

# THIS ISN'T THE GLUE FACTORY: TESCO'S HORSE MEAT SCANDAL

## An application of Benoit's (1997) Image Repair Theory

In Jan 2013, the Food Safety Authority of Ireland found horse and pig DNA in frozen beef burgers from several supermarkets chains in the UK but, the bulk of the spotlight fell on Tesco as the crisis unfolded. This work used Benoit's Image Repair Theory (1997) to critique the strategies Tesco employed to counter the horsemeat crisis.



2013

### Horsing Around: Crisis starts

Jan, 15

Nine of 10 samples from four retailers showed low levels of horse DNA with the tenth sample containing up to 29% horsemeat.

### Shifting-the-blame: Passing the buck

Jan, 16

- \*Messages argue that another organization or individual was the real cause of the offensive act.
- \*Tim Smith's video detailing how Tesco would investigate the cause of the horse meat crisis employed this denial strategy.



### Minimization: Reining it in

Jan, 17

- \*In this strategy the organization tries to downplay the negative effects of the crisis on the affected stakeholders.
- \*Tesco detailed that if an individual had ingested any tainted meat, it would have no negative effects to their health. See the **burger horse**.

### Corrective action: Ponying up

Jan 30

- \* The organization takes steps to solve the problems caused by the offensive act and communicate messages about what they are doing to prevent any similar offense.
- \* Tesco announced that it would drop one of its main suppliers for violating Tesco's requirement that all ingredients be sourced from the UK and Ireland. See the **burger horse**.

### Mortification: Why the long face?

Jan, 16-30

- \*The organizations responsible for the offensive act accepts responsibility, apologizing, and asking for forgiveness.
- \*Every press release, video, and advertisement Tesco delivered during the crisis had one unifying factor: Mortification. They apologized for the act at every juncture as the crisis unfolded. See the **burger horse**.



## SUCCESSFUL CRISIS RESPONSE

Effective use of Image Repair Theory	Appropriate media use	Top ranked supermarket in UK today
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