

How to Build Enterprise Brand Image by Virtue of Crisis Public Relations?

Ke Yuan

Department of Communication and Design, Fuzhou University Zhicheng College, Fuzhou, 35000, China

Abstract: As the competition in the market environment increases day by day, enterprises often encounter various types of crisis public relations events: regulatory policy changes, changes in the industry environment, competitors' malicious smears, user complaints, and other levels. Moreover, if enterprise managers face a poorly handled crisis, the enterprise brand will be ruined and lose consumers' trust. However, if the crisis is handled properly, it may also turn "crisis" into "opportunity", which is more conducive to the further development of the enterprise. In the face of a crisis, how to reasonably conduct crisis public relations to shape the enterprise's brand image? This paper will combine the research results of domestic and foreign scholars to analyze some key factors of crisis public relations faced by enterprises to effectively improve enterprises' brand image and enhance their reputation and status in public opinion.

Keywords: Crisis Public Relations; Enterprise Public Relations; Brand Image.

1. Introduction

An enterprise's brand image is the cornerstone of its success because it represents a unique, valuable, and irreplaceable asset. Suppose an enterprise enjoys an excellent public reputation. In that case, it will attract more customers, recruit better employees, improve internal cohesion, obtain a more reliable and affordable supply chain, and be supported by consumers. Moreover, a good brand image will directly impact its long-term sustainability.

"Public relations crisis" is often defined as a situation in which an organization may suffer serious repercussions from internal or external challenges, including damage to reputation and image, oppression of public opinion, and other potential development risks. [1] Moreover, modern enterprise public relations crisis arises from both internal and external factors: the external factors such as changes in regulatory policies, changes in the industry environment, and malicious smears by competitors, and the internal factors include team change crisis, data leakage, product service problems, customer complaints, financial crisis, etc.

With the development of mobile Internet, brand crisis events are occurring more and more frequently, and various types of crises are appearing one after another in many fields, while the network media, with its open, timely, interactive, and sharing characteristics, makes the spread of crisis information faster than ever, the transmission channels are wider, and it is more difficult to control and monopolize information thus making the crisis extremely easy to be rapidly expanded. Furthermore, the outbreak of crises is often unexpected, and enterprises shall strengthen their awareness of crises and take effective countermeasures before they arrive to avoid possible losses. Adopt scientific and effective public relations strategies to resolve crises quickly. [2]

2. Definition and Role of Enterprise Brand Crisis Public Relations

2.1. Definition of Enterprise Brand Crisis Public Relations

Whatever the event that causes the crisis, a brand crisis is

essentially a crisis of trust, affection, and interest between the brand or the enterprise it represents and the consumer. Lynn Upshaw believes a brand is not merely its name, logo, and other presentable marks. In a deeper sense, it contains a contract with the consumer, a commitment to consumption, and the trust and affection the consumer gives it. By creating the most satisfying perceived value for customers through branding, an enterprise can win consumers' recognition of the brand, influence their purchasing decisions, develop customer loyalty to the brand, establish stable long-term trading relationships, and bring lucrative profits to the enterprise. Therefore, the brand is a kind of "relational contract". When a crisis occurs, brand enterprises and the media, government departments or authorities, and other social entities actively cooperate to maintain timely communication with the public and take practical action to recover the losses caused by the crisis to consumers, protect the interests of consumers and the public, maintain and strengthen the relationship of trust between the brand and consumers, and establish a good brand image, which is the most important part of brand public relations. [3]

2.2. Role of Enterprise Brand Crisis Public Relations

Public relations play an important role in shaping a brand image. First, constructing an influential brand image wins the trust and support of consumers, which in turn enhances an enterprise's competitive advantage in the marketplace. Moreover, using a bilateral communication method and accurate public relations activities can effectively reduce information asymmetry and enable consumers to receive genuine feedback, which will help enterprises to make informed decisions and build win-win partnerships. Second, the importance of brand culture is self-evident; it is the foundation of an enterprise's development and an important means to achieve its goals. [4] Public relations work, as a management function, can help enterprises establish a scientific and cultural image that meets the needs of the public. Third, the importance of brand loyalty. According to research data, as consumers' exposure to a brand increases, their loyalty increases accordingly. Through good public relations

activities, we can effectively enhance this. The three areas complement each other and must rely on good public relations to achieve this.

3. Theories and Methods of Enterprise Brand Image Management in Crisis Public Relations

3.1. Crisis Management Theories

In his book *Crisis Management* [5], renowned crisis management expert Robt Heath was the first to point out the 4R model of crisis management, namely the four stages of readiness, response, reduction, and recovery (As shown in figure 1).

Readiness refers to the prevention of crises and the

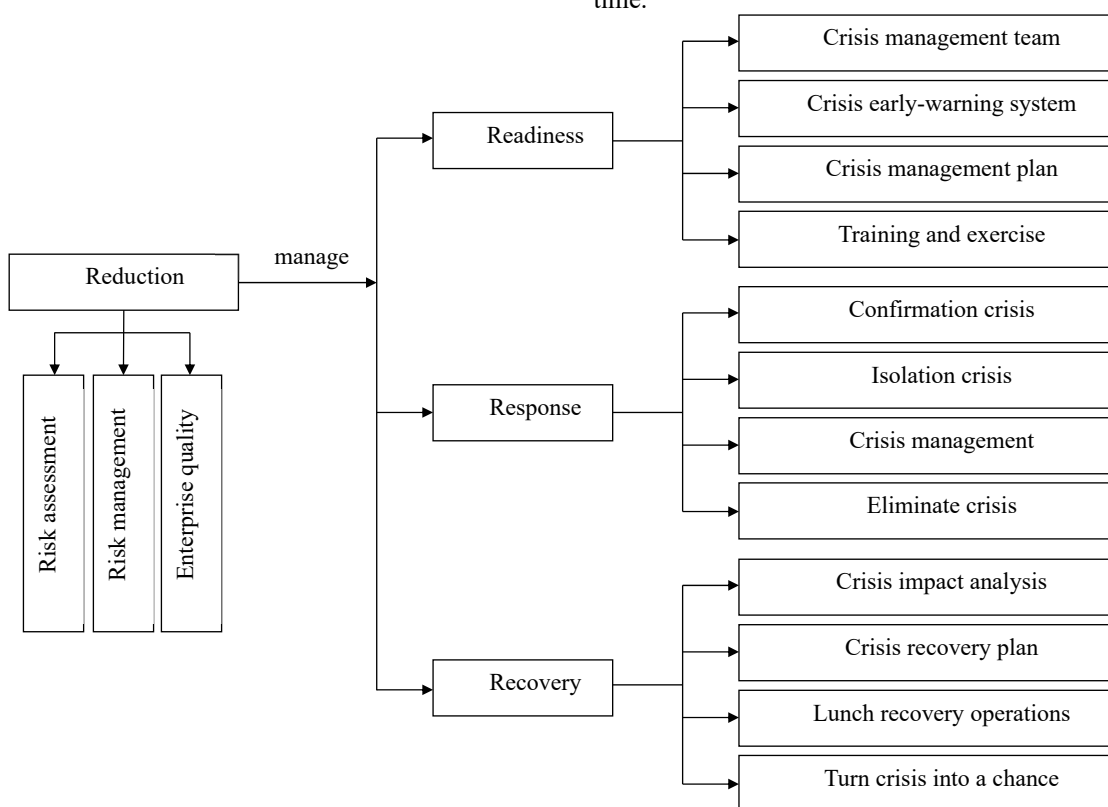


Figure 1. 4R model of crisis management

3.2. Principles and Methods That Enterprises Shall Grasp in the Face of Crisis

(1) Principle of quick response

Taking prompt and timely effective actions when a crisis emerges or even in the bud state is crucial to grasp the initiative of public opinion. In the early stages of a crisis, if public opinion is not dominated in a timely manner, the public will be easily held by a wide variety of public opinion information, thus making it difficult to control the situation. [6]

(2) Principle of providing information based on me

It shall firmly grasp the dominant power of public opinion and let the audience follow its own rhythm instead of letting oneself follow the rhythm of the audience. Only through effective control by the enterprise can the situation be brought back on the right track, thus effectively eliminating the crisis from invisibility.

(3) Principle of public first

When conducting crisis public relations, it is important to

preparation of precautions and early warnings, such as team management, early warning mechanisms, study and judgment schemes, etc.;

Responses are about how to deal with a crisis when it occurs, how fast to deal with it, and how to deal with it;

The reduction is dedicated to minimizing all negative impacts and involves crisis risk management, crisis risk assessment, and organizational quality improvement;

Recovery refers to a series of remedial and improvement work that is subsequently carried out by the subject of the crisis after the situation has subsided. It is easy to find that in this model, the reduction is the most critical item in determining the crisis public relations work, which can be applied in different directions to resolve the crisis through subjective intervention and objective conditions at the same time.

find your target public correctly, and it is often possible to yield twice the result with half the effort by making the public the core of crisis public relations.

(4) Principle of sincerity, frankness, and responsibility

With the highly developed information dissemination on the current self-media platform, it is not feasible to adopt a concealment strategy when a crisis breaks out. At this moment, it is better to reflect on your mistakes and take responsibility than to win public recognition.

In addition to the four basic principles mentioned above, enterprises can also adopt some other effective principles, such as the principle of systematic operation, the principle of advance foresight, and the principle of authoritative support.

4. How to Build Enterprise Brand Image by Virtue of Crisis Public Relations

4.1. Build Internal Crisis Awareness

To effectively prevent and handle crisis events, enterprises

shall establish a comprehensive crisis management environment to develop employees' awareness of the crisis and take effective measures to ensure safety. ¹⁷

First, to enhance employees' risk awareness, enterprises shall strengthen their training to clearly understand the various risks the enterprise faces and the serious challenges these risks can bring to the enterprise's economic growth. At the same time, enterprises shall also let them understand how to deal with crises in the context of the new era.

Second, the enterprise shall make the employees understand that a crisis event will not only seriously affect the normal operation of the enterprise but may also bring huge economic losses to the enterprise and may even bring great personal losses to the employees.

Third, to strengthen the enterprise's crisis awareness, we shall take various measures, including issuing crisis guides, organizing crisis knowledge competitions, and selecting advanced individuals in crisis protection, thus helping employees to recognize the dangers better and learn to respond effectively to crises. Only in this way can we ensure the safety of our enterprise and effectively avoid possible disasters.

4.2. Timely Response Measures

With the development of network technology, the speed of information dissemination has become faster and faster. Therefore, when a crisis event occurs, enterprises must act quickly to deal with it in a timely and effective manner, and specific measures include:

First, once an enterprise faces a crisis, this information will spread rapidly through the Internet, and its spread is incredibly fast. At this time, if the enterprise fails to react in time and take necessary actions, it may be regarded by the media and the public as having accepted the existence of this crisis; if the enterprise fails to take necessary remedial measures in time, but only to justify, it will incur public resentment, thus making its reputation greatly reduced, such an approach can neither effectively deal with the crisis, and may instead bring even worse consequences.

Second, enterprises must quickly develop appropriate response strategies according to different types of crisis events. Once false information is discovered, we must immediately produce reliable evidence to clarify it; if the crisis event is true, we must disclose its cause to the public in a frank manner, respond to public concerns in a timely manner, and clearly state our position to win the public's understanding and support as much as possible.

4.3. Rational Use of Public Relations Consulting

With the ever-changing development of the industry and the diversity of social opinions, enterprises must take effective public relations consulting measures to enhance the professional level of crisis management, and the specific operation steps are as follows:

First, with rich experience in crisis management, professional public relations enterprises are able to respond more effectively to various emergencies, thus enhancing their response capabilities far beyond those of ordinary enterprises; in addition, we have an experienced public relations planning team that can provide high-quality public relations planning for clients, and the emergency plans and measures designed are very scientific; and professional public relations service providers with rich communication skills, who constantly

communicate and accumulate rich practical experience, thus providing strong support for responding to emergencies.

Second, by establishing lasting cooperation with public relations enterprises, their expertise and technology can be effectively used to develop effective crisis management strategies to effectively avoid and reduce possible crises, and thus reduce the occurrence of crises to the maximum extent possible; moreover, when the enterprise considers cooperating with a public relations enterprise, it shall give careful consideration to its operational capacity, business scope, and current market situation.

4.4. Strengthen Public Opinion Monitoring and Guidance

The enterprise shall pay attention to the development of public opinion to better respond to crisis events. Therefore, they shall strengthen the monitoring of public opinion, actively listen to the opinions of all sectors of society and take effective measures to alleviate public sentiment to ensure safety and stability (As shown in figure 2).

First, to respond to a crisis, enterprises shall hire a professional public relations team and actively conduct crisis assessments on social media platforms, ensure that the information provided is in line with objective facts, and release information that helps solve the problem as much as possible so as to reduce the spread of rumors; and it shall be emphasized that enterprises must strictly comply with laws and regulations and prohibit any form of malicious manipulation of public opinion, smearing of others, or defamation of enterprises in other industries to avoid causing greater social harm.

Second, to better respond to the crisis, enterprises shall actively take measures, including holding press conferences and establishing official microblogs, to disseminate relevant information to the public in a timely manner and to be able to grasp the dominance of public opinion, so as to effectively suppress public misunderstanding and prejudice about the crisis.

Third, in order to improve the accuracy of crisis management, enterprises shall actively expand their cooperation with traditional media because, in today's society, people rely more on information from traditional media than false information on the Internet so as to effectively prevent the loss of false information and thus ensure the accuracy of crisis management.

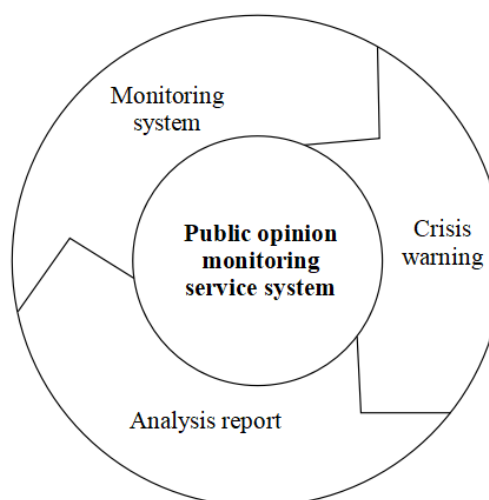


Figure 2. Public opinion monitoring [8]

4.5. Doing Crisis Management and Aftercare

Although crises may harm an enterprise, they can also enhance a company's reputation to some extent. Therefore, enterprises shall take effective measures to mitigate crises and try to reduce their negative effects.

First, if a company can act as quickly as possible with sincere feelings, due diligence, and technical excellence when a crisis occurs and achieve maximum impact at minimum cost, then it will win more praise and recognition; by taking advantage of this opportunity, the enterprise will not only be able to improve the quality of its products and service standards significantly but also to continuously improve the

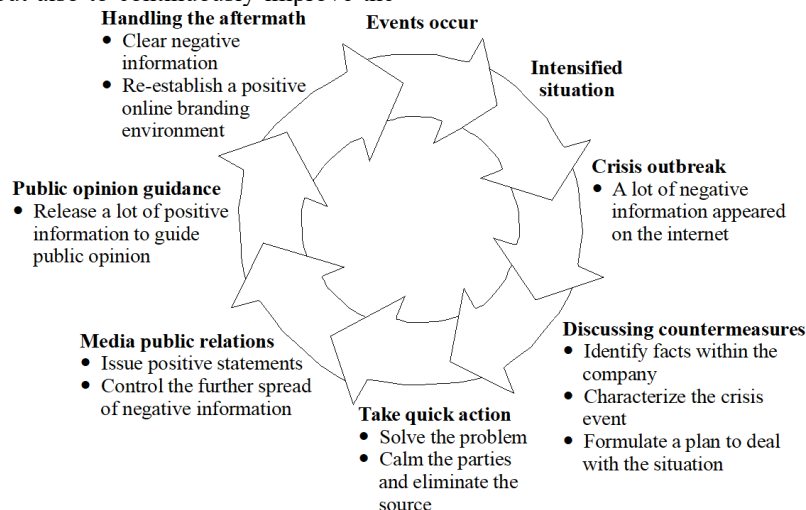


Figure 3. Crisis management procedures [9]

5. Conclusion

To sum up, enterprises do a good job in crisis public relations management and shape a high-quality enterprise brand image; first of all, the enterprise shall start from internally, establish a comprehensive system and management system, optimize the management process, and then improve each link in external relations and external dissemination, and also make targeted adjustments according to the current situation of the enterprise and the industry environment it is in according to local conditions. Moreover, when a crisis occurs, appropriate crisis public relations strategies are adopted to effectively save the enterprise's image or even reshape it, thus transforming the crisis state and enabling the enterprise to achieve better development.

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customer experience, thus building a rigorous, focused and excellent enterprise image.

Second, enterprises shall take the initiative to participate in social charity activities and bravely assume their social responsibilities, especially those located in remote areas and of a larger scale, to change the negative public perception of them through these charity activities, thus providing more possibilities for their economic growth and ultimately realizing their role as an important force in promoting the development of their industries, supporting social progress and achieving national prosperity.