

EFFECTS OF INTERACTIVE ONLINE MEDIA TYPE AND CRISIS TYPE
ON PUBLIC TRUST DURING ORGANIZATIONAL CRISIS

By

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To Breanne: without your love and support this would have never been possible.
To Emma: my sweetcakes, the day I met you was the best one I had ever known and each one since has been even better.

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This 2 x 3 experimental design tests the effects of interactive online media type (specifically blog and streaming video) and crisis type (accident, intentional or victim) on public trust during organizational crisis. Coombs' (1997) Situational Crisis Communication Theory formed the foundation for the crisis type independent variable. Hon and Grunig's (1999) trust dimension measures from Relationship Theory were used as the basis for the dependent variables. Vonnetek Automotive, a fictional organization, was designed to test the variables. This is the first study of this kind to bridge the logical gaps between "new media" effects, crisis communication and trust. Furthermore, the experimental methodology offers predictive qualities not offered in other existing research on the individual variables.

In this study, the public trust of fictional organization Vonnetek Automotive (designed expressly for this study) was measured using reports of the faculty and staff at a major southern university and business members of a chamber of commerce of a southeastern city. The results indicated that the crisis type variable strongly affected perceived trust reports while interactive online media type did not. Interaction effects were found in only 1 of 11 dependent measures, indicating that in some cases there may be a more complex relationship between media type and trust, something that must be studied further.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Researchers across multiple disciplines have attempted to define and understand the concept of trust, often disagreeing on its definition and theoretical foundation (Watson, 2005). While trust research has been conducted in fields such as psychology, management, marketing, and organizational behavior, public relations scholars hold the concept of trust in especially high regard because of its role within relationships - a foundation of the public relations discipline (Broom, Casey, & Ritchey, 1997; Grunig, 1992; Grunig & Hon, 1999; Grunig & Huang, 1999; Ledingham & Bruning, 1998). But why is trust so important to these relationships? Kent and Taylor (2002) accurately summed it up when they stated, “as is well known in public relations, once public trust has been lost it is difficult, sometimes impossible, to regain it.”

Understanding how trust is built and maintained is critical in organizational crisis public relations. One of the main goals of most organizations is to provide a return, or profit, for its shareholders. Trust is crucial to this goal as shareholders must trust an organization to become a shareholder in the first place, and ongoing trust is needed to retain shareholders. Crises occur for a myriad of reasons but all of them potentially threaten the trust shared between an organization and its publics. Even when an organization has properly planned for an unexpected crisis, effects on public trust are still vague at best. Progress has been made, however, in distinguishing different types of crises. Coombs & Holladay (2002) identified three crisis attribution clusters helpful in explicating crisis types: accident clusters, intentional clusters, and victim clusters. Regardless of the attribution of the crisis, however, an organization’s publics must be communicated with. In doing so, many organizations have integrated use of interactive online media tactics into its organizational communication strategies.

“New media” has been a buzzword in communication since McLuhan (1964) first told us that “the medium is the message.” While the definition of “new” has changed with time and technological advances, it currently refers to the interactive use of the Internet as the medium. Organizations, in general, and crisis public relations practitioners, in particular, regularly use the Internet as a key communication medium – hence the use of interactive online media as an independent variable in this research. However, there is no research to establish how interactive online media should be used during crisis and to what effect. Two types of interactive online media increasingly used by organizations are blogs and streaming video, but again there is little experimental research to test their effectiveness.

This proposal details an experiment designed to better understand how public trust is affected by organizational use of interactive online media during various types of crises. Crisis public relations research has often neglected experimental methods in favor of case studies for analysis. While such case studies are valuable, they lack the predictive quality of experimental research – critical to further our understanding of crisis public relations. The focus of this experiment is to examine how organizational use of blogs and streaming video during different types of crises affect public trust of the organization. This study allows analysis of potential main effects of both crisis types and interactive online media types on trust, as well as possible interaction effects among variables. Furthermore, this study begins to fill the void of experimental research in the field of crisis public relations.

This research also furthers Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2007). While Situational Crisis Communication Theory has already proven valuable by adapting concepts from Attribution Theory, Situational Crisis Communication Theory has not been tested experimentally. Furthering Situational Crisis Communication Theory through use of

experimental method allows Situational Crisis Communication Theory to expand its theoretical application to the predictive – a goal that both benefits scholars and practitioners. Situational Crisis Communication theory also currently overlooks media effects. This research begins to identify such media effects within Situational Crisis Communication Theory by examining blogs and streaming video.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

General Public Relations Theory

In order to properly follow the development of crisis and relationship theories, it is important to first examine the foundations of public relations theory. Public relations as a form of communication has existed for centuries. The introductory public relations textbook *Public Relations Strategies and Tactics* (Wilcox and Cameron, 2007) gives the examples of Caesar's *Commentaries*, the Rosetta Stone, and even the earliest Olympic Games as examples of early public relations. And, like all sciences, public relations has strived to identify a research paradigm within its discipline (Kuhn, 1996).

One of the first, and certainly the largest, studies aimed at finding such a paradigm began in 1985 when the International Association of Business Communicators awarded a group of researchers \$400,000 to fund a study focused on answering the following research questions:

How, why, and to what extent does communication affect the achievement of organizational objectives?

How does public relations make an organization more effective, and how much is that contribution worth economically?

What are the characteristics of a public relations function that are most likely to make an organization effective?

The answers to these questions would form the basis for Excellence Theory (Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, Grunig, Repper, White, 1992). In 2006, Botan and Hazleton argued that there was not yet a paradigmatic theory in public relations, though Excellence Theory most closely approaches it. Grunig et al. identified four models of public relations: press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical. The first, press agency, involves one-way publicity for the organization at any means necessary. A classic example of this is P.T. Barnum and his publicity campaigns for his circus. While considered the "lowest"

order of the four models, it is still used by some practitioners – particularly with celebrity publicists. The next model, public information, is also a one-way communication model but the main difference is a focus on truthful information that is of importance to the public. This is a method often employed by government public affairs specialists. The third model is two-way asymmetrical communication. This model does acknowledge and include two-way communication but it is really more like two separate one-way models: organization to the public, and public to the organization. Feedback is used but usually for the benefit of the organization (for example, an organization might relay a message and see what type of reaction it gets, then revise the message and repeat in order to increase persuasion). Finally the “highest” order model is two-way symmetrical communication. In this model, both organization and public simultaneously act as sender and receiver with constant feedback allowing for dynamic mutually beneficial communication. Through this two-way communication, or “mixed motive” model, organization and public are constantly in states of negotiation in order to create win-win scenarios.

The Excellence study also identified four levels of public relations within organizations:

Program level: Individual communication programs, often operating independently of organizational mission/goal.

Functional level: Theoretical/benchmarking level

Organizational level: Public relations must show contribution to organizational effectiveness. (This was the original focus of the IABC proposal.)

Societal level: Effective organizations must be socially responsible

Grunig’s team identified that, for excellence to be achieved, public relations must (a) be a part of the dominant coalition, (b) practice two-way symmetrical communication, (c) be educated in public relations, and (d) be “public relations” independently and not integrated with something else. In this way, public relations could be knowledgeable and remain socially responsible while

still have enough power to effectively work as a positive change agent within the organization. The following section reviews the Excellence Study in more detail.

The Excellence Study sampled four types of organizations in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom: corporations, not-for-profits, government agencies, and associations. The study was carried out in two phases. The first phase was a survey composed of mailed questionnaires to CEOs and senior managers of organizations, from which the authors built an Excellence Index to test the excellence of organizational public relations.

Three years later, the second phase of the study involved conducting case studies using long interviews CEOs and other dominant coalition members to test measures of organizations that were rated high in excellence as well as some that were measured low in excellence, seeking to measure economic value of public relations to its respective organizations. They then applied the Excellence Index to their qualitative second-phase findings to try and identify excellent public relations' contribution to the organizational bottom line.

This analysis provided the team with a number of variables to help answer their research questions. These included the value of communication, contribution to strategic organizational functions, public relations roles, models of public relations, potential of the communications audit, activist pressure on the organization, employee variables, and the status of women.

The value of communication. The team attempted to identify the value of communication within the organizations. This was achieved by CEO reports of perceived value of public relations within the organization.

Contribution to strategic organizational functions. The team looked for contribution to four specific organizational functions: strategic planning, response to major social issues, major initiatives, and routine operations.

Public relations roles. The team asked what role the top communicator in an organization holds – manager, senior advisor, technician, or media relations – to identify public relations roles within excellent organizations.

Models of public relations. The team analyzed which public relations models the organizations used: press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, and two-way symmetrical. This information was used to identify organizational worldview of in-house public relations.

Potential of the communication unit. This variable measured if the communication unit in the organization actually had the ability to practice both management and technician functions. Even in organizations that strive for it, excellence cannot be achieved if the communication unit does not have the potential ability to perform such public relations.

Activist pressure on the organization. The team measured the extent to which an organization is exposed to activist pressure. The team contended that activist groups are, by definition, active and ready to be communicated with.

Employee variables. Examining employees-as-unit-of-analysis to identify organizational culture, the team found two dominant factors: participative and authoritarian. Participative organizational cultures were much more likely to value and utilize two-way symmetrical communication, a tenet of excellence.

The status of women. The team posited that in order to effectively communicate with diverse publics, it must also value diversity within its organizational culture. Thus, the status of women was analyzed in order to help measure this. The team argued that organizations that treat women well exhibit characteristics critical to excellence.

Based on this data, the Excellence Study identified seven characteristics of excellent communication departments, grouped into four categories:

Empowerment of the public relations function

- The senior public relations executive is involved with the strategic management process of the organization, and communication programs are developed for strategic public identified as a part of this strategic management process.
- The senior public relations executive is a member of the dominant coalition of the organization or
- The senior public relations executive has a direct reporting relationship to senior managers who are part of the dominant coalition.
- Diversity is embodied in all public relations roles.

Communicator roles

- The public relations unit is headed by a manager rather than a technician.
- The senior public relations executive or others in the public relations unit must have the knowledge needed for the manager role, or the communication function will not have the potential to become a managerial function.
- Both men and women must have equal opportunity to occupy the managerial role in an excellent department.

Organization of the communication function, relationship to other functions, and use of consulting firms

- Organizations must have an integrated communication function
- Public relations should be a management function separate from other functions.

Models of public relations

- The public relations department and the dominant coalition share the worldview that the communication department should reflect the two-way symmetrical, or mixed-motive, model of public relations.
- Communication programs developed for specific publics are based on the two-way symmetrical, mixed-motive model.
- The senior public relations executive or others in the public relations unit must have the knowledge needed for the two-way symmetrical model, or the

communication function will not have the potential to practice that excellent model.

In summary, the Excellence team identified five keywords to describe excellent public relations: managerial, strategic, symmetrical, diverse, and ethical (Grunig, et al., 2002, p.306).

Excellence Theory, however, made some assumptions in its findings. For instances, one assumption is that the idea of “excellence” is universal. This study, while large in population, was only studied in western cultures. Grunig, Grunig, Sriramesh, Huang, and Lyra (1995) would later acknowledge this, identifying two additional “models” – personal influence and cultural translator – by modifying models of two-way communication. Berger (2005) suggested that Excellence Theory “glosses over” the power relationships regarding the dominant coalition, warning that two-way symmetrical communication may not be as easy as it sounds in practice. Spicer (2007) suggested that a more critical definition of “public relations practitioner” may help alleviate some of Berger’s concerns though research has not yet been conducted to test it. Stacks and Watson (2007) also proposed “that to adequately measure and test symmetrical communication, a move away from regression-based, variable-oriented methodology to a relational-based methodology from both metric and nonmetric data approaches to measurement and research is needed” (p.67).

Additionally, Molleda (2001) found that public relations practitioners act as change agents or as organizational conscience, focused on integrating the organizations with the society in a communal relationship. This relationship is similar to Grunig’s two-way symmetrical communication model in its regard for both organization and public, as well as inherent social responsibility.

Not all scholars were satisfied with the Excellence Theory, however. One major alternative perspective is Contingency Theory. While not typically considered a critical theory,

Cancel, Cameron, Sallot and Mitrook introduced Contingency Theory in 1997. This theory is based on a continuum from total accommodation to total advocacy. Finding that many practitioners answered “it depends” when asked about best practices, the authors identified 86 variables to evaluate communication responses based specific to publics. The authors originally contended that analysis of these variables for each key public could identify the communication strategy best used with each public (on the continuum).

The variables introduced by the authors (Cancel et al., 1997) were distilled into external variables and internal variables, each with sections and subsections. External variables included threats, industry environment, general political/social environment/external culture, the external public, and issue under question. Internal variables included organizational characteristics, public relations department characteristics, characteristics of dominant coalition, internal threats, individual characteristics and relationship characteristics.

A major difference between Contingency Theory and Excellence Theory is that, while Excellence Theory attempts to explain more generalizable organization-public relationships, Contingency Theory isolates the interactions of one organization and one public at a time (Cancel, Mitrook, & Cameron, 1999). Such interactions, and not the results of them, are the focus of Contingency Theory.

Contingency Theory is can be used to identify the many variables that can affect public relationships, though it may be overly complex. One assumption of this theory is that practitioners would be willing to use it (in order for it to be practically applicable). In order to make the theory more parsimonious and practitioner-friendly, Cancel, Mitrook, and Cameron (1999) interviewed organizational public relations managers in order to refine the theory. This study reinforced the value of the contingency continuum to practitioners. However, the study

also identified that the variables most relevant to practitioners could be grouped into

“predisposing” and “situational” variables:

“predisposing variables refer to those variables which that their greatest influence on an organization by helping to share the organization’s predisposition towards relations with external public... situational variables are the specific and often changing dynamics at work during particular situations involving an organization and an external public” (Cancel et al., 1999).

Based on their findings, the authors identified a multitude of variable groupings. The following quote is a synopsis of the authors’ findings regarding highly supported variables:

“Of the predisposing variables cited by interviewees, the following variables received the most support in the overall data analysis: corporation business exposure; public relations access to dominant coalition; dominant coalition’s decision power and enlightenment; corporations size; and individual characteristics of involved persons.

Of those situational variables cited by interviewees, those that received the most support were the following: urgency of situation; characteristics of external public’s claims or requests; characteristics of external public; potential or obvious threats; and potential cost or benefit for a corporation from choosing various stances. Of those variables cited as being particularly pertinent to community relations decisions, the following variables were highly supported by the interviewee data: public’s power to positively impact the corporation; support of the public by dominant coalition and employees; and availability of resources in the corporation.” (Cancel et al., 1999, p. 189)

Shin, Cameron, and Cropp (2006) furthered contingency theory’s parsimony when they conducted a nationwide survey of public relations practitioners in order to find the most parsimonious explanation for contingency theory’s variables. Their results also reported statistical significance in the many variables. Based on their findings, the authors used Cancel et al.’s (1999) variables (within the previously established 11 categories) and their further findings to conduct a factor analysis. As with all factor analyses, the factors were named based on commonalities among included variables. Based on the strong reliability in its factors (using Chronbach analysis), the authors identified the 26 external factors and 7 internal factors.

Crisis and risk communication theory, while relatively quite new, have also become important areas of public relations. Stemming from something as simple as Murphy’s (1989)

non-zero-sum game, organizations are realizing that mutually beneficial relationships are critical to their survival. Today's publics are much more business-savvy and also empowered like no other time in history (Friedman, 2005). These empowered publics often realize their leverage and regularly hold organizations socially responsible for their actions. But even those organizations that act socially responsibly undergo crises. In either case, the need for crisis public relations planning and management research is critical. Benoit's (1995) image discourse theory, Coombs' (1995) crisis responses, Threat Grid, and Crisis Type Matrix, and Coombs and Holladay's (2002) Situational Crisis Communication Theory are all valuable contributions and being used regularly by scholars and practitioners alike. Due to the newness of this type of theory and the fact that research done in the area has not focused on one area but been very widely spread, it is too early in its evolution to generally evaluate crisis communication theories though specific theories are evaluated later in a separate section of this paper.

As mentioned above, public relations methods have existed throughout history but it wasn't until the twentieth century that scholars began to search for theoretical underpinnings to the discipline. While studies like the Excellence Theory and Contingency Theory have attempted to build a paradigmatic foundation for public relations, most research leading up to this point was based on case study or practical application (Ferguson, 1984). Ferguson recognized that public relations studies based on theory-building were few. In arguably one of the most influential public relations works, Ferguson (1984) content analyzed the state of public relations publications. Her research examined published public relations journal articles and found only 4% of them to be theoretically-based. In 2003, Sallot, Lyon, Acosta-Alzuru, and Jones replicated this study and found 20% of articles to be theoretically-based – documenting a measureable increase in theoretical interest and research. Perhaps most important, however, was

Ferguson's observation that the field of public relations was in need of a logical unit-of-analysis. She concluded her 1984 paper by calling for the field to consider *relationship* as a unit-of-analysis. Ferguson's call was widely embraced by public relations scholars and has been increasingly adopted by practitioners. Since this initial call, relationship theory has developed into its own branch of public relations research – and grown substantially since. In 1992, Ehling called this shift “an important change in the primary mission of public relations.” Broom, Casey and Ritchey (1997) furthered this perspective by calling for an explication of the term “organization-public relationship” in order to further develop theory. Furthermore, they observed:

The formation of relationships occurs when parties have perceptions and expectations of each other, when one or both parties need resources from the other, when one or both parties perceive mutual threats from an uncertain environment, and when there is either a legal or voluntary necessity to associate (p. 95).

This observation also translates well to crisis public relations planning and management. The “mutual threats” mentioned are an inherent component of crisis, and are discussed later in this paper.

Ledingham (2001) identified “four pivotal developments which spurred the emergence of the relational perspective as a framework for public relations study, teaching, and practice” (p. 286):

Recognition of the central role of relationships in public relations. See Ferguson (1984)

Reconceptualizing public relations as a management function. See both Excellence Theory and Contingency Theory

Identification of components and types of organization-public relationships, their linkage to public attitudes, perceptions, knowledge and behavior, and relationship management strategies.

Construction of organization-public relationship models that accommodate relationship antecedents, process, and consequences.

Two major models of the relationship theory have also been introduced. Broom, Casey and Ritchey (1997) developed a three-stage model based on antecedents, relationship state, and consequences of the relationship of interest. In 2000, Grunig and Huang developed a similar three-stage model based on situational antecedents, maintenance strategies, and relationship outcomes.

Ledingham and Bruning's (1998) relationship study identified five relationship dimensions: trust, openness, involvement, investment and commitment. Hon and Grunig (1999) advanced this line of research by further fleshing out relationship-management strategies and outcomes such as strategies, access, positiveness, openness, assurance, networking, sharing of tasks, outcomes, control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, communal relationships and exchange relationships. The dimension of trust, as defined in these studies, is the dependent variable in this study and is discussed in-depth in the next section.

Finally, crisis public relations scholar Coombs (2000) also analyzed relationship theory from the crisis perspective. His research found that relationships are affected (and in particular, can be damaged) by relational expectations and relationship history between an organization and its publics. Coombs' crisis-focused research again highlighted the Broom, Casey, and Ritchey's 1997 findings.

Measuring Trust in Public Relations

“Whenever philosophers, poets, statesmen, or theologians, has written about man's relationship to his fellow man, to nature, or to animals, the phenomena of trust and betrayal, faith and suspicion, responsibility and irresponsibility, have been discussed.”
-Morton Deutsch

These words by Deutsch (1958), in his paper entitled “Trust and Suspicion,” were written 50 years ago but the sentiment is no less powerful today when applied to organizational trust with its key publics. Morton utilized a type of two-person, non-zero-sum game in order to test

his hypotheses of trust. Based on game theory and today commonly referred to as “Prisoner’s Dilemma,” (Poundstone, 1993), he illustrated that if two parties could trust each other, they could also achieve mutually beneficial and desirable circumstances. However, if either party violated the trust then both parties would be punished.

While this mathematic model is too simplistic for direct application to most public relations research, its focus on the risks and rewards of mutual trust do translate well. This model easily correlates to interpersonal relationships but the tenets are the essentially the same when analyzing relationships between an organization and its publics. Simply put, shared trust between an organization and its key publics is necessary for the building and maintenance of mutually beneficial two-way communication. Public relations research in the 1950s was nil but current research on trust within the discipline, like that reviewed in the previous section of this study, has acknowledged the critical importance of such organization-public trust.

As stated above, public relations scholars express such strong interest in the concept of trust because of its influence on relationships. Public relations theorists attempting to understand the implications of trust are often focused on relationship-based theories, as it is part and parcel of them. The unit-of-analysis for public relations has steadily evolved with the discipline, current research strongly supporting relationship as unit-of-analysis. Trust is often included as a component of such relationships. A review of this research follows.

Relationship theories have grown in both number and relevance since Ferguson’s (1984) identification of relationship as a viable unit of analysis for public relations scholars, as opposed to the (then) traditional use of individuals as unit of analysis (Ki & Hon, 2007). Grunig, Grunig, and Ehling (1992) furthered Ferguson’s explication of relationship-as-unit-of-analysis by including trust and credibility as additional dimensions of relationships. Broom, Casey, and

Ritchey (1997) stated that Ferguson's relationship orientation "mix(es) characteristics of relationships with the perceptions of the parties in relationships, as well as constructs based on the reports of those in relationships." While this could be problematic for researchers in the process of explicating a (then) new unit of analysis, it seems instrumental to truly understanding the implications of organizational-public trust relationships – trust is based on just such a mix of characteristics. Organizational-public relationships, it seems, are largely based on varying degrees of trust or distrust.

Many public relations researchers agree with Kasperson's (1986) reasoning that trust is multidimensional (eg., Hon & Grunig, 1999; Ki & Hon, 2007; Yang, 2007; Hall, 2006; Huang, 2001). Kasperson identified the following trust characteristics: competence, lack of bias, no hidden agenda or undue influence, and a sense that the agency cares about those it serves and will provide adequate opportunities for people to air their concerns. While Kasperson is an environmental risk researcher, it is interesting that the dimensions identified are so closely aligned to contemporary public relations concepts: "no hidden agenda or undue influence" and "sense that the agency cares..." are very similar to transparency and organizational social responsibility – two terms regularly used in public relations research and practice. Transparency is "the full, accurate, and timely disclosure of information," a clear similarity with Kasperson's first dimension. Grunig (1992) defined social responsibility as "excellent organizations manage with an eye of the effects of their decisions on society as well as on the organization" (p.240). Publics that feel an organization is interested in the well-being of both itself and society will logically feel that the "agency cares" – Kasperson's second dimension.

As the evolution of the relationship management function of public relations progressed, so too has its research within the field. In fact, two influential public relations theories – Excellence

Theory and Contingency Theory – are based heavily on the relationship component of public relations. Excellence Theory (Grunig, Dozier, Ehling, Grunig, Repper, & White, 1992) is structured on the concept of two-way symmetrical communication. Grunig et al. (1992) define two-way symmetrical communication as “a model of public relations that is based on research and that uses communication to manage conflict and improve understanding with strategic publics” (p. 18). This “improved understanding” constitutes a relationship. Contingency Theory (Cancel, Cameron, Sallot, & Mitrook, 1997) is based on a continuum from total accommodation to total advocacy, which would be unnecessary unless it were applied to a relationship of some kind. Simply put, an organization must accommodate another party or advocate for itself in lieu of such accommodation – also constituting a relationship.

Watson’s (2005) overview of trust research across disciplines argued that each discipline must adapt its own measures of trust and concluded the following: “The question ‘Do you trust them?’ must be qualified: ‘trust them to do what, and how do you define trust?’” Hon and Grunig’s (1999) *Guide for Measuring Relationships in Public Relations* provides an answer to that question by defining trust within public relations.

Hon and Grunig (1999) identified six precise components of relationships: control mutuality, trust, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, and communal relationship. In this context, Hon and Grunig defined trust as “one party’s level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party.” Furthermore, they distilled three clear dimensions of trust: integrity, dependability, and competence. Integrity is defined as “the belief that an organization is fair and just,” dependability as “the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do,” and competence as “the belief that an organization has the ability to do what it says it will do.” Hon and Grunig (1999) tested these dimensions with the following questions:

1. This organization treats people like me fairly and justly.
2. Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
3. This organization can be relied on to keep its promises.
4. I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.
5. I feel very confident about this organization's skills.
6. This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

This conceptualization has been embraced by many public relations scholars (ie., Ki & Hon, 2007; Yang, 2007; Hall, 2006; Huang, 2001), and is used to conceptualize the trust variable in this study.

Organizational Crisis Public Relations

Crisis management as an art has been around since the beginning of recorded time. Adam had to manage the first crisis after Eve persuaded him to eat that apple. But crisis management as a science for American companies has been around just a few decades (Pines, 2000).

Public relations itself is a relatively new discipline in respect to other communication disciplines, and younger still when compared to social sciences such as psychology and sociology. Furthermore, the sub-discipline of crisis public relations is in relative infancy. The first crisis public relations research was written in 1982 (Ressler, 1982), not incidentally the same year as the well-known Tylenol cyanide crisis. Considered a paradigmatic case of how to effectively handle crisis, its case study is often analyzed to ascertain effective methods of dealing with organizational crises (ie., Brassell-Cicchini, 2003; Fearn-Banks, 1994; LaPlant, 1999; Leeper, 1996; Marra, 1998).

Organizations are always at risk for crisis, if for no other reason except that they cannot control all aspects of their environments. Therefore it seems likely that organizational crises have existed since the formation of the first organizations. By exercising both their simple and

complex operations, organizations accept the risks associated with them. Furthermore, crises are a perceptual matter – a crisis is determined by those affected by it, meaning that what might facilitate a crisis in one instance might not in another. For example, in the Intel Pentium chip crisis (Hearit, 1999), only chip users processing high-end calculations were noticeably affected by a design flaw in the chip. Most consumers would never even notice the flaw but once word of the flaw spread, the general public’s perception of its effects created a full-fledged crisis for Intel – soon all of Intel’s publics perceived that they were affected. In public relations practice, a popular catchphrase is that “perception is reality.” In the case of Intel, it certainly seemed to be true; customers that were not actually functionally affected by the flaw still perceived a crisis, constituting a very real one for Intel.

Crises can have a number of facets, from misquotes in the media to product recalls and from simple misunderstandings to accidents causing thousands of deaths. Even the most basic principles taught in introductory public relations courses – such as accurate, honest and timely communication, audience analysis, transparency, social responsibility (Wilcox & Cameron, 2007) – seem to be not only valid in a crisis, but may be even more sensitive than in normal everyday operations. Crises can highlight where an organization has missed the mark or neglected certain areas of its public relations efforts.

In order to understand crisis, it is helpful to look at how crisis is defined. The American Heritage Dictionary (1985) defines it as “(a) a crucial or decisive point or situation, turning point; (b) an unstable condition in political, international, or economic affairs in which an abrupt or decisive change is impending.” From public relations practitioner Modzelweski’s (1990) early definition as a situation getting “out of control,” the field of public relations has defined it in a number of ways. Crises have much to do with perceptions, especially those of external

publics. Hayes (1985) suggested that crisis occurs “when there is a large, important difference between the expectations that organizational management has about the way its plans will interact with the environment and what actually happens.” Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) also offered a definition, stating crisis as “a disruption that physically affects a system as a whole and threatens its basic assumptions, its subjective sense of self, its existential core.”

Coombs (2002) substantiated that a crisis can both carry the potential to disrupt normal operations and damage an organization’s reputation. Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (1998) defined crisis as “a specific, unexpected, and nonroutine event or series of events that create high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived to threaten an organization’s high-priority goals.” Seeger and Ulmer (2002) later refined their definition: “a fundamental threat to the very stability of the system, a questioning of core assumptions and beliefs, and risk to high priority goals, including organizational image, legitimacy, profitability, and ultimately survival.” This definition will be used for the term crisis in this study.

Some scholars have variations of their definitions of crisis. Depending on what variables are being analyzed, scholars focus on different aspects of the situation. However it is clear that all research is concerned with potential risks that can have a profound effect on the goals of an organization, whether they be normal operations, high-priority goals, or perceived responsibility, to name a few. It is important to note however that, regardless of the particular focus of the crisis analysis, much crisis research revolves around the concept of an organization either meeting or violating the public’s expectations of integrity, dependability, and competence – this study’s conceptualization of trust. Examples mentioned above include Tylenol’s management of the cyanide crisis by meeting and exceeding public expectations and Intel’s mismanagement of the Pentium crisis by violating their customers’ expectations.

The State of Organizational Crisis Public Relations. A review of the existing research finds that most crisis public relations research is based on case studies and theory/model development. Case studies are designed to gain greater understanding of how crises have occurred and been managed. Some authors devote entire books to them, as Kathleen Fearn-Banks (2002) did with *Crisis Communication: A Casebook Approach*, a compendium of public relations crises and lessons learned. Some other organizational case studies include (alphabetically, by author):

Berger (1999) – The Upjohn Company
Bobo (1997) – Hitachi
Boje & Rosile (2003); Seeger and Ulmer (2003) – Enron
Brinson & Benoit (1999) – Texaco
Carney & Jordan (1993) – Sears
Christen (2005) – AT&T
Duhe & Zoch (1994); Tyler (1997) – Exxon
Gonzalez-Herrero & Pratt (1996) – McDonald’s and Intel
Greenberg (1993) – Pepsi
Hearit & Brown (2004) – Merrill Lynch
Ihlen (2002) – Mercedes
Kauffman (1997, 1999, 2001, 2005) – NASA
LaPlant (1999) – Tylenol
Martinelli & Briggs (1998) – Odwalla
Stevens (1999) – The Prudential Insurance Company
Taylor (2000) – Coca-Cola

The volatile airline industry is also, not surprisingly, a popular field of research (alphabetically, by author):

Cowden and Sellnow (2002) – Northwest Airlines
Downing (2004) – American Airlines
Englehardt, Sallot, & Springston (2004) – ValuJet
Greer and Moreland (2003) – United Airlines
McKinney et. al. (2005) – United Airlines

The multitude of case studies available to crisis public relations scholars and practitioners can be considered a strength of the field as a resource but do they stand on their own?

Considering that it is critical for the discipline of public relations to understand how to best plan

for and manage crises, it would seem that case studies alone will not serve our goals. Certainly we can learn from the mistakes and successes of previous cases but how do scholars and practitioners best predict the effectiveness of future crisis management? The answer to predictive questions like this is experimental research – research that is explicitly used for its predictive quality. Unfortunately, there is almost no experimental research on crisis public relations. However some scholars have focused on furthering theory within the discipline. Scholars are still building the foundation on which to formulate comprehensive crisis public relations theory. Much of the research is introduced by adapting existing theory from other areas of public relations or associated social sciences or by creating relatively new theory altogether – including some models for crisis public relations. A review of theoretical crisis public relations research follows.

Gonzalez-Herrero and Pratt (1996) introduced an integrated symmetrical model based on Grunig's situational theory and issues management. They posit that “a proactive, symmetrical crisis-management process characterizes the model's four main steps: (a) issues management, (b) planning-prevention, (c) crisis, and (d) postcrisis.” They include a matrix visualizing the theoretical framework of the model as well as steps to be taken at each stage. It should also be noted the model is applicable in general crisis public relations, though focused on crises caused by organizational mismanagement.

Crisis can also affect the image of the organization, another area of crisis public relations research. Benoit (1997) called for effective messages through the use of image restoration discourse theory. He contended that it allows for practitioners to critically analyze their messages both during and after use. The author suggested that image restoration discourse theory identified the following:

“Remember to use persuasive messages; Organizations at fault should admit responsibility immediately; Deny charges when innocent; Shift the blame when appropriate; Identify outside crisis catalyst, if possible; Report plans to correct/prevent problems; Remember that minimization may not always work; and Employ multiple strategies when appropriate.” (pp. 183-184)

Grunig, Grunig, and Dozier's (2002) *Excellent Public Relation and Effective*

Organizations furthered their advocacy of ongoing, two-way symmetrical communications. This type of public relations is designed to allow the public relations practitioner to better measure the perceptions of key publics in order to more effectively communicate – perceptions that define the perceived trustworthiness of an organization. Their research also called for spokesperson expertise and inclusion of public relations into the “dominant coalition” of decision-makers at the executive level. These strategies are important to general public relations but become critical in times of crisis.

Cancel, et al. (1997) introduced the Contingency Theory of accommodation “based on a continuum from pure accommodation to pure advocacy.” While it argued that Grunig's Excellence Theory is too basic, it may be overly complex – the authors identify 87 different variables that can affect the stance of organizational-public relationships. This stance strongly affects the relationship of the parties in general and the trust level of the parties specifically. How accommodating or advocating an organization is, and has been, can influence the trust of its publics. Furthermore, crises can change the dynamic of these relationship and its dominant variables.

There has been theory specifically designed for public relations crises. Reynolds and Seeger (2005) presented the CERC, or crisis and emergency risk communication, model. It is a blend of risk and crisis communication founded on the evolution from risk to crisis. Based on the authors' contention that stages of risk and crises will have some level predictability, the model attempts to reduce uncertainty and improve crisis management. While the authors do not

contend that the model can predict all developments, it attempts to help managers anticipate potential risks and crisis. The authors also provided a table of “distinguishing features of risk and crisis communication” and a working model of the CERC.

Marsh’s (2006) research revisiting Ryan’s Rhetorical Stasis Theory contended that crisis managers can use the theory to select the most appropriate apologia in times of need. Marsh argued that Rhetorical Stasis Theory allows managers a “hierarchical template for examining the range and depth of crisis response strategies.” While not comprehensive, such theory application has begun to build a foundation on which to better study crisis public relations.

Most recently, Coombs (2007) offered his theory of crisis response, Situational Crisis Communication Theory. It is based on Attribution Theory and Coombs’ (1995, 2002) earlier research on crisis response strategies (nonexistence, ingratiation, mortification, suffering), his Crisis Type Matrix (Intentional-Unintentional and External-Internal quadrants), and the Threat Grid that was designed to assess the type and threat a crisis represented. As Coombs pointed out, an important consideration when evaluating organizational crisis public relations research is the attribution of the crisis. While previous research links Attribution Theory and crises (ie., Bradford & Garrett, 1995; Coombs, 1995; Härtel, McColl-Kennedy, & McDonald, 1998; Jorgenson, 1994, 1996; McDonald & Härtel, 2000, Stockmyer, 1996), Coombs and Holladay (2002) used Situational Crisis Communication Theory to identify three crisis attribution (responsibility) clusters that are helpful in conceptualizing crisis type as an experimental variable (Coombs and Holladay, 2002):

(1) Accident cluster – minimal attributions of crisis responsibility (technical-error accident, technical-error product harm, and challenge), event considered unintentional or uncontrollable by the organization

(2) Intentional cluster – very strong attributions of crisis responsibility (human-error accident, human-error product harm, and organizational misdeed), event considered to be purposeful

(3) Victim cluster – very weak attributions of crisis responsibility (natural disasters, workplace violence, product tampering, and rumor), organization viewed as victim of event

Coombs and Holladay's (2002) crisis clusters were used to conceptualize the *crisis type* variable in this study. This experiment will identify what effect the crisis attribution cluster type has on public trust of an organization. To do so will require an organization to have a relationship with its public, one based on communication and, more specifically, trust. While an organization communicates with its publics regularly, it is especially vital during organizational crises in order to preserve its established trust. As mentioned above, while the effects of traditional public relations methods (ie., news releases, news conferences, media interviews) have been previously explored, this experiment will identify how public trust of an organization is affected during types of crisis through interactive online media channels.

Public Relations in the New (Media) World

“Today we are beginning to notice that the new media are not just mechanical gimmicks for creating worlds of illusion, but new languages with new and unique powers of expression.”

-Marshall McLuhan (Carpenter and McLuhan, 1960)

What is “new” media? This is a question that has been asked throughout media history and can be difficult to answer. When McLuhan made the statement, he was speaking not of a particular medium but of media innovation and its continuous evolution. Due to the dynamic nature of media and rapidly developing technology, today's new media is considered to be based on interactive Internet technology and its uses. As Pavlik and Dozier (1996) stated, “little is known with great certainty about the future of the information superhighway except that the pace of technological change is likely to continue and accelerate.” Over a decade later, scholars and practitioners do know more about the future of the information superhighway than Pavlik and Dozier did then but there is still uncertainty about the influence of interactive online media.

Robert Logan (2004), a collaborator with McLuhan in the 1970s, furthered McLuhan's research by identifying fourteen differences between new media and traditional mass media: (1) two-way communication, (2) ease of access to and dissemination of information, (3) continuous learning, (4) alignment and integration, (5) community, (6) portability and time flexibility, (7) convergence, (8) interoperability, (9) aggregation of content, (10) increased variety and choice, (11) reduced gap between producers and consumers, (12) social collectivity and cooperation, (13) remix culture, and (14) the transition from products to services.

There has been very little research conducted on how the Internet and interactive online media affect public relations, however a review of the existing research follows. Taylor and Perry (2005) applied Everett Rogers' (2003) Diffusion of Innovations Theory to online organizational crisis communication. Approximately 50% of their participating organizations reported using the Internet when responding to crisis. Jo and Kim (2003) analyzed the relationship between web characteristics and perceptions toward relational components. Capriotti and Moreno (2007) discussed the importance of organizations expressing corporate social responsibility (CSR) through interactive websites. Finally, Gonzalez-Herrero and Ruiz de Valbuena (2006) found that large international organizations attribute high importance to web-based media centers, though there are still shortcomings in many of their designs and content. While these studies are valuable in their own right, a void still exists for research on how trust is affected by use of interactive online media.

Two new mediums that are increasingly being used by organizations are weblogs, or blogs, and streaming video on their organizational websites. A blog "is a website that typically combines text, images and links in a kind of personal journal (Goodman, 2006)". Blog use has exponentially increased in recent years. According to Technorati, a company that presents data

on the growth of blogs, it is currently tracking 106.1 million blogs – over double the 50 million blogs tracked in 2006. Seltzer and Mitrook (2007) suggested that blogs could potentially be better suited for online relationship building than its traditional counterparts – online relationships built, at least in part, on trust.

Streaming video is being increasingly used on organizational websites as a method for communicating with key publics. One of the main advantages of using streaming video is that the organization can disseminate messages as they choose – without the filter of a media gatekeeper – however there is currently no research testing its effects. This experiment will test how use of blogs and streaming video affect public trust of an organization during different types of crisis.

Using specific components of Situational Crisis Communication Theory and the trust concept from relationship theory, this experiment tests how trust is affected by use of interactive online media during different types of crises. This type of research is important for both scholarly and practical reasons. First, the theoretical foundation that this experiment is based on is relatively young when compared with other public relations theories. This experiment analyzes components of Situational Crisis Communication Theory (crisis clusters) and the *trust* concept of relationship theory. Second, this research builds understanding of how crises can best be managed in particular situations. Finally, this research explores how interactive online media, specifically blogs and streaming video, affect trust in times of crisis.

This research clearly identifies the concept of “trust” as a key dimension to relationships between an organization and its publics. Organizations must rely on trust with its publics if they are to achieve their goals of survivability and profit. Organizations are also subject to crisis making it critical to understand how to best manage them in order to maintain public trust. Two

increasingly popular interactive online media types are blogs and streaming video, which are used to also test their effectiveness in maintaining public trust during crisis.

Hypotheses

The theoretical perspective this research is based on, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2007), supposes the “crisis manager examining the crisis situation in order to assess the level of the reputational threat of a crisis” (p. 137). This inherent “level of reputational threat” is expected to damage trust regardless of the crisis cluster, simply by its nature. In other words, trust is expected to be damaged (to some extent) simply because of the presence of the crisis.

H1: All treatments will report lower trust scores after crisis than reports from pretest.

However, Coombs and Holladay (2001) theorized that “strong crisis responsibility and predisposition to a negative reputation evaluation should make it more difficult to protect the organization’s reputation” (p. 338). While reputation evaluation is not included in this experiment, crisis responsibility (type) should still have some effect.

H2: Intentional cluster treatments will report lower trust scores than accident or victim, regardless of medium.

Research Questions

In addition to the hypotheses stated above, this experiment also hopes to answer two research questions:

RQ1: Which interactive online medium, blog or streaming video, will report higher trust scores after organizational crisis treatments?

RQ2: Will use of either blog or streaming video be better suited to maintain trust during particular types of crises?

In summary, the logical connect between the variables in this experiment may be best summed up by borrowing from Harold Lasswell. Just as Lasswell (1948) famously described early models of communication as “Who (says) What (to) Whom (in) What Channel (with) What Effect,” this experiment tests “Organization (says) Crisis Communication (to) Its Publics (in) Interactive Online Media (with) What Effect on Trust?” The remainder of this proposal outlines the methodology for testing the variables conceptualized above.

CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

This experiment used a 2 (interactive online media: blog, streaming video) X 3 (crisis cluster: accident, intentional, victim) design to test perceptions of public trust during organizational crisis. A manipulation check for interactive online media type was unnecessary; it was obvious if participants were exposed to either blog treatment or streaming video treatment. However, a pilot test was necessary to ensure that participants perceived the “crisis type” news stories in the way intended in this study. Before delving further into the main study, it will be helpful to review the pilot study methodology and its findings. The next section summarizes the results of the pilot study and its manipulation check testing.

Pilot Study

Participants ($n=206$) were graduate and undergraduate students at a large southeastern university. Due to the nature of the pilot study questions and the fact that participants would have had the same past experience (read: none) as any other population, this population should not have had an effect on the results. Participants were exposed to one of three articles about Vonnetek Automotive to test crisis attribution based on message copy. Participants were also asked to read the article and answer a survey rating their feelings about its content (Appendix B). The articles were written to manipulation check the crisis clusters: The Article One crisis was attributed to accident by respondents, the Article Two crisis was attributed to intentional by respondents, and the Article Three crisis was attributed to victim by respondents.

Conclusions from the Pilot Study. All pilot tests resulted in statistically significant reports of successful manipulation checks (see Table 4-1, Table 4-2, Table 4-3).

Main Study

Participants

Participants ($n=377$) were faculty and staff from a large southeastern university and business members of a chamber of commerce in a southeastern city. Demographic data of participants including sex, age, job position, years worked, organization type, state in which organization conducts business, number of employees and number supervised, tenure at the organization, and website use was taken for evaluation purposes. For purposes of internal validity, all participants were assigned to the same pretest and each participant was randomly assigned to one posttest treatment (blog/accident, blog/intentional, blog/victim, streaming video/accident, streaming video/intentional, streaming video/victim). This study used nonprobability consecutive sample as it was provided the best population representation of nonprobability methods. While using the university faculty and staff and chamber of commerce members were a convenience sample, each participant was randomly assigned one of the six posttests.

Design

The 2 X 3 pretest/posttest design was used to assess the effects of interactive online media type and crisis cluster type on ratings of trust, including dimensions of integrity, competence and dependability. Ratings of trust, based on Hon and Grunig's (1999) measures, were taken during both pre- and posttest (Appendix A).

1. Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly and justly.
2. Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
3. Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises.
4. I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.

5. I feel very confident about Vonnetek Automotive's skills.
6. Vonnetek Automotive has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

Hon and Grunig's (1999) measures of satisfaction and communal satisfaction were also taken during the data collection process to disguise the trust variable.

Vonnetek Automotive. Vonnetek Automotive was a fictional custom automobile manufacturer based out of Toledo, Ohio. An organizational website was built for Vonnetek Automotive specifically for this study. It was posted immediately before testing began in order to assure that no participants could have familiarity with it. This organizational website included links to the Homepage, the About page, a picture Gallery, an Events page, and a News page. The Homepage (Figure 3-1) consisted of custom automobile pictures and general organizational information. The About page (Figure 3-2) included a fictional history of Vonnetek Automotive as well as contact information (also fictional). The Gallery page (Figure 3-3) simply included pictures of custom automobiles, with the expectation that visitors would think they were created by Vonnetek Automotive. The Events page (Figure 3-4) consisted of a list of "2008 Car Shows." These events, locations and dates are all actually real car shows to add to the realism of the website. Finally, the News page included either A) a brief note about a charity Vonnetek Automotive was participating in (in the pretest, Figure 3-5) or B) both that note and either a blog or streaming video with one of six treatments (blog/accident, blog/intentional, blog/victim, streaming video/accident, streaming video/intentional, streaming video/victim) in the posttest (Figure 3-6 and Figure 3-7).

Operationalization of Independent Variables

Interactive online media type. Operationalization of interactive online media type was very simple. In blog treatments, the posttest News page used a blog for the news story. In streaming video treatments, the posttest News page used streaming video for the news story. For

each crisis type treatments (accident, intentional, victim), both interactive online media formats included the same copy (which was tested during Pilot Test).

Crisis type. For each set of interactive online media treatments, one posttest treatment utilized a victim cluster (in which Vonnetek Automotive was perceived as a victim in Pilot Test), one posttest treatment utilized an accident cluster (which was perceived as an accident for Vonnetek Automotive in Pilot Test), and one posttest treatment utilized an intentional cluster (in which was perceived to be intentionally caused by Vonnetek Automotive). See Pilot test for more on crisis type operationalization.

Operationalization of Dependent Variable

The online survey used semantic differential scales (Appendix C) to measure trust, satisfaction, and communal relationship using Hon and Grunig's (1999) questions (Appendix A). A reliability analysis was conducted for the 11 dependent measures. No measures were excluded (Chronbach's Alpha=.82).

Procedure

All treatments were web-based. Eight-thousand surveys were emailed and 377 were completed for a response rate of 5%. Participants were sent an emailing generally describing the experiment and asked to click a link to a website. Clicking the link first displayed the informed consent document and then directed participants to begin the treatment. Participants were asked to evaluate relationship characteristics of Vonnetek Automotive.

In the pretest, all participants were emailed a link to the same Vonnetek Automotive website and then they answered an online survey measuring their perceived trust of Vonnetek Automotive within the matrix of relationship questions. This pretest also established the control group for the experiment. One week later, participants were exposed to (posttest) one of six treatments (blog/accident, blog/intentional, blog/victim, streaming video/accident, streaming

video/intentional, streaming video/victim) and then answered an online survey measuring their perceived trust (within the matrix of relationship questions) of Vonnetek Automotive to measure effects of interactive online media type and crisis type on trust of the organization. This method tested for main and interaction effects of the two independent variables, as also allowed replication of each of the six conditions. All treatments and measures were taken online. The participants were debriefed on the experiment and procedure following completion of the dependent measures. Administrators at the university and the chamber of commerce did not give permission at the same time. This resulted in the chamber of commerce being administered the survey two weeks before the university. In each case, all organizational participants were emailed instructions simultaneously, though simultaneous administration of treatments may not be ensured due to the nature of the online administration. In each case, the posttest was administered 10 days after the pretest to ensure consistency.

Data Analysis

Descriptive data was analyzed. Two-way ANOVAs were conducted to test main and interaction effects of independent variables *interactive online media type* and *crisis type* on dependent variable *trust*. Bonferroni correction was used for each effect in order to ensure accuracy of statistical significance. Furthermore, one-ANOVAs were also conducted on each independent variable with each dependent variable to reduce instances of “chance” statistical significance.

Table 3-1 *Pilot test crosstabs*

	Response - accident	Response - intentional	Response - victim	Total
Accident treatment	60	6	1	67
Intentional treatment	6	63	0	69
Victim treatment	23	8	39	70
TOTAL	89	77	40	206

Table 3-2 *Pilot test ANOVA (DV: ATTRIBUTION, IV: CRISISTYPE)*

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	64.98	2	32.49	145.35*	.00*
Within Groups	45.38	203	.22		
Total	110.35	205			

*p<.05

Table 3-3 *Pilot test – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: ATTRIBUTION, IV: CRISISTYPE)*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.
ATTRIBUTION	CRISISTYPE	Accident	Intentional	.08	.00*
			Victim	.08	.00*
		Intentional	Accident	.08	.00*
			Victim	.08	.00*
		Victim	Accident	.08	.00*
			Intentional	.08	.00*

*p<.05



Figure 3-1 Vonnetek Automotive Home page – both Pretest and Posttest



Figure 3-2 Vonnetek Automotive About page – both Pretest and Posttest

Vonnetek Automotive Corporation - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Delicious Bookmarks Tools Help

http://www.vonnetek.com/1/events.html

Wikipedia (en)

Vonnetek Automotive Corporation

1999_MeasuringRelations.pdf (applicati...)

Vonnetek

Home About Gallery Events News

2008 Car Shows

Event	Location	Dates
North American Int'l Auto Show	Detroit, MI, USA	1/19/2008 - 1/27/2008
78th International Motor Show	Geneva, Switzerland	3/6/2008 - 3/16/2008
Goodwood Festival of Speed	Goodwood, Chichester, West Sussex, UK	7/11/2008 - 7/13/2008
Concorso Italiano	Monterey Bay, CA, USA	8/15/2008
Goodwood Revival	Goodwood, Chichester, West Sussex, UK	9/19/2008 - 9/28/2008

Done

start TEMPLATE Microsoft Office ... Vonnetek Automotive... SIRIUS Player - 100... 3:06 PM

Figure 3-3 Vonnetek Automotive Gallery page – both Pretest and Posttest

Vonnetek Automotive Corporation - Mozilla Firefox

File Edit View History Delicious Bookmarks Tools Help

http://www.vonnetek.com/1/events.html

Wikipedia (en)

Vonnetek Automotive Corporation

1999_MeasuringRelations.pdf (applicati...)

Vonnetek

Home About Gallery Events News

2008 Car Shows

Event	Location	Dates
North American Int'l Auto Show	Detroit, MI, USA	1/19/2008 - 1/27/2008
78th International Motor Show	Geneva, Switzerland	3/6/2008 - 3/16/2008
Goodwood Festival of Speed	Goodwood, Chichester, West Sussex, UK	7/11/2008 - 7/13/2008
Concorso Italiano	Monterey Bay, CA, USA	8/15/2008
Goodwood Revival	Goodwood, Chichester, West Sussex, UK	9/19/2008 - 9/28/2008

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Figure 3-4 Vonnetek Automotive Events page – both Pretest and Posttest



Figure 3-5 Vonnetek Automotive News page – Pretest treatment



Figure 3-6 Vonnetek Automotive News page – Posttest Blog treatment



Figure 3-7 Vonnetek Automotive News page – Posttest Streaming Video treatment

CHAPTER 4 RESULTS

This chapter presents the results of the experiment described in Chapter 3. It begins with a review of data analysis conducted using the data collected during in the experiment. This review is followed by the results of hypothesis testing and research questions.

Preparing the Data for Analysis

Online surveys on www.surveymonkey.com were closed two weeks after posttest administration. Data was downloaded to an Excel spreadsheet and then transferred into a SPSS data set. The surveys were designed so that each question was required to have an exact number of responses (for instance, one and only one answer on Likert-type scales) and all questions were required to be answered in order to finish the surveys. This insured against missing values and that no impossible values were entered.

Sample Demographics

The average age of the respondents was 45.55. Females comprised 62.3% of respondents and 37.7% were male. The average respondent has been in their position for 8.99 years and supervises 5.25 employees. In terms of total years at their organization, 35.3% reported working at their organization for More than 10 years, 29.4% reported 1-5 years, 16.1% reported 6-10 years, and 6.3% reported Less than one year. For organization type, 75.8% indicated Education, 9% indicated Corporation, 4.5% indicated Government, 4.1% indicated Not-for-profit, 1.2% indicated Consultant, and 5.3% indicated Other. These results were not surprising considering that respondents were faculty and staff at a large southeastern university and members of a chamber of commerce in a southeastern city. The vast majority of respondents indicated that their organization has a website (97.8%) and respondents reported spending an average of 9.9 hours per week conducting work-related activities on their website.

Results of the Statistical Analysis

The results of the statistical analysis of this study are divided into two sections. The first section reviews how the analyses address the hypotheses introduced in Chapter 2. The second section evaluates the data analyses for answers to the research questions introduced in Chapter 2.

Tables 4-1 through 4-11 illustrate descriptives of two-way ANOVAs showing mean, standard deviation, and sample size (N). This is helpful to illustrate a general breakdown of the reported data. In order to test statistical significance in these findings, two-way ANOVAs were used to compare means across categories of one qualitative variable, controlling for another.

Table 4-1 *Two-way ANOVA descriptive statistics (DV: TREATSFAIRLY)*

Crisis type	Media type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest		4.02	.85	977
Accident	Blog	3.51	1.36	39
	Streaming video	4.03	1.22	38
	Total	3.77	1.31	77
Intentional	Blog	2.73	1.30	45
	Streaming video	2.61	1.43	51
	Total	2.67	1.37	96
Victim	Blog	4.66	1.19	35
	Streaming video	4.55	1.42	42
	Total	4.60	1.31	77
Total	Pretest	4.02	.845	377
	Blog	3.55	1.50	119
	Streaming video	3.64	1.60	131
	Total	3.85	1.20	627

Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly and justly.

Table 4-2 *Two-way ANOVA descriptive statistics (DV: CONCERNEDABOUT)*

Crisis type	Media type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest		3.58	1.19	377
Accident	Blog	3.54	1.32	39
	Streaming video	3.84	1.33	38
	Total	3.69	1.32	77
Intentional	Blog	2.62	1.21	45
	Streaming video	2.43	1.25	51
	Total	2.52	1.23	96
Victim	Blog	4.17	1.32	35
	Streaming video	4.07	1.40	42
	Total	4.12	1.36	77
Total	Pretest	3.58	1.19	377
	Blog	3.38	1.42	119
	Streaming video	3.37	1.52	131
	Total	3.49	1.31	627

Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.

Table 4-3 *Two-way ANOVA descriptive statistics (DV: KEEPPROMISES)*

Crisis type	Media type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest		4.15	.846	377
Accident	Blog	3.82	1.34	39
	Streaming video	4.05	1.11	38
	Total	3.94	1.23	77
Intentional	Blog	2.60	1.25	45
	Streaming video	2.47	1.35	51
	Total	2.53	1.30	96
Victim	Blog	4.66	1.21	35
	Streaming video	4.43	1.35	42
	Total	4.53	1.28	77
Total	Pretest	4.15	.846	377
	Blog	3.61	1.52	119
	Streaming video	3.56	1.55	131
	Total	3.93	1.20	627

Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises.

Table 4-4 *Two-way ANOVA descriptive statistics (DV: TAKESOPINIONSOF)*

Crisis type	Media type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest		3.73	1.35	377
Accident	Blog	3.51	1.23	39
	Streaming video	3.84	1.29	38
	Total	3.68	1.26	77
Intentional	Blog	3.09	1.44	45
	Streaming video	2.47	1.36	51
	Total	2.76	1.43	96
Victim	Blog	4.11	1.35	35
	Streaming video	4.26	1.43	42
	Total	4.19	1.39	77
Total	Pretest	3.73	1.35	377
	Blog	3.53	1.40	119
	Streaming video	3.44	1.57	131
	Total	3.63	1.41	627

I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.

Table 4-5 *Two-way ANOVA descriptive statistics (DV: CONFIDENTSKILLS)*

Crisis type	Media type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest		4.40	1.14	377
Accident	Blog	3.79	1.61	39
	Streaming video	3.45	1.29	38
	Total	3.62	1.46	77
Intentional	Blog	3.56	1.56	45
	Streaming video	3.59	1.56	51
	Total	3.57	1.55	96
Victim	Blog	4.69	1.08	35
	Streaming video	4.26	1.35	42
	Total	4.45	1.24	77
Total	Pretest	4.40	1.14	377
	Blog	3.97	1.52	119
	Streaming video	3.76	1.45	131
	Total	4.19	1.32	627

I feel very confident about Vonnetek Automotive's skills.

Table 4-6 *Two-way ANOVA descriptive statistics (DV: ABILITYACCOMPLISH)*

Crisis type	Media type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest		4.40	.99	377
Accident	Blog	4.31	1.54	39
	Streaming video	3.97	.85	38
	Total	4.14	1.25	77
Intentional	Blog	3.87	1.42	45
	Streaming video	3.90	1.59	51
	Total	3.89	1.51	96
Victim	Blog	4.80	1.26	35
	Streaming video	4.43	1.09	42
	Total	4.60	1.17	77
Total	Pretest	4.40	.99	377
	Blog	4.29	1.46	119
	Streaming video	4.09	1.27	131
	Total	4.32	1.16	627

Vonnetek Automotive has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

Table 4-7 *Two-way ANOVA descriptive statistics (DV: SOUNDPRINCIPLES)*

Crisis type	Media type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest		4.21	.91	377
Accident	Blog	3.64	1.31	39
	Streaming video	4.11	1.43	38
	Total	3.87	1.38	77
Intentional	Blog	2.33	1.07	45
	Streaming video	2.22	1.36	51
	Total	2.27	1.23	96
Victim	Blog	4.74	1.42	35
	Streaming video	4.69	1.52	42
	Total	4.71	1.47	77
Total	Pretest	4.21	.91	377
	Blog	3.47	1.59	119
	Streaming video	3.56	1.80	131
	Total	3.93	1.33	627

Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive's behavior.

Table 4-8 *Two-way ANOVA descriptive statistics (DV: DOESNOTMISLEAD)*

Crisis type	Media type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest		4.00	.96	377
Accident	Blog	3.23	1.50	39
	Streaming video	3.71	1.25	38
	Total	3.47	1.39	77
Intentional	Blog	2.20	1.08	45
	Streaming video	2.24	1.41	51
	Total	2.22	1.26	96
Victim	Blog	4.34	1.28	35
	Streaming video	4.31	1.37	42
	Total	4.32	1.32	77
Total	Pretest	4.00	.96	377
	Blog	3.17	1.55	119
	Streaming video	3.33	1.62	131
	Total	3.70	1.30	627

Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me.

Table 4-9 *Two-way ANOVA descriptive statistics (DV: MAKEDECISIONSFOR)*

Crisis type	Media type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest		2.77	1.41	377
Accident	Blog	2.77	1.39	39
	Streaming video	2.66	1.28	38
	Total	2.71	1.33	77
Intentional	Blog	1.98	1.03	45
	Streaming video	1.82	1.11	51
	Total	1.90	1.07	96
Victim	Blog	3.14	1.61	35
	Streaming video	2.90	1.45	42
	Total	3.01	1.52	77
Total	Pretest	2.77	1.41	377
	Blog	2.58	1.42	119
	Streaming video	2.41	1.35	131
	Total	2.66	1.41	627

I am very willing to let Vonnetek Automotive make decisions for people like me.

Table 4-10 *Two-way ANOVA descriptive statistics (DV: WATCHCLOSELY)*

Crisis type	Media type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest		3.97	1.22	377
Accident	Blog	3.21	1.38	39
	Streaming video	3.71	1.41	38
	Total	3.45	1.41	77
Intentional	Blog	2.53	1.08	45
	Streaming video	2.78	1.72	51
	Total	2.67	1.46	96
Victim	Blog	4.11	1.41	35
	Streaming video	3.93	1.31	42
	Total	4.01	1.35	77
Total	Pretest	3.97	1.22	377
	Blog	3.22	1.43	119
	Streaming video	3.42	1.59	131
	Total	3.71	1.38	627

I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.

Table 4-11 *Two-way ANOVA descriptive statistics (DV: SUCCESSFULATTHINGS)*

Crisis type	Media type	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Pretest		4.19	.89	377
Accident	Blog	4.33	1.16	39
	Streaming video	4.03	1.20	38
	Total	4.18	1.18	77
Intentional	Blog	4.07	.99	45
	Streaming video	3.88	1.31	51
	Total	3.97	1.17	96
Victim	Blog	4.49	1.04	35
	Streaming video	4.26	.99	45
	Total	4.36	1.01	77
Total	Pretest	4.19	.89	377
	Blog	4.28	1.07	119
	Streaming video	4.05	1.18	131
	Total	4.18	.99	627

Vonnetek Automotive is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.

Tables 4-12 through 4-22 illustrate these tests of between-subjects effects showing sum of squares, degrees of freedom, mean square, F-value, and p-value.

Table 4-12 *Tests of between-subjects effects (DV: TREATSFAIRLY)*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CRISISTYPE	161.54	2	80.77	71.46*	.00*
MEDIATYPE	.53	1	.53	.469	.49
CRISISTYPE*MEDIATYPE	5.31	2	2.66	2.35	.10
Error	700.75	620	1.13		

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly and justly.

Table 4-13 *Tests of between-subjects effects (DV: CONCERNEDABOUT)*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CRISISTYPE	119.00	2	59.50	38.93*	.00*
MEDIATYPE	.00	2	.00	.00	.98
CRISISTYPE*MEDIATYPE	2.83	2	1.42	.93	.40
Error	947.69	620	1.53		

*p<.05

Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.

Table 4-14 *Tests of between-subjects effects (DV: KEEPPROMISES)*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CRISISTYPE	184.95	2	92.47	86.04*	.00*
MEDIATYPE	.11	1	.11	.10	.75
CRISISTYPE*MEDIATYPE	2.29	2	1.15	1.07	.35
Error	666.39	620	1.08		

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises.

Table 4-15 *Tests of between-subjects effects (DV: TAKESOPINIONSOF)*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CRISISTYPE	88.16	2	44.08	24.17*	.00*
MEDIATYPE	.14	1	.14	.08	.78
CRISISTYPE*MEDIATYPE	11.13	2	5.57	3.05*	.05*
Error	1130.75	620	1.82		

*p<.05

I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.

Table 4-16 *Tests of between-subjects effects (DV: CONFIDENTSKILLS)*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CRISISTYPE	41.10	2	20.55	12.82*	.00*
MEDIATYPE	3.73	1	3.73	2.33	.13
CRISISTYPE*MEDIATYPE	2.63	2	1.32	.82	.44
Error	993.60	620	1.60		

*p<.05

I feel very confident about Vonnetek Automotive's skills.

Table 4-17 *Tests of between-subjects effects (DV: ABILITYACCOMPLISH)*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CRISISTYPE	22.87	2	11.43	8.82*	.00*
MEDIATYPE	3.07	1	3.07	2.37	.12
CRISISTYPE*MEDIATYPE	2.23	2	1.12	.86	.42
Error	803.59	620	1.30		

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

Table 4-18 *Tests of between-subjects effects (DV: SOUNDPRINCIPLES)*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CRISISTYPE	267.29	2	133.65	109.42*	.00*
MEDIATYPE	.53	1	.53	.49	.49
CRISISTYPE*MEDIATYPE	4.11	2	2.06	1.68	.19
Error	757.29	620	1.22		

*p<.05

Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive's behavior.

Table 4-19 *Tests of between-subjects effects (DV: DOESNOTMISLEAD)*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CRISISTYPE	194.10	2	97.05	77.74*	.00*
MEDIATYPE	1.59	1	1.59	1.27	.26
CRISISTYPE*MEDIATYPE	3.05	2	1.52	1.22	.30
Error	773.98	620	1.25		

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me.

Table 4-20 *Tests of between-subjects effects (DV: MAKEDECISIONSFOR)*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CRISISTYPE	58.81	2	29.41	15.63*	.00*
MEDIATYPE	1.74	1	1.74	.92	.34
CRISISTYPE*MEDIATYPE	.16	2	.08	.04	.96
Error	1166.69	620	1.88		

*p<.05

I am very willing to let Vonnetek Automotive make decisions for people like me.

Table 4-21 *Tests of between-subjects effects (DV: WATCHCLOSELY)*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CRISISTYPE	80.83	2	40.42	24.00*	.00*
MEDIATYPE	2.23	1	2.23	1.32	.25
CRISISTYPE*MEDIATYPE	4.70	2	2.35	1.39	.25
Error	1044.07	620	1.68		

*p<.05

I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.

Table 4-22 *Tests of between-subjects effects (DV: SUCCESSFULATTHINGS)*

Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
CRISISTYPE	6.81	2	3.41	3.50*	.03*
MEDIATYPE	3.50	1	3.50	3.60	.06
CRISISTYPE*MEDIATYPE	.16	2	.08	.08	.92
Error	603.46	620	.97		

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.

Finally, Tables 4-23 through 4-33 illustrate multiple comparison post-hoc tests for each variable using Bonferroni correction. Bonferroni correction was used to reduce the chance of false statistical significance due to conducting multiple tests simultaneously on the data. For all variables exhibiting main effects, one-way ANOVAs were conducted to further reduce the odds of false significance based on chance (Appendix F). One-way ANOVAs were used to test equality of three or more means at one time by using variances. In all cases, the one-way ANOVAs confirmed statistical significance of tested variables). Participant responses did not report statistical significance for any of the demographic data: sex, age, job position, years worked, organization type, state in which organization conducts business, number of employees and number supervised, tenure at the organization, and website use was taken for evaluation purposes

Table 4-23 *Multiple comparisons – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: TREATSFAIRLY)*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.
TREATSFAIRLY	CRISISTYPE	Pretest	Accident	.13	.32
			Intentional	.12	.00*
			Victim	.13	.00*
		Accident	Pretest	.13	.32
			Intentional	.16	.00*
			Victim	.17	.00*
		Intentional	Pretest	.12	.00*
			Accident	.16	.00*
			Victim	.16	.00*
		Victim	Pretest	.13	.00*
			Accident	.17	.00*
			Intentional	.16	.00*

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly and justly.

Table 4-24 *Multiple comparisons – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: CONCERNEDABOUT)*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.	
CONCERNEDABOUT	CRISISTYPE	Pretest	Accident	.16	1.00	
			Intentional	.14	.00*	
			Victim	.16	.00*	
		Accident	Pretest	Intentional	.19	.00*
				Victim	.20	.19
				Pretest	.14	.00*
		Intentional	Accident	Victim	.19	.00*
				Pretest	.14	.00*
				Victim	.19	.00*
		Victim	Pretest	Accident	.20	.19
				Intentional	.19	.00*
				Accident	.20	.19

*p<.05

Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.

Table 4-25 Multiple comparisons – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: KEEPPROMISES)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.
KEEPPROMISES	CRISISTYPE	Pretest	Accident	.13	.55
			Intentional	.12	.00*
			Victim	.13	.02*
		Accident	Pretest	.13	.55
			Intentional	.16	.00*
			Victim	.17	.00*
		Intentional	Pretest	.12	.00*
			Accident	.16	.00*
			Victim	.16	.00*
		Victim	Pretest	.13	.02*
			Accident	.17	.00*
			Intentional	.16	.00*

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises.

Table 4-26 *Multiple comparisons – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: TAKESOPINIONSOF)*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.
TAKESOPINIONSOF	CRISISTYPE	Pretest	Accident	.17	1.00
			Intentional	.15	.00*
			Victim	.17	.04*
		Accident	Pretest	.17	1.00
			Intentional	.21	.00*
			Victim	.22	.10
		Intentional	Pretest	.15	.00*
			Accident	.21	.00*
	Victim		.21	.00*	
	Victim	Pretest	.17	.04*	
		Accident	.22	.10	
		Intentional	.21	.00*	
MEDIATYPE	Pretest	Blog	.14	.46	
		Streaming	.14	.11	
		Video			
	Blog	Pretest	.14	.46	
		Streaming	.17	1.00	
		Video			
Streaming	Pretest	.14	.11		
	Video	.17	1.00		

*p<.05

I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.

Table 4-27 Multiple comparisons – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: CONFIDENTSKILLS)

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.	
CONFIDENTSKILLS	CRISISTYPE	Pretest	Accident	.16	.00*	
			Intentional	.15	.00*	
			Victim	.16	1.00	
		Accident	Pretest	Intentional	.19	1.00
				Victim	.20	.00*
				Pretest	.15	.00*
		Intentional	Accident	Victim	.19	.00*
				Pretest	.16	1.00
				Accident	.20	.00*
		Victim	Pretest	Accident	.19	.00*
				Intentional	.19	1.00
				Victim	.19	.00*

*p<.05

I feel very confident about Vonnetek Automotive's skills.

Table 4-28 *Multiple comparisons – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: ABILITYACCOMPLISH)*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.
ABILITYACCOMPLISH	CRISISTYPE	Pretest	Accident	.14	.41
			Intentional	.13	.00*
			Victim	.14	1.00
		Accident	Pretest	.14	.41
			Intentional	.17	.84
			Victim	.18	.08
		Intentional	Pretest	.13	.00*
			Accident	.17	.84
			Victim	.17	.00*
		Victim	Pretest	.14	1.00
			Accident	.18	.08
			Intentional	.14	.00*

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

Table 4-29 *Multiple comparisons – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: SOUNDPRINCIPLES)*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.	
SOUNDPRINCIPLES	CRISISTYPE	Pretest	Accident	.14	.09	
			Intentional	.13	.00*	
			Victim	.14	.00*	
		Accident	Pretest	Intentional	.17	.00*
				Victim	.18	.00*
				Pretest	.13	.00*
		Intentional	Accident	Victim	.17	.00*
				Pretest	.14	.00*
				Accident	.18	.00*
		Victim	Pretest	Accident	.17	.00*
				Intentional	.17	.00*
				Victim	.17	.00*

*p<.05

Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive's behavior.

Table 4-30 *Multiple comparisons – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: DOESNOTMISLEAD)*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.	
DOESNOTMISLEAD	CRISISTYPE	Pretest	Accident	.14	.00*	
			Intentional	.13	.00*	
			Victim	.14	.12	
		Accident	Pretest	Intentional	.17	.00*
				Victim	.18	.00*
				Pretest	.13	.00*
		Intentional	Accident	Victim	.17	.00*
				Pretest	.17	.00*
				Victim	.17	.00*
		Victim	Pretest	Accident	.18	.00*
				Intentional	.17	.00*
				Accident	.14	.12

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me.

Table 4-31 *Multiple comparisons – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: MAKEDECISIONSFOR)*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.
MAKEDECISIONSFOR	CRISISTYPE	Pretest	Accident	.17	1.00
			Intentional	.16	.00*
			Victim	.17	.94
		Accident	Pretest	.17	1.00
			Intentional	.21	.00*
			Victim	.22	1.00
		Intentional	Pretest	.16	.00*
			Accident	.21	.00*
			Victim	.21	.00*
		Victim	Pretest	.17	.94
			Accident	.22	1.00
			Intentional	.21	.00*

*p<.05

I am very willing to let Vonnetek Automotive make decisions for people like me.

Table 4-32 *Multiple comparisons – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: WATCHCLOSELY)*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.	
WATCHCLOSELY	CRISISTYPE	Pretest	Accident	.16	.01*	
			Intentional	.15	.00*	
			Victim	.16	1.00	
		Accident	Pretest	Intentional	.16	.01*
				Victim	.20	.00*
				Victim	.21	.05*
		Intentional	Pretest	Accident	.15	.00*
				Victim	.20	.00*
				Victim	.20	.00*
		Victim	Pretest	Accident	.16	1.00
				Intentional	.21	.05*
				Intentional	.20	.00*

*p<.05

I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.

Table 4-33 *Multiple comparisons – post hoc Bonferroni (DV: SUCCESSFULATTHINGS)*

Dependent Variable	Independent Variable			Std. Error	Sig.
SUCCESSFULATTHINGS	CRISISTYPE	Pretest	Accident	.12	1.00
			Intentional	.11	.28
			Victim	.12	1.00
		Accident	Pretest	.12	1.00
			Intentional	.15	.95
			Victim	.16	1.00
		Intentional	Pretest	.11	.28
			Accident	.15	.95
			Victim	.15	.06
		Victim	Pretest	.12	1.00
			Accident	.16	1.00
			Intentional	.15	.06

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.

Results Related to the Hypotheses

H1: All treatments will report lower trust scores after crisis than reports from pretest.

To test Hypothesis 1, descriptive analysis was first performed to see if posttest trust scores were lower than pretest treatments and then two-way ANOVAs were conducted to find statistical significance. Hypothesis 1 was strongly supported as pretests reported statistically significant higher means than Intentional treatments for 9 of 11 dependent variables: “Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly, (4.02 vs. 2.67), $F(2, 620)=71.46, p=.00$ ” “Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me (3.58 vs. 2.52), $F(2, 620)=38.93, p=.00$,” “Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises (4.15 vs. 2.53), $F(2, 620)=86.04, p=.00$,” “I feel very confident about Vonnetek Automotive’s skills (4.40 vs. 3.57), $F(2, 620)=12.82, p=.00$,” “Vonnetek Automotive has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do (4.40 vs. 3.89), $F(2, 620)=8.82, p=.00$,” “Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive’s behavior (4.21 vs. 2.27), $F(2, 620)=109.42, p=.00$,” “Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me (4.00 vs. 2.22), $F(2, 620)=77.74, p=.00$,” “I am very willing to let Vonnetek Automotive make decisions for people like me (2.77 vs. 1.90), $F(2, 620)=15.63, p=.00$,” and “I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage (3.97 vs 2.67), $F(2, 620)=24.00, p=.00$.”

Pretests also reported statistically significant higher means than Accident treatments in 3 of 11 dependent variables: “I feel very confident about Vonnetek Automotive’s skills (4.40 vs. 3.62), $F(2, 620)=12.82, p=.00$,” “Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me (4.00 vs. 3.47), $F(2, 620)=77.74, p=.00$,” and “I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage (3.97 vs. 3.45), $F(2, 620)=24.00, p=.00$.”

However, Pretests also reported significantly lower means than Victim treatments in 4 of 11 dependent variables: “Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly (4.02 vs. 4.60), $F(2, 620)=71.46, p=.00$,” “Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me (3.58 vs. 4.12), $F(2, 620)=38.93, p=.00$,” “Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises (4.15 vs. 4.53), $F(2, 620)=86.04, p=.00$,” and “Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive’s behavior (4.21 vs. 4.71), $F(2, 620)=109.42, p=.00$.”

H2: Intentional cluster treatments will report lower trust scores than accident or victim, regardless of medium.

To test Hypothesis 2, descriptive analysis was first performed to see if the Intentional treatment mean was lower than Accident and Victim treatments and then two-way ANOVAs were conducted to find statistical significance. Hypothesis 2 was strongly supported as all 11 of 11 Intentional treatments reported lower trust score means than Accident and Victim and the difference was statistically significant in 9 of 11 dependent variables: “Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly, $F(2, 620)= 55.67, p=.00$,” “Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes and important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me, $F(2, 620)= 27.57, p=.00$,” “Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises, $F(2, 620)= 72.86, p=.00$,” “I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions, $F(2, 620)= 18.40, p=.00$,” “Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive’s behavior, $F(2, 620)= 93.05, p=.00$,” “Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me, $F(2, 620)= 74.37, p=.00$,” “I am very willing to let Vonnetek Automotive make decisions for people like me, $F(2, 620)= 12.51, p=.00$,” and “I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage, $F(2, 620)= 28.20, p=.00$.”

Results Related to the Research Questions

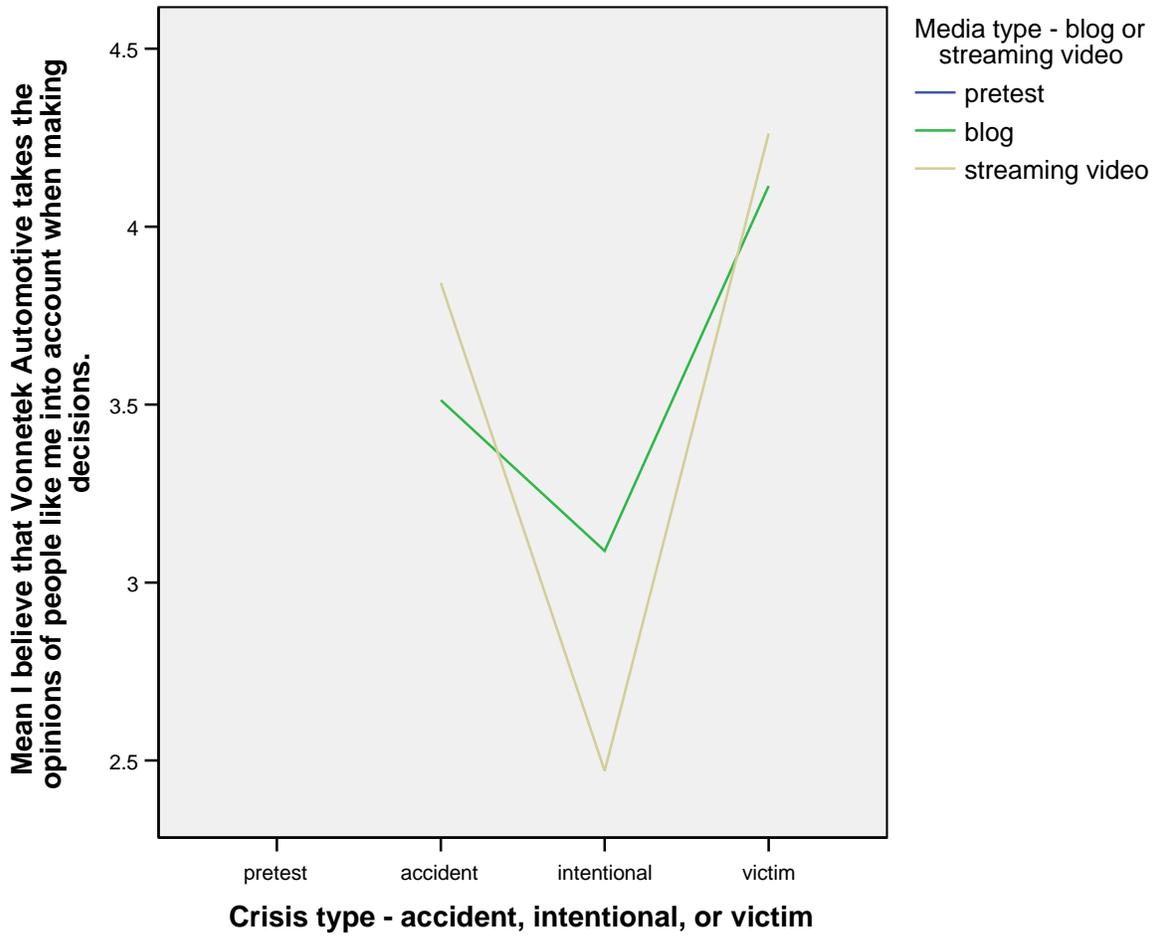
RQ1: Which interactive online medium, blog or streaming video, will report higher trust scores after organizational crisis treatments?

To answer Research Question 1, two-way ANOVAs were conducted to test for main effects of independent variable Media Type (Blog, Streaming Video). None of the 11 dependent variables reported statistically significant main effects.

RQ2: Will use of either blog or streaming video be better suited to maintain trust during particular types of crises?

To answer Research Question 2, further testing from Research Question 1 was required. Two-way ANOVAs were conducted to test for interaction effects of independent variables Crisis Type (Accident, Intentional, Victim) and Media Type (Blog, Streaming Video). One dependent variable reported statistically significant interaction effects: “I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions (Table 4-4b),” a dependability dimension measure.

For “I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions, $F(1, 620)=3.05, p=.05$,” Streaming Video in Accident treatments (3.84) reported significantly higher means than Blog in Accident treatments (3.51) and Streaming Video in Victim treatments (4.26) reported significantly higher means than Blog in Victim treatments (4.11). However, Blogs in Intentional treatments (3.09) reported significantly higher means than Streaming Video in Intentional treatments (2.47) (Figure 4-1).



I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.

Figure 4-1 Graph of interaction effects – TAKESOPINIONSOF

CHAPTER 5 DISCUSSION

This study used an experimental design to test potential effects of interactive online media type and crisis type on public trust of an organization during an organizational crisis. The goal of this research was two-fold. The first goal was to further the body of knowledge of public relations research in order to better understand and improve the field at large. Secondly, this research attempted to identify effective predictive tactics for use by public relations practitioners. The study was designed such that both goals could be met.

Trust Dimensions

In order to test for independent variable effects, two-way ANOVAs were conducted. The independent variables tested in this study were Interactive Online Media Type (blog and streaming video) and Crisis Type (using Coombs' crisis clusters: accident, intentional, victim). For the dependent variable, Hon and Grunig's (1999) definition of *trust* was used. Composed of several dimensions – integrity, dependability, and competence – their definitions of these terms (p. 19) are below followed by the questions used in the study to measure respondent reactions. The original questions were written using “this organization” instead of “Vonnetek Automotive.”

Integrity: “the belief that an organization is fair and just”

- “Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly and justly”
- “Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me”
- “Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive's behavior”
- “Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me”

Dependability: “the belief that an organization will do what it says it will do”

- “Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises”
- “I am very willing to let Vonnetek Automotive make decisions for people like me”
- “I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me”

Competence: “the belief that an organization has to ability to do what it says it will”

- “I feel very confident about this Vonnetek Automotive's skills”
- “Vonnetek Automotive has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do”

It is important to discuss the roles that each variable plays in predicting reports of trust. In other words, how can scholars and practitioners utilize this information for the practice of public relations? Hon and Grunig's dimensions of trust clearly identify how the dependent measures used in this research translate into public perceptions of organizational trustworthiness during crisis.

Based on the consistency with which measures of each trust dimension were reported either positively or negatively, it seems unlikely that they contain hidden meanings to respondents. In short, this research works to support the future use of such measures as reliable instruments of trust.

The two-way ANOVAS indicated main effects for Crisis Type in several variables:

Main effects were found for the following measures of Integrity: "Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly and justly," "Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me," "Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive's behavior," and "Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me." Main effects for Dependability included "Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises," "I am very willing to let Vonnetek Automotive make decisions for people like me," and "I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me." Finally main effects were found for the following measures of Competence: "I feel very confident about this Vonnetek Automotive's skills," and "Vonnetek Automotive has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do." The main effects represent respondents feeling significantly different answering these questions based on the type of crisis the organization had undergone (accident, intentional, victim).

In moving forward, a moment should be taken to evaluate the other variables. While no specific study or report has been conducted on the percentages of organizations using interactive online media, their organizational use seems to be very prevalent. Organizational blogs and streaming videos are often mentioned or featured in outlets that are not technology focused such as news broadcasts, news magazine articles and newspapers. This representation to the “general public” suggests that interactive online media use by organizations has become common knowledge.

While it seems that blogs and streaming video are indeed widely used by organizations, their effects are unknown. Therefore this experiment includes both blogs and streaming video as media to begin studying their effects during organizational crisis. Does the method in which the crisis message is delivered matter and, if so, *how* does it matter? Is one better than another all of the time? In certain scenarios?

In order to find answers to some of these questions, two-way ANOVAs were conducted to test for main effects of Media Type. No main effects were found based on this research. This finding would begin to answer one of this study’s research questions, analyzed in a later section.

Again, “Is one [media type] better than another [media type] all of the time? In certain scenarios?” While testing for main effects already handled the former question, testing for interaction effects needed to be done for the latter. Interaction effects suggest that it is situational; similar to other situational theories like Contingency Theory, “It Depends.” Interaction effects indicate when variables affect each in one “direction” in one case and another “direction” in another. Indeed interaction effects of the independent variables were found for one of the dependent measures. Interaction effects for Crisis Type and Media Type were found for “I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when

making decisions” ($F=3.05$, $p=.05$). This measure was one of Hon and Grunig’s (1999) dependability dimension questions, “that [Vonnetek Automotive] will do what it says it will do.”

Hypotheses

Now that the data analyses have been covered, a review of the hypotheses and research questions is in order. Data analysis led to the following results:

H1: All treatments will report lower trust scores after crisis than reports from pretest.

While it was hypothesized that a crisis of any type would damage public trust of the organization, this hypothesis was not supported. It was expected that an organization undergoing any crisis, regardless of who was responsible for it, would report lower test scores than an organization not in crisis (as in the Pretest).

In fact, Victim treatments reported higher mean scores than Pretest treatments in all dependent measures with statistical significance in 5 of 11 dependent variables: Three of these measures tested the Integrity dimension of the trust variable: “Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly and justly,” “Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me,” and “Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive’s behavior.” Two statistically significant variables measured the Dependability dimension of the trust variable: “Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises” and “I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.” Interestingly, none of the Competency measures were affected by the Crisis Type. This may indicate that Competency needs to have a historical basis, whereas Integrity and Dependability do not. For example, perhaps Vonnetek Automotive’s actions mentioned in, and including, the communication gave the respondents a feeling for if Vonnetek

was acting with integrity and in a dependable way. It is possible that competence is based on past actions of the organization; in this case Vonnetek does not have any.

In summary, this data indicates that a organization who has been a “victim” of a crisis is likely to have its publics find it more trustworthy on scales of treating its publics fairly and justly, being concerned about people like the respondent, being reliable for keep its promises, considering opinions of its publics when making decisions, and being guided by sound principles, than before it ever being involved in a crisis at all. This is an intriguing finding, perhaps due to respondent sympathy for the organization as a victim of the crisis. In fact, that seems to be a very likely possibility. In this particular study, it is hard to imagine another reason for this result. However, this data also suggests that competency is not rated higher in Victim treatments than Pretest. It is possible that that a respondent could potentially feel sympathy for the organization but not report higher organizational competence scores.

While crisis attribution was manipulated in this experiment, other types of crisis could also potentially influence the results. For example, would the results be consistent using a crisis in which people were hurt or killed? Due to the dramatically different consequences of this type of crisis (compared with odometer tampering used in this study), it seems possible that participants could respond even more strongly

For purposes of comparison, this study should be replicated using a real organization. It would be especially interesting to test with multiple organizations with pretest scores ranging from very low to very high. It may be that an organization that is rated very low on trust because of its past may report same or lower ratings after a crisis because the publics thought they “had it coming.” Or perhaps an organization with extremely high pretest ratings gets lower scores because the crisis highlights a previously unknown flaw in the organization. While it may be

that all organizations will report higher trust scores when a victim than in pretest (as resulted in this study), that will remain unknown without further research. Furthermore, future research should consider concluding the data analysis by measuring questions such as “On the following scale, please rate the organization’s level of trust/integrity/dependability/competence.” This would provide either data to support the reliability of the dependent measures or potential flaws in design if the reports were not consistent with the dependent measures.

H2: Intentional cluster treatments will report lower trust scores than accident or victim, regardless of medium.

It was hypothesized that, no matter what the medium, intentional treatments would report lower trust scores after crisis. This was based on the thought that once respondents knew that the organization had undergone crisis due to its own intentional actions, they would essentially “punish” the organization with lower trust scores. In other words, an organization that would be in crisis due to an intentional act would surely not be trusted.

This hypothesis was fully supported. All dependent measures reported significantly lower mean scores in Intentional treatments than Accident treatments or Victim treatments. Therefore, the data suggest that the publics of a organization in an Intentional scenario would report the organization to not treat them fairly or justly, not be concerned about people like them, not be reliable with its promises, not consider opinions of its publics when making decisions, not able to accomplish what it says it will, not be guided by sound principles, be misleading, need to be watched closely, not be successful at the things it tries to do, and the publics will not be confident in the organization’s skills or willing to let it make decisions for them, compared to that organization in either an Accident or Victim scenario.

In short, for an organization to be trusted by its publics, one thing that it must prevent is intentionally causing a crisis. It should be noted, however, that this study used an organization undergoing an intentional crisis due to acting in a very socially irresponsible manner. It is possible that an organization could intentionally create a crisis but do so with admirable and socially responsible intentions, only to have them go wrong. For example, an organization that decides not to chop down a forest for environmental issues but then has a crisis when its employees revolt because of lack of work. This concept leads back to Situational Crisis Communication Theory, which looks at both crisis attribution and relationship history. Would an organization with a long history of acting socially responsible be perceived similarly during the treatments in this experiment as an organization with a tradition of acting irresponsibly? It seems unlikely but future research must be conducted to test that hypothesis.

Research Questions

RQ1: Which interactive online medium, blog or streaming video, will report higher trust scores after organizational crisis treatments?

This research question was trying to find out if either blog or streaming video were simply better in all cases. If so, practitioners could support focusing more of their efforts on the particular medium. Based on the two-way ANOVAS above, Media Type did not show any main effects: measures of dependent variables were not significantly affected by use of Blog instead of Streaming Video, or vice versa. In other words, neither blogs nor streaming video rose to the top as the consistently higher scorer in terms of trust scores.

These results do not indicate that practitioners should stop using either blogs or streaming video. In fact, they simply suggest that there may not be a difference in public perception of organizational trust during crises.

Future research pilot tests should include questions asking respondents to rate trustworthiness of interactive online media types. This would help establish a benchmark upon which to measure the posttests. In fact, inclusion of many types of both traditional and interactive online media could be a valuable reference for many future studies.

RQ2: Will use of either blog or streaming video be better suited to maintain trust during particular types of crises?

This research question again harkens back to the earlier question, “Is one better than another all of the time? In certain scenarios?” Specifically, the second question is answered by RQ2. In order to find out, independent variables Crisis Type and Media Type were tested for interaction effects. Once again, interaction effects indicate when variables affect each in one “direction” in one case and another “direction” in another.

Interaction effects were found for 1 of 11 dependent measures: “I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions” ($p=.05$). Streaming Video treatments reported a significantly higher mean than Blog treatments in Accident (3.84 vs. 3.51, respectively) and Victim crisis types (4.26 vs. 4.11, respectively). However, Blog treatments (3.09) reported a significantly higher mean than Streaming Video treatments (2.47) in Intentional treatments.

In summary, when a organization is in an Accident crisis scenario, its use of Streaming video would likely report higher values for “I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions,” a Dependability dimension of trust.

This may be due to the fact that the streaming video treatments were very similar in look to a newscast (they were, in fact, filmed in a news studio). Respondents may be more used to

watching newscast that they consider trustworthy report accidents in newscasts. If so, there may be some projection of trust by the respondent from one source (news) to another (organization). If this experiment were conducted again, it should add another variable: “source.” Everything could be exactly replicated except to use two versions of each streaming video treatment, one in which the speaker identifies himself/herself as a newscaster and another in which they identify themselves as a organizational spokesperson. It is possible that the newscaster treatment receives significantly higher trust scores than the exact same treatment introduced as an organizational spokesperson.

The results alternatively indicate that if an organization is in the midst of an Intentional crisis scenario, based on this research its use of a Blog would likely report higher values for “I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions. This research strongly supports that an organization in an Accident or Victim crisis should use Streaming Video, but use a Blog in Intentional crisis situations. In this case, it may be that the respondents are looking for some answers or justification from the organization and blogs may seem to be more intimate. Future research should again test blogs but against streaming video of a news conference, for example, in which the same questions are answered. It could be that this too could fulfill the respondents’ potential desire for “answers.”

This study was conducted using the faculty and staff of a large southeastern university and members of a chamber of commerce for a city in the southeastern United States. In order to test whether this made a difference, testing was conducted to test for statistical significance between the university faculty and staff responses compared with the chamber of commerce members’ responses. The responses were not significantly different.

Implications

Implications For Interactive Online Media Research

This research highlights a large void in “new media” effects research. While many, including scholars and practitioners, are interested in using in using both mediums, the effects are still unknown. As stated above, this study did not find any main effects for blogs or streaming video treatments. Beyond blogs and streaming video, there are many other interactive online mediums that need to be studied both in terms of general understanding and in terms of effects-specific research. Some of these include instant messaging, online social networking, virtual communities, as well as some that will surely be introduced in the near future. Further research is definitely needed to flesh out this area of study.

As interactive online media are introduced to both organizations and their publics, it will be important to continue studying their effects. For example, interactive online media have reputations for embodying certain attributes: blogs as intimate, instant messaging as quick, social networking sites as communities establishing their own distinct cultures, etc. While these descriptions may indeed be accurate, future research is necessary to prove such claims.

Implications For Situational Crisis Communication Theory

This study makes several contributions to the body of academic knowledge of Situational Crisis Communication Theory. Most important of these contributions is expanding the scope of the theory. Previous Situational Crisis Communication Theory research has not explored application within the scope of interactive online media – the same media increasingly being used as focus for research and standard practice for many professionals. While furthering experimental research in the area of crisis public relations, it also tested variables that had not been experimentally measured previously. As mentioned above, Situational Crisis Communication Theory (Coombs, 2007), supposes that “crisis manager examining the crisis

situation in order to assess the level of the reputational threat of a crisis” (p. 137), with this inherent “level of reputational threat” is expected to damage trust regardless of the crisis cluster, simply by its nature. In other words, trust is expected to be damaged (to some extent) simply because of the presence of the crisis. The findings of this research, specifically Victim treatments reporting higher values in 11 of 11 dependent variables suggest that this is surely not the case.

This research is the first to test aspects of Situation Crisis Communication Theory and media effects. Due to the fact that most organizational crises are going to have a media component, this is an area where much more exploratory research must be conducted. It must be noted that the media suppliers are also steadily changing. It is not enough as an organization in crisis to simply understand that the traditional media now has interactive online components or that the organization can communicate via its own website. Increasingly, opinion leaders are emerging out of the Web 2.0. No longer does a journalist need to be hired by a large national newspaper to have his/her stories read, with the proliferation of Web 2.0 anyone with some knowledge of any subject, access to the Internet, and the time it takes to type a blog can become an opinion leader know worldwide – and many are! Understanding all of these different types of media is critical during organizational crisis, though it is also becoming necessary to simply operate from day-to-day successfully. Situational Crisis Communication Theory has provided a sufficient foundation on which to build these branches of crisis public relations research.

Based on the results of the manipulation checks, pilot test and this study itself, Coombs and Holladay’s (2002) Situational Crisis Communication Theory crisis clusters seem to be very strong in their design. Respondents not only identified crisis types distinctly but also reported statistically significant reactions to them.

This experiment also acknowledges that Situational Crisis Communication Theory's "organizational history" component may be very important for understanding how an organization can best maintain trust during a crisis. It seems likely, as Situational Crisis Communication Theory suggest, that an organization with a reputation for acting responsibly would receive higher trust scores than an irresponsible organization. Furthermore, this research begins to make a case to consider integrating the trust dimension into Situational Crisis Communication Theory as well as acknowledge media effects within its construct. While Situational Crisis Communication Theory is already built in a way that can accommodate these variables, they are important enough to the scope of the theory itself that they should be implemented as fully functioning components.

While crisis public relations theory is still too young to be generally evaluated, the findings of this research build upon the field's understanding of each of the variables. This study supports researchers moving forward using Coombs and Holladay's clusters with increased confidence. Furthermore, simply by isolating the clusters outside of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory framework, confirming their own strength independently, and refolding them back into Situational Crisis Communication Theory, it strongly contributes to building upon Situational Crisis Communication Theory and by extension the sub-discipline of crisis public relations as a theoretical whole. Finally, the power of the clusters retrospectively strengthens past research using them as well.

Finally, these effects on Situational Crisis Communication Theory should have a domino effect for Crisis Response Theory. This research illustrates that additional variables may be needed to effectively manage crises, whether using either theory. Situational Crisis Communication Theory attempts to predict results of crisis communication. Crisis Response

Theory focuses on the responses themselves. When combined, they are complementary to one another by first identifying how best to communicate in crisis, followed by confirming that the chosen response should have its desired effect.

Implications For Relationship Theory

The results of this research further Relationship Theory by experimentally applying the trust dimension measures to crisis scenarios. Clearly trust is a critically important factor before, during and after organizational crisis and this research furthers our understanding of how trust is affected throughout this process. Organizations exist, at least in large part, to achieve success. This success is often measured by longevity and ability to make money. Trust is critical to both of these goals. While money can be made in the short term, even without trust, an organization performing in such fashion would not achieve longevity. Therefore, in order for an organization to be “successful,” it must be able to cultivate and maintain trust with its publics – publics that it strives to create and keep relationships with. It follows that without such relationships, an organization would not make money nor be able to survive for any decent length of time.

Hon and Grunig (1999) introduced the PR Relationship Measurement Scale which included guidelines for measuring relationships, an obvious component to Relationship Theory. They identified trust, control mutuality, satisfaction, commitment, exchange relationship, communal relationship. In short, symmetrical relationships are those with the highest likelihood of maintaining the longevity mentioned above and these six elements seem to be present:

“The most productive relationships in the long run are those that benefit both parties in the relationship rather than those designed to benefit the organization only. Public relations theorists have termed these types of relationships symmetrical and asymmetrical, respectively.” (p. 19)

An effective way to test components of Relationship Theory is to take them out of their framework and test them independently of the overall theory. While this has been done with

trust variables in the past, this is the first instance in which the trust dimensions were tested using crisis scenarios. Just as a crisis can bring about the best and worst in people when it arises, so too can crisis testing bring out the best and worst in a theory. It can disprove a theory, at least disprove it as being applicable during a crisis scenario. Or on the other hand, it can still remain a reliable theoretical foundation even when tested in crisis scenarios. In this case, the trust variables were tested in just such a way. Trust is clearly important in any relationship but it can sometimes be the only thing holding an organizational -public relationship together when the chips fall. For each of the dependent measures, all of the trust dimensions from Hon and Grunig's research, trust measures seemed to be strong. This was due in large part to the fact that there were no instances in which trust scores were way out of sync with the majority.

Again, by testing the trust component of Relationship Theory outside of its "normal" framework, finding it effective, and folding it back into Relationship Theory should strengthen the overarching theory in general. As the saying goes, "a chain is only as strong as its weakest link." Therefore, each of the components should also be tested more independently. In fact, a replication of this study using a real organization would allow for all elements above to be tested and evaluated for strengths and weaknesses. This is especially true for trust, which could then be compared with the findings in this study.

Due to the explorative nature of this research (based on the unique combination of variables), it is difficult to make solid predictions for future studies using the trust scale. However, this research does succeed at serving as a roadmap for future research by identifying new areas for such study.

The literature reviewed in this study identified Excellence Theory as a precursor to Relationship Theory. The experiment conducted also seems to support the Excellence team's

two-way models in terms of its critical importance to cultivating and maintaining trust. However, future research should consider asking respondents which of the four public relations models – press agency, public information, two-way asymmetrical, or two-way symmetrical – they actually feel each media type is (Grunig, et al., 1992). It could be, for example, that blog would be reported as two-way symmetrical and streaming video as public information but we cannot assume anything in this regard without testing this in future research. For the same reason, future research using media type as a variable should ask if respondents feel they are “traditional” or “interactive” to further our understanding of interactive online media perceptions. This is especially true with populations that are heavily personally invested in technology. Technology changes extremely quickly. With it, so too do the mediums used and the perceptions of them by their users. For example, there are likely publics of the same medium that may think a simple website is “interactive” and others who insist that it is just another version of “traditional” media. Understanding this on a more detailed level in future research could strongly enhance any potential findings.

Finally, this research gives further support to the Relationship-Theory-as-eventual-paradigm camp. The variables simply fit too well into public relations research to dismiss this possibility. In fact, it would be very difficult to think of a public relations research study in which it could not be logically applied.

Implications For Public Relations Practice

This research highlights important implications for public relations practitioners. The first is that practitioners should consider exactly what they really know about interactive online media effects before spending potentially vast amounts of money on them. In some cases, the answer is probably “not that much.” It is well known that many agency practitioners and in-house organizational practitioners (as well as consultants and the like) believe that it is very important

to have an interactive online presence, but to what effect? Budgets are not unlimited, especially in today's economy. Public relations practitioners have long dealt with how to show their worth within an organization (Grunig, et al., 1992). Spending money with no real understanding of what the return-on-investment is will not help that cause. This is certainly not to say that public relations practitioners should not pursue such media, it must just be a priority to practitioners to be able to evaluate the value of each endeavor. For example, this research suggests that an organization in a Victim situation should make sure that it is communicating that "it is a victim" to its publics. If the results of this research do indeed predict practical application, it could essentially build trust instead of losing it. That is a measurable objective for any practitioner to take to his or her management.

The second contribution to public relations practice is further building the knowledge of how to practically manage public relations crises. This is a critical function within any organization and C-level executives are increasingly calling for crisis planning and management from their staff. Studies like this one can immediately translate into resources for such practitioner/

Beyond simply applying these findings to public relations planning and implementation, organizations like Edelman Public Relations, the university involved and the chamber of commerce involved have already expressed that they find this study to be extremely valuable. Each of them recognizes that this research will help to focus and streamline their crisis planning and management. Furthermore, this knowledge can be applied to any organization, or for that matter many organizations. And practical understanding of how an organizational practitioner should communicate during a crisis does not need to be asymmetrical communication. By

maintaining trust throughout such crises, both organizations and their publics can benefit through openness, honesty, and clear lines of communication.

Implications for Using Experimental Methodology and Interactive Online Media

The methodology used in this study illustrated some strengths and weaknesses of attempting to use experimental method to measure interactive online media. First, while methodology should always be handled with care, special consideration should be taken when using interactive online media to test interactive online media. Future research should consider using other methods in tandem with interactive online media to ensure that this issue does not confound the variables.

Second, using Survey Monkey as the collection tool also provided some strengths and weaknesses. While the service does an adequate job of collecting the actual data and exporting it for use in statistical software, it is also not expressly designed for experimental research. Because of this, Survey Monkey had to be linked to from within the Vonnetek website. This was effective but it did not allow for visual consistency. The only way to achieve that would have been to design Vonnetek.com to match the Survey Monkey website, a design that may not suit many studies. A better data collection website design would implement the actual design of all online components in order to create such consistency.

Finally, likely the strongest aspect of Survey Monkey is its user-friendliness and ability to store massive amounts of data in an easily manageable format. It also allows for exporting data into a variety of formats, which can save extra steps when preparing to analyze data.

Implications Summary

The most important implication, and overall contribution to the body of knowledge, that this study makes is to begin to connect the logical variables of interactive online media, crisis type and trust. Perhaps most important in this regard is that it promotes the value of theory to

practitioners. This research is the first to explore and attempt to create a roadmap for future studies analyzing how these three variables work together. This area of research is one that both scholars and practitioners agree is important and thus should help bridge the often present rift between academia and practice. The fact that this theoretical study was fully funded by Edelman Public Relations further supports this claim.

This study applied aspects of both Excellence Theory and Contingency Theory in its design. By the organization communicating its crisis scenario honestly, even in the case of Intentional treatments, Excellence Theory's concept of acting in a socially responsible manner was (at least partially) applied. It must be noted that this responsibility refers only to the after-effects in Intentional treatments due to the fact that an intentional crisis should not occur when acting responsibly. Contingency Theory was also partially applied in this study because Vonnetek Automotive used the interactive online media types to communicate the crisis to its publics. This essentially began a negotiation between the organization and its publics for the destination of its relationships on the accommodation-advocacy continuum.

The data from this research additionally raises questions about Seltzer and Mitrook's (2007) suggestion that blogs could be better suited for online relationship building than its traditional counterparts. As mentioned above, future research must measure respondent perceptions of the media type. If, indeed, streaming video is perceived as a "non-traditional" medium then perhaps blogs are not better suited.

Finally, this research brings up the question, "Can the trust dimension stand on its own?" Based on the results of this study, the answer seems to be yes. The only way to find out for sure, however, will be to replicate this study with additional measures – perhaps other Relationship Theory dimensions – and test if the same results are reported.

This study enhances the value of the theories that it builds upon. Shoemaker (2003) established guidelines to test the value of theory. While this study does not create theory nor is it focused on one specific theory, Shoemaker's guidelines are still helpful to gauge this study's contribution to the theories that it uses:

Testability. This is achieved when a theory is able to be tested to verify its claims. This study could easily be replicated to prove its testability. This research also introduced new ways of testing the theories involved. By utilizing experimental design, this study begins to push crisis public relations research beyond the traditional case studies offered previously. It also is the first study of its kind to combine testing of online interactive media, crisis, and trust variables in order to understand their connections.

Falsifiability. A good theory must be able to be falsified. Based on the design of this study, it would be fairly simple to achieve falsifiability in future research, a strength of theory per Shoemaker's guidelines. This could be achieved by creating new scenarios in which the current findings would be violated.

Parsimony. This does not refer to being simple, per se. Instead, parsimony is achieved while only being as complex as necessary in order to achieve the desired results. While including 11 dependent variables, they were closely related and only two independent variables were tested making this study only as complex as needed. The connections this research makes between variables is also quite simple to understand, thereby further supporting its parsimonious nature.

Explanatory power. In essence, the more that a theory can explain the better. The findings from this study enhance the explanatory power of the theories that it uses. It achieves

this first by testing them in new ways and secondly by proving that the theories do indeed provide some explanation in those scenarios.

Predictive power. Can the theory or theories being test provide prediction for what might happen in a similar scenario in the future? This is of special importance to practitioners. One of the biggest strengths of using experimental method is its predictive nature. Furthermore, the use of “real world” participants – instead of students, for example – increases the accuracy of this predictive power by enhancing the study’s external validity.

Scope. How applicable is the theory to a large range of use? In some instances, scope can come at the expense of predictive power. The scope of this research was narrowed by use of only two interactive online media types and use of an organization. This design was used to increase the predictive power for those selections. However, it is likely that other organizations can apply the findings of this research to their communication efforts.

Heuristic value. Does the theory stimulate further interest in knowledge? This study does increase the heuristic value of the theories which it uses by applying its variables to applications of interest to both scholars and practitioners. Furthermore, it offers several suggestions for future research which also enhance the heuristics.

Limitations

One of the most interesting findings within this research is the fact that Victim treatment means were significantly higher than the Pretests. The reasons for this could be two-fold. First, it may be that the respondents felt sympathy for Vonnetek Automotive as a victim. However, it may be a result of Vonnetek Automotive being a fictional organization. Ki and Hon (2007) found that stakeholder publics with stronger evaluations of the relationship with an organization reported more positive attitudes toward it. Without a previous relationship with the organization, the respondents may have felt challenged in answering some Pretest questions resulting in lower

Pretest scores or Pretest scores near the median. While the advantages of using a fictional organization included having full control over the website and its content and ease of manipulation checks, the limitations above must be considered.

Another limitation was the method of administration. While the emails containing the surveys were simultaneously sent for each organization, both organizations should have been administered the surveys simultaneously for all participants. The responses from the university participants were not significantly different than those of the chamber members but if they were it would have been difficult to tell whether it was due to their organizational membership and/or when they were administered the survey. Also while organizational members were emailed the surveys simultaneously, there was no practical way of achieving simultaneous administration of the actual instruments. This also likely had an effect on the low 5% response rate. While it was expected that the response rate would be lower due to the survey administration during the summer break at the participating university (many faculty and staff on vacation), using the email method of administration also typically has a lower response rate than some other methods. Due to the time and budgetary constraints, however, it was deemed the most appropriate method for this study.

Additionally, future research should consider inclusion of “traditional” media types in order to act as control. This would both create opportunities for comparison as well as potentially further knowledge of those traditional media. The lack of a true control group in this design makes it difficult to confirm that the effects are due specifically to the interactive online media types and not simply “media.”

There may be a limitation within the explanation of the interaction effects found for “I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when

making decisions.” In other words, does an organization with high scores for this variable correlate to it being trustworthy? For example, some people feel that tobacco companies take opinions of people into account when making decisions but then use them in an untrustworthy fashion. While considered part of the trust matrix, further testing should be conducted to correlated higher scores with that measure and higher levels of trust. Again, could respondents feel that an organization takes their opinions into account but they still don’t trust the organization? Could an organization take a respondent’s opinion into account only to use the information in an untrustworthy manner? Further testing must be conducted to explicate this information. It should, at minimum, be manipulation checked in future research.

It seems unlikely that this study is the one to totally disprove McLuhan’s (1964) “The medium is the message,” though the results show very little in the way of significance between the media types used in this experiment. More preferable would be further test these findings by replication. This would be simple enough by replicating the study with more types of interactive online media.

As mentioned above, many people seem to believe that blogs are more intimate than other forms on interactive online media. This research introduced the question of whether respondents might have felt that the Blog treatments were more intimate (and less well-known) and Streaming Video treatments were widely known because of its similarity to broadcast television. In order to test, this study should be replicated using all streaming video treatments in which one treatment has the speaker state that they are an independent reporter and another in which the speaker states they are an organizational spokesperson.

This study could be replicated surveying the faculty and staff of another university to further the external validity of its findings. It would also be interesting to have the workforce of

a large organization(s) as the sample for comparison. While no significant differences were found between the participants working at the university and the business members of the chamber of commerce, future research could focus more specifically on how more detailed demographics might affect the data.

Finally, it would be very interesting to create an experiment from a combination of this design and Coombs (2000) research findings that relationships are damaged during crisis by relational expectations and history between an organization and its publics. It would likely require an existing and known organization in order for the publics to have a relationship history with it. Would such a relationship still be damaged using the Victim treatments from this study?

APPENDIX A
SURVEY MEASURES

Trust:

1. Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly and justly.
2. Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.
3. Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises.
4. I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.
5. I feel very confident about Vonnetek Automotive's skills.
6. Vonnetek Automotive has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.
7. Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive's behavior.
8. Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me.
9. I am very willing to let Vonnetek Automotive make decisions for people like me.
10. I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.
11. Vonnetek Automotive is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.

APPENDIX B
PILOT STUDY

Welcome,

Thank you for participating in this study. This research is designed to test your perception of a company and your analysis of a short article. Your answers will be used to help further research on public perception.

Today you will be asked to complete a survey. Please carefully follow the directions for each section. All responses are anonymous and kept strictly confidential.

Once again, thank you for your cooperation.

Please continue to the next page.



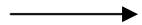
SECTION Ia.

Please carefully read the following article. Once finished, you will be asked several questions. Please select the answer that best matches how you feel about each statement.

ARTICLE ONE (Accident)

In May 2006, odometers in cars manufactured by Vonnetek Automotive Corporation were reported to be faulty. By late 2007, the Vonnetek Automotive Corporation had discovered that some odometers had malfunctioned due to a rare electrical issue. Vonnetek Automotive executives were unaware of the malfunction while the cars were on the assembly line because the electrical impulse causing the problem did not affect any other components. Some of the affected cars had been taken from the production line to be tested, a common practice in the automobile industry. Because it is illegal to disconnect the odometers on the test cars, they arrive at the dealerships with “test” miles on them. The test drive is an important check for quality control. These tests involve driving the cars many “hard” miles. The cars are driven on a test track located at the manufacturing facility. The people who bought the test cars from Vonnetek Automotive did not know the cars had been test driven. In fact, the customers believed the cars had virtually no miles on them. Vonnetek Automotive executives investigated and diagnosed the technical failure. The facts of the case were revealed at a news conference held by Vonnetek Automotive Corporation following its investigation. Affected customers have been contacted by Vonnetek Automotive in order to correct the situation. Vonnetek Automotive is headquartered in Toledo, Ohio and specializes in manufacturing of exotic and replica automobiles.

Please continue to the next page.



SECTION IIa.

The following items measure your feelings toward Vonnetek Automotive. For each item, you will be asked whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Please select the choice that best matches how you feel about the statement.

Indicate agreement or disagreement with each statement by selecting a number between 1 and 7, where 1 means "I strongly disagree" and 7 means "I strongly agree."

Please look at the Vonnetek Automotive website.

1. Which of the following are victims in this situation? (Check all that apply)

- Vonnetek
- Dealerships
- Customers
- Automotive industry

2. Who do you feel is at fault in this crisis?

3. Do you think that Vonnetek Automotive is responsible for this crisis?

- Yes
- No

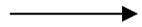
SECTION Ib.

Please carefully read the following article. Once finished, you will be asked several questions. Please select the answer that best matches how you feel about each statement.

ARTICLE TWO (Intentional)

In May 2006, odometers in cars manufactured by Vonnetek Automotive Corporation were reported to be faulty. By late 2007, the Vonnetek Automotive Corporation was found guilty of odometer tampering. Two Vonnetek Automotive executives had ordered the odometers to be disconnected on the cars tested from the assembly line. It is common practice in the automobile industry to take cars from the production line and to test them. However, it is illegal to tamper with the odometers on the test cars. The test drive is an important check for quality control. These tests involve driving the cars many “hard” miles. The cars are driven on a test track located at the manufacturing facility. The people who bought the test cars from Vonnetek Automotive did not know the cars had been test driven. In fact, the customers believed the cars had virtually no miles on them. Vonnetek Automotive executives knowingly committed fraud. The facts of the case were revealed at a news conference held by Vonnetek Automotive following the guilty verdict. Affected customers have been contacted by Vonnetek Automotive in order to correct the situation. Vonnetek Automotive is headquartered in Toledo, Ohio and specializes in manufacturing of exotic and replica automobiles.

Please continue to the next page.



SECTION IIb.

The following items measure your feelings toward Vonnetek Automotive. For each item, you will be asked whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Please select the choice that best matches how you feel about the statement.

Indicate agreement or disagreement with each statement by selecting a number between 1 and 7, where 1 means "I strongly disagree" and 7 means "I strongly agree."

Please look at the Vonnetek Automotive website.

1. Which of the following are victims in this situation? (Check all that apply)

- Vonnetek
- Dealerships
- Customers
- Automotive industry

2. Who do you feel is at fault in this crisis?

3. Do you think that Vonnetek Automotive is responsible for this crisis?

- Yes
- No

SECTION Ic.

Please carefully read the following article. Once finished, you will be asked several questions. Please select the answer that best matches how you feel about each statement.

ARTICLE THREE (Victim)

In May 2006, odometers in cars manufactured by Vonnetek Automotive Corporation were reported to be faulty. By late 2007, an independent investigation found that Vonnetek Automotive Corporation had been a victim of odometer tampering. Vonnetek Automotive executives discovered that some dealerships selling their cars had tampered with the odometers in order to charge higher prices. The dealerships involved are not owned by Vonnetek Automotive. It is common practice in the automobile industry to take cars from the production line and to test them. However, it is illegal to tamper with the odometers on the test cars. The test drive is an important check for quality control. These tests involve driving the cars many “hard” miles. The cars are driven on a test track located at the manufacturing facility. Because of the testing, Vonnetek Automotive executives insist that all dealerships sell them at a discount. The people who bought the test cars from the dealerships did not know the cars had been test driven. In fact, the customers believed the cars had virtually no miles on them. Vonnetek Automotive executives were unaware that the dealerships had committed fraud. The facts of the case were revealed at a news conference held by Vonnetek Automotive Corporation following the investigation. Affected customers have been contacted by Vonnetek Automotive in order to correct the situation. Vonnetek Automotive is headquartered in Toledo, Ohio and specializes in manufacturing of exotic and replica automobiles.

Please continue to the next page.



SECTION IIc.

The following items measure your feelings toward Vonnetek Automotive. For each item, you will be asked whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Please select the choice that best matches how you feel about the statement.

Indicate agreement or disagreement with each statement by selecting a number between 1 and 7, where 1 means "I strongly disagree" and 7 means "I strongly agree."

Please look at the Vonnetek Automotive website.

1. Which of the following are victims in this situation? (Check all that apply)

- Vonnetek
- Dealerships
- Customers
- Automotive industry

2. Who do you feel is at fault in this crisis?

3. Do you think that Vonnetek Automotive is responsible for this crisis?

- Yes
- No

APPENDIX C
SURVEY INSTRUMENT 1

Attention UF Faculty and Staff

In its ongoing efforts to provide a safe environment for students, faculty and staff, the university is working to improve its response to disasters. In addition to our internal planning efforts, we are attempting to implement best practices from other institutions and support studies that may provide us new insights to disaster management. One such effort is a doctoral research study by Seth Oyer, a student in UF's College of Journalism & Communications. A brief description of Seth's project and the need for volunteers to view a web site and provide input is outlined. There are two parts to Seth's survey. Seth has piloted his surveys and indicates that it will take 7 to 8 minutes (total for both) to view and respond to his information. The second part of this survey will be sent out in a few days. I encourage you to consider participating in this study.

William Properzio, Ph.D.
Director, UF Environmental Health and Safety
Project Title: Effects of Media on Trust

Thank you for considering participation in this study. This research is designed to test media effects during certain scenarios. Your answers will be used to help researchers better understand particular media effects.

This survey is two-part. First you will be asked to look at a website and complete a short survey (Part One). Within one week, you will be contacted via email (like you were today) to complete Part Two of the survey.

Please carefully review the organizational website you will be directed to with the link below. Explore each tab. Once you are finished please click the News tab, then the Survey link and please complete the short survey. All responses are anonymous and kept strictly confidential.

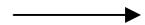
Once again, thank you for your cooperation.

Please click on this link to begin: www.vonnetek.com/1/

Sincerely,

Seth Oyer
soyer@ufl.edu
Primary Researcher & Doctoral Candidate
University of Florida
College of Journalism & Mass Communications
Department of Public Relations

Please continue to the next page



SECTION I.

The following items measure your feelings toward Vonnetek Automotive. For each item, you will be asked whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Please select the choice that best matches how you feel about the statement.

Indicate agreement or disagreement with each statement by selecting a number between 1 and 7, where 1 means “I strongly disagree” and 7 means “I strongly agree.”

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly and justly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel very confident about this Vonnetek Automotive’s skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive’s behavior.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am very willing to let Vonnetek Automotive make decisions for people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am happy with Vonnetek Automotive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Both Vonnetek Automotive and people like me benefit from the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most people like me are happy in their interactions with Vonnetek Automotive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship Vonnetek Automotive has established with people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most people enjoy dealing with Vonnetek Automotive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive fails to satisfy the needs of people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel people like me are important to Vonnetek Automotive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In general, I believe that nothing of value has been accomplished between Vonnetek Automotive and people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive does not especially enjoy giving others aid.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive is very concerned about the welfare of people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that Vonnetek Automotive takes advantage of people who are vulnerable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think that Vonnetek Automotive succeeds by stepping on other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive helps people like me without expecting anything in return.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I don't consider Vonnetek Automotive to be particularly helpful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that Vonnetek Automotive tries to get the upper hand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

This concludes the survey. Thank you for your time and your participation.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact the primary researcher.

Seth Oyer
 Doctoral Candidate
 University of Florida
 College of Journalism & Communication
 Department of Public Relations
soyer@ufl.edu

APPENDIX D
SURVEY INSTRUMENT 2

Attention UF Faculty and Staff

In its ongoing efforts to provide a safe environment for students, faculty and staff, the university is working to improve its response to disasters. In addition to our internal planning efforts, we are attempting to implement best practices from other institutions and support studies that may provide us new insights to disaster management. One such effort is a doctoral research study by Seth Oyer, a student in UF's College of Journalism & Communications. A brief description of Seth's project and the need for volunteers to view a web site and provide input is outlined. There are two parts to Seth's survey. Seth has piloted his surveys and indicates that it will take 7 to 8 minutes (total for both) to view and respond to his information. The second part of this survey will be sent out in a few days. I encourage you to consider participating in this study.

William Properzio, Ph.D.
Director, UF Environmental Health and Safety
Project Title: Effects of Media on Trust

Thank you once again for participating in this study. This research is designed to test media effects during certain scenarios. Your answers will be used to help researchers better understand particular media effects.

This is the second and final part of the survey you began last week. Today you will again be asked to look at a website and news story followed by a short survey (Part Two).

Please carefully navigate to the News tab of the organizational website you will be directed to with the link below. Please look at the news story on the webpage. Once you are finished please click the Survey link below the news story and please complete the short survey. All responses are anonymous and kept strictly confidential.

Once again, thank you for your cooperation.

Please click on this link to begin: www.vonnetek.com

Sincerely,

Seth Oyer
soyer@ufl.edu
Primary Researcher & Doctoral Student
University of Florida
College of Journalism & Mass Communications
Department of Public Relations

SECTION I.

The following items measure your feelings toward Vonnetek Automotive. For each item, you will be asked whether you agree or disagree with the statement. Please select the choice that best matches how you feel about the statement.

Indicate agreement or disagreement with each statement by selecting a number between 1 and 7, where 1 means “I strongly disagree” and 7 means “I strongly agree.”

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT DISAGREE	NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE	SOMEWHAT AGREE	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly and justly.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel very confident about this Vonnetek Automotive’s skills.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive’s behavior.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am very willing to let Vonnetek Automotive make decisions for people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I am happy with Vonnetek Automotive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Both Vonnetek Automotive and people like me benefit from the relationship.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most people like me are happy in their interactions with Vonnetek Automotive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Generally speaking, I am pleased with the relationship Vonnetek Automotive has established with people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Most people enjoy dealing with Vonnetek Automotive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive fails to satisfy the needs of people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel people like me are important to Vonnetek Automotive.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

In general, I believe that nothing of value has been accomplished between Vonnetek Automotive and people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive does not especially enjoy giving others aid.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive is very concerned about the welfare of people like me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that Vonnetek Automotive takes advantage of people who are vulnerable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I think that Vonnetek Automotive succeeds by stepping on other people.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Vonnetek Automotive helps people like me without expecting anything in return.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I don't consider Vonnetek Automotive to be particularly helpful.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
I feel that Vonnetek Automotive tries to get the upper hand.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7

Please continue to the next page.



SECTION II.

The following questions ask for some general demographic information. Please select the appropriate response or fill in the blank as needed.

Sex

Female

Male

Age _____

What is your position at your organization? _____

How many years have you worked in that position? _____

Which of the following best describes your organization (select one)?

Corporation

Not-for-profit

Government

Education

Consultant

Other

In which state do YOU conduct most of your business _____

How many employees currently work for your organization? _____

How many years in total have you worked at your organization (please choose one)?

Less than one year

1-5 years

6-10 years

More than 10 years

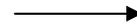
Does your company have a website?

Yes

No

Please estimate the number of hours you spend in a typical work week involved in business interactions via your website (please round to the nearest hour): _____

Please continue to the next page.



This concludes the survey. Thank you for your time and your participation.

If you have any questions regarding this study, please feel free to contact the primary researcher:

Seth Oyer
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University of Florida
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APPENDIX E
INFORMED CONSENT

Protocol Title: Measurement of Media Effects

Please read this consent document carefully before you decide to participate in this study. Please feel free to print this document for your research.

Purpose of the research study:

To measure the effects of media in certain scenarios.

If you choose to participate in the study, you will be asked to:

- 1) Look at an organizational website and answer a short online survey about the organization.
- 2) Within ten days, you will be asked to answer another short online survey about the organization.

Time required:

5-7 minutes (total)

Risks and benefits:

There are no risks or benefits associated with participating in this study. You will be able to contribute to the development of social science and public relations research.

Compensation:

You will not receive compensation for participation in this study.

Confidentiality:

Your identity will be kept confidential to the extent provided by law. Your name will not be attached in any way to the results of the study. No one will be able to identify you as a respondent.

Voluntary participation:

Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. There is no penalty for not participating.

Right to withdraw from the study:

You have the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence.

Participant Signature Date

_Seth Oyer_____ _5/9/08_____

P.I. Signature Date

Principal Investigator - Seth Oyer, 352-256-0910, soyer@ufl.edu

Supervisor - Dr. Michael Mitrook, 352-392-8730, mmitrook@jou.ufl.edu

For questions about your rights as a research participant, contact the IRB at 352-392-0433 or irb2@ufl.edu.

APPENDIX F
MAIN EFFECTS – ONE-WAY ANOVAS

Table F-1 ANOVA (DV: *TREATSFAIRLY*, IV: *CRISISTYPE*)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	189.36	3	63.12	55.67*	.00*
Within Groups	706.43	623	1.13		
Total	895.79	626			

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive treats people like me fairly and justly.

Table F-2 ANOVA (DV: CONCERNEDABOUT, IV: CRISISTYPE)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	126.21	3	42.07	27.57*	.00*
Within Groups	950.52	623	1.53		
Total	1076.73	626			

*p<.05

Whenever Vonnetek Automotive makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me.

Table F-3 ANOVA (DV: *KEEPPROMISES*, IV: *CRISISTYPE*)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	234.65	3	78.23	72.86*	.00*
Within Groups	668.83	623	1.07		
Total	903.48	626			

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive can be relied on to keep its promises.

Table F-4 ANOVA (DV: *TAKESOPINIONSOF*, IV: *CRISISTYPE*)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	101.24	3	33.75	18.40*	.00*
Within Groups	1142.39	623			
Total	1243.63	626			

*p<.05

I believe that Vonnetek Automotive takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions.

Table F-5 ANOVA (DV: CONFIDENTSKILLS, IV: CRISISTYPE)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	83.79	3	27.93	12.41*	.00*
Within Groups	999.38	623	1.60		
Total	1083.17	626			

*p<.05

I feel very confident about Vonnetek Automotive's skills.

Table F-6 ANOVA (DV: ABILITYACCOMPLISH, IV: CRISISTYPE)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	29.07	3	9.69	7.47*	.00*
Within Groups	808.40	623	1.30		
Total	837.47	626			

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do.

Table F-7 ANOVA (DV: SOUNDPRINCIPLES, IV: CRISISTYPE)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	341.37	3	113.79	93.05*	.00
Within Groups	761.82	623	1.25		
Total	1057.23	626			

*p<.05

Sound principles seem to guide Vonnetek Automotive's behavior.

Table F-8 ANOVA (DV: DOESNOTMISLEAD, IV: CRISISTYPE)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	278.77	3	92.92	74.37*	.00*
Within Groups	778.46	623	1.25		
Total	1057.23	626			

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive does not mislead people like me.

Table F- 9 ANOVA (DV: MAKEDECISIONSFOR, IV: CRISISTYPE)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	70.38	3	23.46	12.51*	.00*
Within Groups	1168.58	623	1.88		
Total	1238.96	626			

*p<.05

I am very willing to let Vonnetek Automotive make decisions for people like me.

Table F-10 ANOVA (DV: WATCHCLOSELY, IV: CRISISTYPE)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	142.75	3	47.58	28.20*	.00*
Within Groups	1051.15	623	1.69		
Total	1193.90	626			

*p<.05

I think it is important to watch Vonnetek Automotive closely so that it does not take advantage of people like me.

Table F-11 ANOVA (DV: *SUCCESSFULATTHINGS*, IV: *CRISISTYPE*)

Source	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	6.95	3	2.32	2.38	.07
Within Groups	607.04	623	.97		
Total	613.99	626			

*p<.05

Vonnetek Automotive is known to be successful at the things it tries to do.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Seth Oyer is an accomplished public relations professional with over a decade of executive and management experience in the technology industry. A crisis communications specialist, he has acted as a public relations consultant to corporate, not-for-profit, and political organizations.

An award-winning instructor, Oyer has experience teaching small- and large-lecture and interactive classes, resulting in excellent student evaluations (with normal grading curves). He has also provided service during his doctoral studies on faculty search committees and as president of Graduate Students in Mass Communication Association.

Oyer earned his BA as a double-major in English and communications from the State University of New York College at Fredonia. He earned his MA in mass communication from the University of Central Florida. He completed his PhD at the University of Florida and accepted an assistant professor at Bowling Green State University, starting in fall 2008. Oyer has been published and has several conference papers/publications in progress.