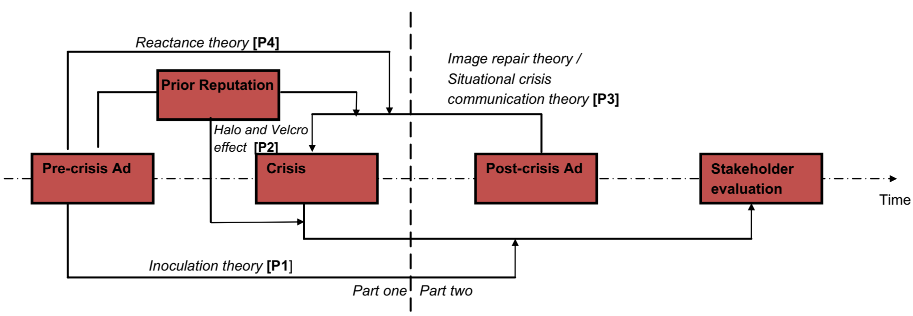

Figure 2. The CCA framework.

Drew 1997). One could examine which types of advertisement message are more effective in enhancing positive attitude toward the organization after a corporate crisis event.

More importantly, the CCA framework considers both pre-crisis and post-crisis corporate advertising effect concurrently, presenting a holistic perspective of the utility of CCA and the cumulative effect of an organization's advertising behaviour on stakeholders' evaluation of the organization in a crisis context. The CCA framework contributes to current theory by illustrating the complex process of stakeholders' reception toward advertising of an organization in crisis and integrating interdisciplinary research domains of advertising, public relations, and crisis communication beyond the isolated effects proposed in the respective research domains.

Application for practitioners

The CCA framework offers a comprehensive view of the use of corporate advertising and its relevant effects in a crisis situation. According to the framework, corporate advertising can play a strategic role in an organization's crisis management efforts, both pre-emptively and reactively. With the prevalence of corporate advertising (Schumann, Hathcote, and West 1991), the CCA framework would allow practitioners to valuate corporate advertising beyond the conventional promotional or publicity benchmarks and recognize its strategic advantage in an event of a corporate crisis. Furthermore, in the new media landscape, communication between the organization and stakeholders is becoming more symmetrical and dialogical. In times of crisis, many organizations have used the online and mobile platforms to reach a large group of audience at virtually zero cost to communicate their side of the story (Taylor and Perry 2005). Although such forms of communication are not strictly considered corporate advertising, the strength of the CCA framework is that it can be applied even in such communication since it examines specific post-crisis corporate advertising message strategies using crisis response strategies both from the image repair theory and SCCT. For instance, the image repair theory has previously been used to examine all forms of organizational communication in times of crisis (Benoit and Pang 2008). In addition, the CCA framework allows a more holistic evaluation of the persuasiveness of organizational messages based on previous communication and relationship between the organization and its audiences. We believe that the CCA framework is highly applicable to evolving usage and forms of corporate advertising and organizational communications in the media landscape today.

In practice, the use of the CCA framework can facilitate corporate communicators in deciding whether or not to issue corporate advertisement, and the type of message strategies used in their corporate advertisements. In addition, the CCA framework allows practitioners to consider the value of pre-crisis advertising as a pre-emptive crisis management strategy to enhance crisis readiness and image management of their organizations (Pang 2012). In events of negative news about the organization, the CCA framework allows organizations to determine the effectiveness and appropriateness of using corporate advertising as a way to reach their stakeholders quickly and directly to protect their reputation.

Conclusion

As an exploratory paper into the topic of corporate advertising in organizational crises, there are several limitations the authors would like to address. First, today's organizations increasingly incorporate multiple communication tools to cope with crises. However, our study focuses on a single type of communication programs – corporate advertising. Future research is encouraged to examine corporations' use of multiple communication tools and platforms to manage crisis situations. Second, there are other variables in crisis theories that can be used to evaluate organization communication in crises. For instance, the SCCT (Coombs 2007) proposes that the effectiveness of crisis response depends on crisis culpability, crisis history, and prior reputation of the organization. While these theories present multiple factors in evaluating the effectiveness of crisis communication, the CCA framework focuses on message strategies in corporate advertisements and the interdependent effect of pre-crisis and post-crisis advertising.

Considering the prevalence of corporate advertising for businesses today, it is timely to consider the use of corporate advertising even in unpredictable events of a corporate crisis. We propose the CCA framework in providing a comprehensive and prescriptive examination of the various effects of corporate advertising in crisis context. The CCA framework focuses on the effectiveness of corporate advertising, both from the pre-emptive and the reactive approaches, toward obtaining or safeguarding positive stakeholders' evaluation of the organization after a corporate crisis. The framework proposes that corporate advertising issued before and after a crisis could have an interdependent effect on the overall effectiveness and persuasiveness of corporate advertisements. The CCA framework contributes to current theory and practice by addressing the complexities of corporate advertising in corporate crisis, and by integrating marketing, advertising, public relations, and crisis research domains to develop an interdisciplinary framework of CCA.

Further studies should investigate the proposed effects of corporate advertisements drawn from the CCA framework. Both qualitative and quantitative approaches are useful in determining the question of appropriateness in CCA, and the validity of the effects proposed in the CCA framework. The framework can be used to analyze organization's advertising behavior in past real crisis cases to understand the effectiveness of CCA. An experimental approach would be useful in examining the conceptual relationships proposed in the framework and validate the reliability of the CCA framework as a conceptual model. In addition, the possible interactional effect from the interplay of pre-crisis advertisement and post-crisis advertisement messages should be examined through further quantitative studies.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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