

The Integrated Crisis Stakeholder-Relationship Model in the Fashion Industry

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Abstract: This paper introduces the Integrated Crisis Stakeholder-Relationship Value Model, a framework developed to explain how crisis events in the fashion industry, take into consideration crisis type, crisis history to drive media coverage which ultimately influence stakeholder sensemaking. In the context of this work, crisis outcomes can be either value co-creating or value co-destructing, based on the media framing of events and a renewed stakeholder perspective, meaning value is dynamic and evolving concept in the context of a fashion industry crisis. Drawing on a comparative analysis of two fashion case studies, Arcadia, a traditional multi brand fashion retail group, and Kanye West, a celebrity consumer fashion brand, the model addresses an important gap in the field of fashion and entertainment in crisis communication. The model integrates crisis type and history, media framing and stakeholder sensemaking to demonstrate how crisis events can reshape relationships between a variety of stakeholder such as consumers, employees, strategic alliance partners or even fanbases. Using longitudinal content analysis over a period of 15 years for both case studies, this study employs a comparative case approach using quantitative analysis to examines trade and entertainment media crisis patterns across brand types. Findings demonstrate that crisis type has limited influence whilst media tone is a dominant driver of stakeholder sensemaking and value outcomes. Traditional brands and trade media generate broader history and co-destruction narratives whilst celebrity brands narrow the lens emphasizes alliances and co-creation shaped by crisis history.

Keywords — Crisis, Crisis History, Fashion, Value Co-Creation, Value Co-Destruction,

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INTRODUCTION

The fashion industry, and therefore its industry related crises, carry significant economic, cultural and reputational consequences, yet academic research in the field of crisis communication has not kept pace with the complexity and increasing impacts of these events [1]. Whether it be sustainability and ethical controversies, stakeholder or CEO transgressions, or operational failures, the fashion industry is uniquely crisis prone and has high mediated narratives which intensifies stakeholder scrutiny [2]. Despite this, fashion continues to be underrepresented in crisis communication research. Stakeholder relationships in the fashion industry can be emotionally charged and inherently relational, with value for multiple stakeholders being at the heart of the multi beneficial relationships [3]. Due to this, value dynamics and relationships can change in the context of crisis, where value can be co-created or destroyed through interactions and relationship breakdowns, which can drive crisis outcomes [4]. There is also a growing convergence of fashion and celebrity brands, which can change and affect value and relationship dynamics. Kapferer discusses the key differences between traditional retailers who are generally institutionalized, and how personal brands, such as celebrity brands is rooted in individual identity and therefore in crisis creates difficulty in separating reputational threats and behaviors from the individual, therefore celebrity [5]. This frames the argument for understanding how different types of fashion brand, can have different outcomes based on the concepts discussed as part of the Integrated Crisis Stakeholder-Relationship Value Model. Overall, this study examines how media tone, media type, organisational form, and crisis history shape stakeholder relationships, value co-creation and co-destruction, and the visibility of diverse stakeholders during fashion crises.

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LITERATURE

Crisis communication research has increasingly noted media coverage as part of an active stakeholder relational factor, as opposed to just a neutral transmitter of information. Media coverage can frame a crisis through agenda setting, tone, journalistic style which can ultimately shape blame, responsibility and legitimacy for a variety of stakeholders, who have connections to a organization in crisis [2] [6]. In a highly mediatized industry such as fashion, media narratives can play an influential role in guiding stakeholder sensemaking. Stakeholder Relationship Management (SRM) places emphasis on relational factors as a critical perspective when exploring crisis events [1]; Placing emphasis on stakeholders' perspective and expectations when experiencing a crisis event, places importance of their issue judgement and sensemaking and can ultimately influence relational value. Value can be co-created or even co-destroyed in a crisis event [4]. The context of the fashion industry and crisis can often intensify these dynamics due to reliance on brand identify and sometimes celebrity association, heightening emotional responses and relational expectations [3]

Existing crisis communication research often positions crisis type as a variable is crisis that can influence blame attribution and severity however Bundy et al., state that crisis type is now one of many factors and is not enough on its own to understand the impact and response [7]. In addition to this Diers-Lawson, discusses the importance of relational outcomes such as emotion in stakeholder sensemaking [2]. Due to the high mediatization of the industry, and understanding elements of media framing in crisis, it is also key to understand how media tone and journalistic style play a part in the sensemaking and value outcomes. This in addition to media type, in this case entertainment publications or trade publications, and type of organization, traditional fashion retailer or celebrity fashion brand. Diers-Lawson also places importance of the portrayal of crisis in media framing and how this can affect emotional stakeholder judgements of crisis [2]. For example, negative framing can be shown to intensify emotional responses of stakeholders and potentially cause relational breakdowns, whilst positive framing can facilitate strategic alliance building and reputational repair [8] [9]. Either way, these viewpoints can help in understanding how the different factors in media framing of crisis events, can influence outcomes of value co-creation or value-destruction in stakeholder relationships.

RQ 1. During media coverage of, co-creation events, which elements of media coverage influence SRM relationships? (*Crisis Type, Media Tone, Type of Media and Type of Organisation*)

RQ 2. During media coverage of, co-destruction events, which elements of media coverage influence SRM relationships? (*Crisis Type, Media Tone, Type of Media and Type of Organisation*)

Also to be considered in media framing is the extent in which the coverage explicitly acknowledges the diversity of stakeholders. Stakeholder visibility and mentions in coverage is not only shaped by media framing, but combined with discussion or issue origin, i.e. crisis history, prior crisis events involving strategic brand alliances or other related stakeholders can be recalled, emphasizes or excluded[10]. Crisis events categorized as co-creation may broaden stakeholder inclusion and recognition and those categorized as co-destruction events may narrow the mentions of stakeholders, again depending on media type, crisis history and other factors in the framing.

RQ3. In which contexts does media coverage directly mention diverse stakeholders? (*Crisis Type, Type of Organization, Journalistic Style, Media Tone and Issue Origin*)

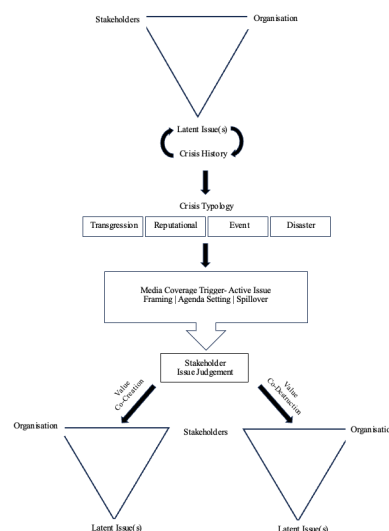


Figure 1: Integrated Crisis Stakeholder-Relationship Value Model

METHOD

This study adopts a multi case study approach, examining how media coverage shapes stakeholder relationship management during fashion crises, comparing traditional fashion brand Arcadia with a celebrity fashion brand, Kanye West. These cases were selected due to their high mediatization, and key differences in organizational structure and identify, to ultimately capture differences between institutionalized fashion retailers and individual celebrity brands. A longitudinal quantitative content analysis was conducted for both case studies over a 15-year period. Articles were taken from trade and entertainment publication such as Business of Fashion, Retail Gazette, Rolling Stone and Variety, reflecting the types of organization, Arcadia was limited to just trade publications due to having no pop culture relevance to entertainment publications. The Kanye West coverage included both trade and entertainment outlets due to the cross over into celebrity and fashion journalism. A codebook was developed to capture various factors such as crisis type, media tone, media type (trade or entertainment), organization type (celebrity or traditional) as well as issue origin, stakeholder mentions, along with relation cues for co-creation or co-destruction outcomes. All content was coded and analyzed using SPSS. Factor analysis was conducted to reduce the observed variables into underlying constructs, thereby validating the dimensional structure of stakeholder relationship management in explaining value co-creation (VCC) and value co-destruction (VCD) outcomes. To address the RQ's presented in these proceedings, univariate analysis (ANOVA) was conducted to examine any significant relational findings in media and crisis conditions, which Post Hoc Scheffé tests used to identify specific group differences where applicable.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To address RQ1, a series of univariate ANOVAs examined the influence of crisis type, media tone, media type, and organisational form on three co-creation SRM factors: Value of Strategic Alliance, Relationship of Organisation and Stakeholders, and Stakeholder Support. Crisis type showed limited explanatory power, with small but significant effects for Value of Strategic Alliance, $F(3, 581) = 3.38, p < .02, \eta^2 = .02$, and Stakeholder Support, $F(3, 581) = 3.18, p < .02, \eta^2 = .02$. No significant effect was observed for Relationship of Organisation and Stakeholders.

By contrast, media tone emerged as the strongest predictor across all co-creation variables. Significant main effects were found for Value of Strategic Alliance, $F(2, 1188) = 1217.88, p < .001, \eta^2 = .67$, Relationship of Organisation and Stakeholders, $F(2, 1188) = 78.14, p < .001, \eta^2 = .12$, and Stakeholder Support, $F(2, 1188) = 74.93, p < .001, \eta^2 = .12$. Post-hoc Scheffé tests showed that positive-tone coverage reported substantially higher levels than neutral or negative coverage, which did not differ significantly. Media type had small but significant effects, with trade media reporting higher levels than entertainment media across all co-creation factors (all $p < .001$). Organization type significantly influenced Value of Strategic Alliance, $F(1, 1189) = 81.82, p < .001$, with higher levels in celebrity-brand coverage, but showed no significant effects for the remaining co-creation variables.

To address RQ2, univariate ANOVAs assessed the same independent variables across four co-destruction SRM factors: Organisational Commitment, Prior Experience, Mutual Benefit, and Relationship Quality. Crisis type again showed limited influence, with small significant effects for Organisational Commitment, $F(3, 581) = 3.07, p < .027, \eta^2 = .02$, and Mutual Benefit, $F(3, 581) = 5.84, p < .001, \eta^2 = .03$. By contrast, media tone emerged as the strongest predictor across all co-creation variables. Significant main effects were found for Value of Strategic Alliance, $F(2, 1188) = 1217.88, p < .001, \eta^2 = .67$, Relationship of Organisation and Stakeholders, $F(2, 1188) = 78.14, p < .001, \eta^2 = .12$, and Stakeholder Support, $F(2, 1188) = 74.93, p < .001, \eta^2 = .12$. Post-hoc Scheffé tests showed that positive-tone coverage reported substantially higher levels than neutral or negative coverage, which did not differ significantly. Media type had small but significant effects, with trade media reporting higher levels than entertainment media across all co-creation factors (all $p < .001$). Organization type significantly influenced Value of Strategic Alliance, $F(1, 1189) = 81.82, p < .001$, with higher levels in celebrity-brand coverage, but showed no significant effects for the remaining co-creation variables. No significant effects for Prior Experience or Relationship Quality. Media tone selectively influenced co-destruction framing. Tone significantly affected Prior Experience, $F(2, 1188) = 49.15, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$, with higher levels in negative-tone coverage, and showed a very small effect for Relationship Quality, $F(2, 1188) = 3.11, p < .05, \eta^2 = .01$. Media tone did not significantly influence Organisational Commitment or Mutual Benefit. Media type effects were minimal, with trade media more likely than entertainment media to reference Prior Experience, $F(1, 1189) \approx 57.16, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$. Organization type showed a strong effect only for Prior Experience, $F(1, 1189) = 189.10, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$, with higher levels in traditional-brand coverage.

Finally, RQ3 examined the contexts in which media coverage referenced diverse stakeholders, using a summed stakeholder-mention score (15–30). Crisis type did not significantly influence stakeholder diversity for either Arcadia or Kanye West. In contrast, organisational type had a strong effect, $F(1, 1189) = 205.03, p < .001, \eta^2 = .15$, with traditional-brand coverage referencing approximately one additional stakeholder group per article on average. Media tone significantly affected stakeholder diversity, $F(2, 1188) = 48.28, p < .001, \eta^2 = .08$, with negative-tone coverage mentioning more diverse stakeholders than neutral or positive coverage. Journalistic style showed no significant effect. Issue origin

produced varied outcomes: co-creation origins slightly increased stakeholder diversity, $F(1, 1187) = 15.93$, $p < .001$, while co-destruction origins substantially reduced stakeholder breadth, $F(1, 1179) = 150.23$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .12$. Media type also significantly shaped stakeholder breadth, with trade media referencing more diverse stakeholders than entertainment media, $F(1, 1181) = 136.16$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .10$.

DISCUSSION

These findings provide empirical support for the Integrated Crisis Stakeholder-Relationship Value Model by demonstrating that multiple factors influence stakeholder sensemaking and value outcomes. Media framing of crisis type, media tone, publication type and organization type determine how stakeholder judge these crisis events which can result in outcomes of value co-creation or destruction. The model is reinforced through the evidence that crisis history and mention of issue origin in media coverage of crisis, can also influence sensemaking, refocusing coverage of previous transgressions or reputational issues. Overall, these results validate the models aim in understanding how crisis events unfold, and how relationships, value and therefore outcomes and dynamic and driven through various factors framed in the media for stakeholders to judge.

CONCLUSION

This study recognizes the view that fashion crises cannot be explained by crisis type alone. Instead, the findings show the media framing matters, more than the crisis type itself with media tone, publication type, and brand type showing stronger influence on stakeholder sensemaking. Positive framing amplifies narratives of co-creation whilst co-destruction is clearly linked to crisis history, as media narrow the stakeholder focus when linking current and past crisis events. These value dynamics and outcomes of crisis, vary depending on context as expected. Traditional fashion brands and trade publications broaden stakeholder visibility and comment more frequently on strategic alliances, whereas celebrity fashion brands and entertainment media, concentrate on a central figure, in this case framing Kanye as the villain. The findings highlight the important directions for future research in the field of fashion and crisis communication. It is important to continue work in this area, as an essential part of crisis communication literature and models, reflecting the relational and highly mediated nature of the fashion industry.

Author Biography

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