

Restoring Trust and Enhancing Purchase Intention After a Crisis Through a Corporate Social Responsibility Program and a Specific Response Strategy: An Abstract

Anne-Lotte Kraesgenberg, Ardion D. Beldad, and Sabrina M. Hegner

Abstract Organizational crises can be extremely damaging for organizational reputation, and legitimacy is something that is widely acknowledged by both practitioners and academics. Organizations confronting a crisis of whatever nature, then, are expected to adequately deal with it in any way possible to avoid incurring the wrath of those who might be directly or indirectly affected by the crisis. While the literature on crisis communication offers an array of evidence-based strategies and approaches any organization embroiled in a crisis could employ, one also wonders whether or not an organization's precrisis action, specifically corporate social responsibility efforts, in combination with how the organization responds to the crisis could restore customers' trust in the organization and impact their willingness to engage in an exchange with the organization after the crisis. Additionally, it is worthwhile to investigate how crisis type (product-harm vs. moral-harm crisis) would interact with CSR program type (institutional vs. promotional CSR) and crisis response strategy (rebuild vs. diminish) influencing customer trust and postcrisis purchase intention.

To address these two questions, a scenario-based 2×2×2 experiment was implemented with 304 individuals in the Netherlands as participants. Analyses of data reveal the main effects of all independent variables on the attitudinal (ability-, benevolence-, and integrity-based trust) and behavioral intention (purchase intention) constructs. More specifically, it is known that a rebuilding strategy has a more positive impact on benevolence- and integrity-based trust. Additionally, while a product-harm crisis is detrimental to customers' ability-based trust, a moral-harm crisis can be damaging for customers' integrity-based trust in a company. Furthermore, an institutional CSR program is advantageous for all outcome variables. Finally, an interaction effect between crisis type and crisis response strategy has been found. Results of this study have practical implications for crisis communication executives, as they provide important insights into factors that an organization should take into account when dealing with a specific type of crisis.

A.-L. Kraesgenberg (✉) • A.D. Beldad • S.M. Hegner
University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands
e-mail: a.s.kraesgenberg@student.utwente.nl; a.d.beldad@utwente.nl; s.hegner@utwente.nl