



BU STUDENTSHIPS 2023

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT TITLE

Developing a measurement framework to represent the impact of social media on organisations during and after a crisis

PROJECT SUMMARY

This study aims to develop a framework in the field of crisis communication by understanding and creating a measurement outline that articulates the impact of social media on the organisation during and after a crisis.

Social media plays a central role in crisis communication management. Crisis communication research has primarily focused on strategies to protect organisational reputation (Frandsen & Johansen 2011). Research in this area has mainly focused on incorporating social media analysis of stakeholder perceptions to inform crisis response strategies (Lambret & Barki 2018; Stieglitz et al 2018) and the development of the interactive crisis communication model for social media for crisis communication response (Cheng 2018). Most recently the success of using social media analytics to inform crisis communication during the Covid-19 pandemic methods were discussed in various papers, including those of Chon and Kim (2022). In the disaster management field, social media information has been used together with CyberGIS information to provide a deeper and real-time understanding of disasters (Huang et al 2015). Various theories to this extent has been developed including social-mediated crisis communication (SMCC), the STREMI model, the social media crisis management matrix/framework (SMSMF) (Bukar et al 2020). However, all these studies focus on how social media can assist reputation protection in a crisis.

This study, however, wants to forward theory development in crisis communication by not investigating the use social media as part of the crisis response plan, but rather understanding and creating a measurement framework for the impact of social media on the organisation during and after a crisis. It therefore aims to articulate the impact that social media can have on an organisation in crisis, in order to contextualise the role of social media in a corporate crisis. The framework for measurement is expected to include elements from cost to business, reputation impact, changes in goodwill and so forth. Measuring this important element of communication during a crisis, could help organisations to determine their success or failure in managing the crisis, based on various organisational elements like reputation, cost to the business and so forth.

When considering the current measuring frameworks available in corporate communication, two main tools need to be mentioned: the AMEC framework and the Corporate Reputation Quotient. The AMEC framework provides clear guidelines to organisations on how communication should be measured, including the communication output through to the final outcomes and societal impact (AMEC, 2023). This accepted corporate communication measurement framework, based on the 3rd iteration of the Barcelona Principles of measurement in communication (AMEC 2023b), provides guidance to the industry, but lacks a specific view of how to quantify crisis communication impact, specifically social media impact on an organisation.

In addition, the Corporate Reputation Quotient (Forbrun et al 2000) has provided organisations with a measurement tool to judge the growth or decline of their reputation, which could be applied for crisis situations, but to date has not been applied to this context. Within this model, the impact of the social media element during a crisis has also not been explored.

This study will be theoretically framed by crisis communication, strategic communication management and social media theories, as viewed from a reflective paradigm.

Aims

The overall research objective would be to:

Develop a measurement framework to assess the impact of social media on organisations during and after a crisis.

The specific research objectives will be:

1. To determine the relationship between crisis communication, social media and strategic communication management elements of measurement that can be used to understand the impact of social media during and after a crisis, from a theoretical perspective
2. To determine elements of measurement that can be used to understand the impact of social media during and after an organisational crisis, from the perspectives of CEOs, CFOs and Chief Communication Officers from energy providers globally
3. To distil insights on elements of measurement that can be used during and after an organisational crisis, by analysing social media posts and reactions from energy providers globally

Methods

To provide a broad view across industries on a measurement framework to determine social media impact during and after a crisis, a mixed method research will be used that combine qualitative and quantitative elements. The specific methods used will include semi-structured interviews, social media content analysis and questionnaires. For the qualitative part of the study, a total of 20 CEOs, CFOs and Chief Communication Officers across energy providers across the globe, will be selected based on their knowledge and experience in crisis communication. A social media analysis across a stratified sample from the same organisations, will provide further insights on the published crisis communication and reactions to this communication. The quantitative part of the study will include a representative sample from the energy providers, stratified geographically. The top managers in these organisations will be targeted with the questionnaire. Training and support will be given to the candidate to support them in complete a mixed method study.

Outcomes

The outcome of the study would be the development of a measurement framework to determine the impact of social media on organisation during and after a crisis. The contribution of the study academically would include theory development in this new field, whereas the practical contribution of the study would enable global organisations to track the impact of social media on their business during and after a crisis, and isolate the measurement of the social media impact for improved management.

ACADEMIC IMPACT

This research will aim to develop a new comprehensive measurement framework to understand the impact of social media activity on an organisation during and after a time of crisis. Academics agree that social media has a great influence on organisation, but the impact of this particular element has not been isolated and measured before. The impact of social media on an organisation during a crisis has not yet been defined in terms of value, reputation impact or similar measures. Providing a measurement framework to guide this discussion will build new theory in both the disciplines of corporate communication and crisis communication management and show leadership in these academic disciplines.

The research would typically result in two academic conference presentations and two academic peer reviewed articles. Further impact would be established by sharing the new measurement framework with global organisations through partnering with the Helpful Digital Group.

SOCIETAL IMPACT
<p>This research will contribute to energy providers being able to measure the impact of social media during a crisis. That could aid their understanding and management of a crisis. This could contribute to the UNSDG 9, which focuses on industry, innovation and infrastructure. Energy companies have a large impact on country infrastructure and their contribution to sustainability actions cannot be underestimated. By understanding and being able to measure the social media aspect of their crisis more appropriate, could also help the organisations learn in order to provide a better service and most possibly a more sustainable service, going forward.</p>
PGR DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES
<p>The PhD opportunity would offer the candidate the chance to develop as a leader and specialist in crisis communication measurement. These skills as researcher, and specialist, would place the candidate in an ideal position to further develop an academic or industry career. The candidate will have gained specialist knowledge across social media, measurement, and a range of research methods during their study. Also working with Helpful Digital would help the candidate gain some direct industry knowledge.</p>

SUPERVISORY TEAM	
First Supervisor	Dr Tanya le Roux
Additional Supervisors	Prof Scott Wright
Recent publications by supervisors relevant to this project	<p>Sutton, L.B., le Roux, T. and Fourie, L.M., 2022. Who Should Be Identified as Internal Stakeholders? An Internal Communication Practitioner and Consultant Perspective in the South African Corporate Context. <i>Communicatio</i>, 48 (4), 93-116.</p> <p>Le Roux, T. and Van Niekerk, D., 2020. Challenges in stakeholders self-organising to enhance disaster communication. <i>Corporate Communications</i>, 25 (1), 128-142.</p> <p>Ndlovu, E., Prinsloo, B. and le Roux, T., 2020. Impact of climate change and variability on traditional farming systems: Farmers' perceptions from south-west, semi-arid Zimbabwe. <i>Jamba</i>, 12 (1), 742.</p> <p>Le Roux, T. et al., 2015. Planning and executing scenario based simulation exercises: Methodological lessons. <i>Journal of Homeland Security & Emergency Management</i>, 12 (1), 193-210.</p> <p>Le Roux, T., 2014. DR4 communication in the South African context: A conceptual paper. <i>Public relations review</i>, 40 (2), 305-314.</p> <p>Sun, Y. and Wright, S., 2023. Relay activism and the flows of contentious publicness on WeChat: a case study of COVID-19 in China. <i>Information Communication and Society</i>.</p>

	<p>Wright, S., 2021. Beyond 'fake news'? A longitudinal analysis of how Australian politicians attack and criticise the media on Twitter. <i>Journal of Language and Politics</i>, 20 (5), 719-740.</p> <p>Wright, S. and Nolan, D., 2021. The Development of Data Journalism in China: Influences, Motivations and Practice. <i>Digital Journalism</i>.</p> <p>Wong, S.C. and Wright, S., 2020. Hybrid mediation opportunity structure? A case study of Hong Kong's Anti-National Education Movement. <i>New Media and Society</i>, 22 (10), 1741-1762.</p>
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INFORMAL ENQUIRIES
Please contact the lead supervisor on the following email for informal enquiries: tleroux@bournemouth.ac.uk
ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
<p>The BU PhD Studentships are open to UK, EU and International students.</p> <p>Candidates for a PhD Studentship should demonstrate outstanding qualities and be motivated to complete a PhD in 4 years and must demonstrate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • outstanding academic potential as measured normally by either a 1st class honours degree (or equivalent Grade Point Average (GPA) or a Master's degree with distinction or equivalent • an IELTS (Academic) score of 6.5 minimum (with a minimum 6.0 in each component, or equivalent) for candidates for whom English is not their first language and this must be evidenced at point of application.
ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
Degree in a related discipline, which could include strategic communication, public relations, crisis management, organisational strategy or business disciplines
HOW TO APPLY
<p>Please complete the online application form by the deadline listed on the project webpage.</p> <p>Further information on the application process can be found at: www.bournemouth.ac.uk/studentships</p>