

Public Abstract

First Name: Maria

Middle Name: M.

Last Name: Garcia

Adviser's First Name: Glen Cameron. Ph.D.

Adviser's Last Name:

Co-Adviser's First Name: Yong Volz, Ph.D.

Co-Adviser's Last Name:

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Title: A tale of two multinationals: The BP and Greenpeace Go Green conflict in an era of green crisis

This dissertation offers an in-depth case study of the 11-year BP and Greenpeace conflict. For eleven years, Greenpeace has criticized BP for its use of green marketing. BP first drew attention to its corporate social responsibility stance when it advertised the company's concerted efforts to invest in renewables and alternative energy. Over time, both companies garnered substantial media attention for their campaigns. Conflict between the two multinationals surfaced once again after the 2010 Deepwater Horizon explosion. This case study explores how newspapers in the United Kingdom and United States framed the two conflict groups and why BP and Greenpeace members remain in conflict.

Findings show that newspapers attributed BP with overall blame, and identified it as the villain of the story. Greenpeace was coined the hero. Members from both organizations also adopted these frames for themselves, and were able to identify with the claims made in many of the news stories. The news media was also viewed as a powerful source of shaping the way people in society view a conflict or crisis. This dissertation points out the importance of studying not only how news media communicate a story, but also how those in the story perceive themselves and the issues that revolve around them. This dissertation advances academic scholarship by proposing an extension of the attribution theory in crisis management, entitled media attribution theory. The proposed theory is applicable to both basic and applied research, serving the interests of scholars and industry professionals.