

ABSTRACT

How Nonprofits React in Crisis Situations

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Nonprofit organizations have crisis situations frequently, however, there are few significant studies regarding nonprofit organizations and how they handle crisis situations. For this study, Livestrong, The American Red Cross and Susan G. Komen were analyzed based on the specific crisis situations they dealt with in 2012. The study examined tweets and press releases through a content analysis from each of these organizations in order to determine their specific response. Results demonstrate that these three organizations tend to use specific tones within their text, they use denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, corrective action or mortification from Benoit's Image Repair strategy. They expressed commonalities among interactivity, as well as whom they referred to and similar focus.

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HOW NONPROFITS REACT IN CRISIS SITUATIONS

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

While many companies experience crises, all companies do not have a well-prepared crisis management team and plan. This deficiency can cause stress and more problems when a company does not know how to handle the situation. Typically, crisis teams are responsible for enacting their action plan as soon as a crisis hits. When a crisis management team is not in place, it can be hard for the company to overcome a crisis. Occasionally, being unprepared occurs in the world of nonprofits. Many larger nonprofits may be able to handle the crisis, but all nonprofits may not have the budget or the knowledge regarding how to solve the situations as quickly and as discretely as possible. Scholars define a crisis within an organization as a situation that has a short decision time and is a high threat to important values. Additionally, these run the risk of escalating in intensity and jeopardizing an organizations image and damaging their bottom line. A situation can also be defined as a crisis if stakeholders perceive it to be one (Wilcox, Cameron, Ault & Agee, 2003).

Regardless of whether nonprofits are prepared to handle a crisis, how they respond is always important because a crisis can impact their reputation. If they handle the situation incorrectly, they can potentially lose much of their following and support, which could permanently damage the nonprofit. But if they handle the situation well, the nonprofit could survive and possibly exceed all previous expectations over time.

One of the main goals of crisis communication is for a company to preserve its image (Coombs, 1995). By using the appropriate strategy, a company can acknowledge the crisis and respond without tarnishing its reputation. This is necessary even when the company is not directly responsible for the crisis that occurred. Working towards preserving an image, allows for nonprofits to re-evaluate what they stand for and to convince their supporters that the cause of the organization did not change even in the midst of the crisis (Lamb, 2013).

After a crisis, it can be difficult for an organization to get back on its feet. What is always particularly intriguing is how they respond in their promotions in order to maintain awareness of their cause in the future. Their response gives the nonprofit a great opportunity to re-focus and remind people why the organization is still credible. It is important to note that while crisis response preparedness of for-profit companies has been studied quite extensively, “in general, crisis communication preparedness of nonprofit organizations has received little systematic research attention,” (Schwarz & Pforr, 2011, p. 68).

This research will utilize the process of content analysis of tweets on Twitter and press releases in order to further understand what occurs when nonprofits face crises. It is appropriate to specifically look at a few specific nonprofits as case studies to examine how each of them has responded following a crisis. These nonprofits can provide insight for other nonprofits on what responses are successful or unsuccessful in terms of upholding the image of the organization. The main research question that will be addressed is which crisis strategies do nonprofit organizations use? This will be evaluated by looking at promotional campaigns after

a crisis has occurred to see what the campaigns look like after the brand potentially has been tainted. The answer to this question can provide insight for crisis management teams, for students seeking a career in crisis management or in a nonprofit, and for other nonprofits to evaluate what their best method of action is if they happen to ever encounter crises in the life of their organization.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

While reviewing previous research on crises, many commonalities were found. For example, many of the articles talked about crisis management during crises, the importance of maintaining their image, attribution theory, situational crisis communication theory, brand equity and social media.

Crisis Management During Crises

After a crisis occurs, consumers' trust in a company or product may change and influence their future decisions. This reality is why it is important to make the truth public knowledge to avoid adding harm to the situation at a later date (David & Jeremie, 2007). By thinking about consumers and considering their perspectives, an organization will likely be more motivated to avoid misleading people during the crisis. Typically, "consumers assume a degree of good faith on the part of companies whose products they use," (Siomkos & Kurzbard, 1994, p. 33). The problem occurs during a crisis when a company has violated this faith, which can potentially turn consumers against the rest of the product lines. At this point, it becomes a priority to explain the crisis to the public in a way they will understand (Siomkos & Kurzbard, 1994).

In crisis situations, there are a few different paths of action that the company can choose. The company response continuum allows the company to think through its options and make the best decision depending on the crisis. Denial, voluntary

recall, involuntary recall and super effort all produce different results, and it is important for the company to respond appropriately (Siomkos & Kurzbard, 1994).

After deciding how they want to strategically handle the crisis, it becomes a priority to decide what the tone of the organization will be throughout the rest of the crisis. A crisis is often a turning point for an organization; “it is not the crisis that is the defining moment, but it is how it is dealt with and what is done,” (Coleman, 2013, p. 128). Many companies and organizations choose between an apologetic and a defensive tone. Attitudes during this time typically are better towards a company that takes the apologetic approach over a defensive approach, but this is also highly dependent on the type and severity of the crisis. Other key factors include how visible the CEO or leadership of the company is throughout the crisis situation. If the leadership of the company is open and fully involved with the crisis, there likely will be a better response than if they were invisible (Turk, Jin, Stewart, Kim & Hipple, 2012). Throughout the crisis, it is important to communicate effectively within the organization and encourage employees to view the crisis as an opportunity and not defeat. This perception is important because a crisis is a great opportunity to re-define what the organization stands for (Lamb, 2013). All of this is key in reputation management throughout a crisis, and it all plays a pivotal role in “how effectively a company responds to and recovers from a crisis,” (Turk, et al. 2012, p. 574).

Stakeholders and Attribution of Crisis

A crisis also causes a stakeholder response; “corporations have relationships with many constituent groups (‘stakeholders’) that affect and are affected by its

decisions,” (Freeman, 1984). Specifically in nonprofits, stakeholders would include staff, donors and volunteers. Additionally, stakeholder theory focuses on “the multiplicity of ways that companies and entrepreneurs are out there creating value, making our lives better, and changing the world,” (Agle, Donaldson, Freeman, Jensen, Mitchell & Wood, 2008, p. 166). By blending together central concepts, we can use stakeholder theory to create a more detailed analysis. This theory can be “unpacked into a number of stakeholder theories, each of which has a normative core, inextricably linked to the way that corporations should be governed and the way that managers should act,” (Freeman, 1994, p. 413). Because of this, “any expectant stakeholder can become a definitive stakeholder,” (Mitchell, Agle & Wood, 1997, p. 878).

Stakeholder response is mainly based on perceptions regarding how the company is handling the situation as well as the perceived cause of the crisis (McDonald, Sparks, & Glendon, 2010). Two different theories that address stakeholder response are the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) and Attribution Theory. The SCCT was developed to help decide which strategy would be the most beneficial with different crisis situations. By addressing the different locus of controls, organizations can choose different crisis response strategies (Claeys, Cauberghe & Vyncke, 2010). Attribution theory serves as a “framework for explaining the relation between a situation and the selection of communication strategies,” (Coombs & Holladay, 1996, p.281). In a crisis, people evaluate organizational responsibility and seek out different attributions to determine the cause of a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). Therefore, when making attributions,

people use four different categories to classify them, one of which is also used in the SCCT. This is the locus of controls, which is important to both of these theories because people who have different locus of controls think differently about how situations should be handled. For example, “if attributions reflect a strong external control and low intentionality [this] suggest[s] that factors outside the organization and its control are responsible for the crisis event,” (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). It is also believed that “strong perceptions of external control should lessen crisis responsibility and image damage because the organization could do little or nothing to prevent the crisis,” (Coombs, 1998, p. 182). All this being said, there still is “little direct research related to the effect of crisis situations on perceptions of crisis responsibility,” (Coombs, 1998, p. 181).

The Symbolic Approach

The Symbolic Approach is also frequently used in crisis situations. This theory combines attribution theory and neoinstitutionalism. These two perspectives suggest that crisis response should be linked to the type of crisis and that communication is key in shaping an organization’s image. The term symbolic is used because this is used to attempt to protect organizations’ images (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). This approach has three main goals: one is to convince stakeholders “there is no crisis,” to have stakeholders view the crisis in a less negative way and have them see the organization as a whole on a more positive level. All of these approaches are important because it promotes an image where there is distance between the organization and the responsibility for the crisis

event. While keeping its distance, this allows for the crisis manager to assess the situation and determine the best response strategy. The central goal for the organization is to preserve the original image, which can occur through the symbolic approach (Coombs & Holladay, 1996). Additionally, “crisis managers should know if there have been similar crises in the past, whether stakeholders are aware of past crises, and if the media reinforced this memory with their coverage,” (Coombs, 1998, p. 187). This approach is important when “explaining and predicting the dynamics between crisis response strategies and reputation damage,” (Coombs & Holladay, 1996, p. 292). Overall, an organization with a history of positive performance should find it easier to maintain a positive image during a crisis.

Benoit Image Repair Strategy

Benoit’s (1997) image repair strategy is an appropriate framework when understanding messages developed to respond to image crises. “The key to understanding image repair strategies is to consider the nature of attacks or complaints that prompt such responses... This specific theory, offers five broad categories of image repair strategies, some with variants, that respond to such threats,” (Benoit, 1997). The first is denial, which addresses simple denial and shifting of the blame. Evasion of responsibility includes provocation, defeasibility, accidents and good intentions. The third is reducing offensiveness of events through bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attacking an accuser and compensation. The fourth type is corrective action and the fifth is mortification. Each of these categories represent different parts of this theory.

Brand Equity and Crisis Situations

In crisis situations, it is important to remember that a company's reputation is an essential factor when dealing with a crisis (Siomkos & Kurzbard, 1994).

Reputation is based on brand equity, which is "the differential contribution of the brand name on the value of the branded product" (Dawar & Pillutla 2000, p. 216). It is also "fragile because it is founded in consumers' beliefs and can be prone to large and sudden shifts outside of management's control," (Dawar & Pillutla 2000, p. 215). Scholars suggested that people who have positive attitudes towards certain brands are more likely to be biased; therefore, when negative publicity occurs during a crisis, loyal customers may show more sympathy (Ahluwalia, Burnkrant, & Unnava, 2000; Cleeren, Dekimpe & Helsen 2008). This however is not how all consumers respond to negative publicity. For many, it can impact purchase behavior. This can apply to more than just the company directly involved with the crisis.

Brand equity can also be tested through the spillover effect, as other brands are perceived as part of the crisis when they are not. They get categorized along with the one directly involved simply by association (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). In these situations, where spillover has already occurred, "issuing a denial will be an effective strategy because it will be literally informative," (Roehm & Tybout, 2006, p. 367). This approach simply engages the correction process for a brand by having customers adjust their perceptions, which explains how crucial this effect is when trying to resist persuasion of other perceptions (Ahluwalia, et al. 2001; Roehm & Tybout, 2006). Also, one of the biggest consequences of crisis situations is the

financial loss that occurs for a firm or company. Crisis management is expensive, especially when it is done right (Cleeren, et al. 2008). Brand equity is a central asset of an organization, and it is important to try to engage positive publicity even during crisis situations.

Social Media and Crises

Within the past seven years, technology and the speed of communication are growing and have allowed for an explosion of social media. One of the most useful aspects of social media is that in crisis situations you can quickly share the details of the crisis to minimize rumors from spreading. However, social media are still not even being used to their full potential (Muralidharan, Rassmussen, Patterson & Shin, 2011). Social media must communicate a unified message. If the messages being sent out over social media are not unified, it may cause confusion, which would bring more harm than good (Security Director's Report, 2009). One specific type of social media that is being used extensively is Twitter. It is "already shaping how crises [are] communicated," (Security Director's Report, 2009, p. 3). For example, Twitter is now being used by nonprofits and news media to spread information and share goals. It is even believed that nonprofits are adopting social media more rapidly than corporate businesses (Muralidharan, et. al, 2011; Butcher, 2009). It is also expected that crisis communication via Twitter causes less secondary crisis reactions because of the ability to re-tweet information and spread it further. This reality allows for information to be shared more quickly than with traditional media. However, the effects of "crisis communication via...Twitter in comparison to

traditional media, have not been analyzed experientially,” (Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011, p. 21).

An organization that uses social media to react quickly can also be perceived to be more honest because of the rapid delivery. If an organization chose to wait and not respond via social media, it could imply that they are hiding something, (Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011). It is especially important for nonprofits to communicate quickly because they “are often judged by higher standards and face higher expectations than most for-profit companies,” (Sisco, 2012, p. 91). It is necessary for an organization to try to be as transparent as possible, live out its principles and involve volunteers to help respond. Because social media are always changing and being updated, it is necessary to keep crisis plans updated and current with the popular tools of social media (Coleman, 2013).

Nonprofit Organizations (NPO's)

Spillan (2003) writes that “historically, business crises were usually thought of as interesting but isolated events affecting primarily large organisations. However, experience has demonstrated that eventually, all organisations will in some way be affected by a crisis situation and nonprofits are not excluded,” (p. 160). Previous research addresses nonprofits and how they select their distribution channels (Xuan, Niu, & Castillo, 2010), whether nonprofits should keep their global marketing campaign local or go global (McGovern, 2012), how they can generate revenue for social causes (Nelson & Vilela, 2009), as well as communication tools and methods for nonprofits in everyday situations (Henley, 2001). However, “very

few studies have explored crisis management in non-profit organisations,” (Spillan, 2003, p. 160). It is important for this gap to be filled so that current and future nonprofits can learn how they can help their organizations through crisis management.

Three specific nonprofits that will be examined are the American Red Cross, Susan G. Komen, and Livestrong. The crisis associated with the Red Cross occurred during Hurricane Sandy. They needed many donations in a short period of time, and they needed financial and blood donations in order to help sustain victims while they were displaced (Trindle, Crittenden, Saul, 2012). For Susan G Komen, its crisis was brought on by the decision to cut funding to Planned Parenthood, which caused many problems for this organization (Flock, 2012). Because of the limited number of tweets and press releases published by Susan G. Komen, the researcher also examined Planned Parenthood’s tweets during this period for comparison. Additionally, the Livestrong crisis has to do with Lance Armstrong, who at the time was chairman of the organization. He was accused of using steroids in the Tour de France race, which cost him his position and many sponsors for the organization (Pearson, 2012). The use of these three crises will be beneficial in answering the research questions.

The review of this literature suggests there are several topics that are related to crisis situations that deserve further attention. It also suggests that more research is needed regarding how nonprofits handle crisis situations. Through content analysis, this study attempts to answer the following questions:

RQ1a: How do nonprofits react after crises?

RQ1b: Specifically what crisis strategies did the American Red Cross, Susan G. Komen, and Livestrong use to react through Twitter and press releases following their crisis situations?

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Based on the research questions, a content analysis is appropriate for this study. Content analysis has previously been used to study crisis communication (Kim & Liu, 2012; Diers & Donohue, 2013; Coombs & Holladay, 2014). Content analysis is systematic, objective and quantitative, and it is a widely accepted practice in communications research when dealing with social media. The basic technique is to code a sample for the particular issue, theme, or organization in the study.

In conducting this content analysis, the American Red Cross, Susan G. Komen and Livestrong were analyzed based on the tweets and press releases that were published by the organization beginning at the date of their crisis and thereafter for 60 days. In light of the Susan G. Komen crisis, tweets published by Planned Parenthood within the specified date range were also analyzed due to the limited tweets produced by Susan G. Komen about this event. Each post or tweet was coded separately and then the results were interpreted and benchmarked for comparison.

In selecting these tweets, the researcher used a census of all related information, which allowed for 74 tweets as well as 20 press releases to be coded across four different organizations. Due to the difficulty of finding previous tweets on Twitter, the researcher found each tweet through Topsy.com by looking solely at the official organizations posts in their record. Additionally, the press releases were only gathered from the organizations websites. Two researchers coded content for this study. One researcher coded half of the tweets and all of the press releases

through a stratified random sample; the other coded all of the tweets and press releases. Inter-coder reliability for the tweets was 30/36 or 83.3 percent. For the press releases, we had a reliability of 17/20 or 85 percent. Overall, this resulted in reliability for tweets and press releases to be 47/56 or 83.9 percent.

Some of the key concepts that were examined when coded were: what is the focus of the post, what is the overall tone and what Benoit's image repair strategy was used. Benoit's (1997) image repair strategy is an important element of this study because this allows for the focus to be on the message options. This strategy offers five categories of classification, which will all be taken into consideration.

CHAPTER FOUR

Findings

This study examined tweets and press releases for three different crisis situations that occurred in 2012. In looking at these four organizations, the data revealed details about how these specific nonprofits reacted to their crisis situation. Some of the key findings were related to, 1) the overall tone of the text, 2) which Benoit strategy was used by each organization, 3) the type of interactivity used, 4) who does the tweet or press release refer to and 5) the focus of the tweet or press release. Additionally when analyzing the press releases, data was also collected on whether there was a statement from an organization official.

Table 1: Sample

Amount of content in 60 day time frame	Livestrong	Red Cross	Susan G. Komen	Planned Parenthood
Tweets	9	54	7	4
Press Releases	2	16	2	0

1) The Overall Tone of the Text

This question was important to this study because it allowed for tweets and press releases to be analyzed by their tone and not just for the content. In total, 74 tweets were coded by two researchers as well as 20 press releases.

1.1 Tone of Tweets and Press Releases

What is the overall tone of the text?	Livestrong	Red Cross	Susan G. Komen	Planned Parenthood
Positive	3 tweets/ 2 press release	24 tweets/ 3 press releases	0 tweets/ 0 press releases	2 tweets/ 0 press releases
Neutral	5 tweets/ 0 press releases	26 tweets/13 press releases	4 tweets/ 0 press releases	1 tweets/ 0 press releases
Negative	1 tweets/ 0 press releases	0 tweets/ 0 press releases	3 tweets/ 2 negative	1 tweets/ 0 press releases

This data shows that the majority of the tweets for Livestrong were neutral while their press releases had a positive tone. For the Red Cross, the majority of the tweets and press releases both had a neutral tone and Susan G. Komen’s tweets were mainly neutral but all of their press releases were negative. Planned Parenthood was evenly distributed with their tweets. This was because they were trying to create a change within a different organization. It was important to appeal to many different audiences to provoke change and to gain supporters against Susan G. Komen’s decision. Overall, it seems like each organization tried to have their tweets keep a neutral tone in the 60 days following each of these crises. With the press releases, it seems that each organization took their own approach. Livestrong took a positive approach in order to highlight the good things going on within the organization during this time. The Red Cross kept its messaging neutral in order to stick to the facts of the situation and not put any specific perspective into its press releases. Susan G. Komen kept its press releases on the negative side. They were telling the situation from their point of view and trying to correct false interpretations.

2) Benoit Strategy Used

In examining Benoit's Image Repair Strategy each of these organizations used a variety of the five possibilities.

2.1 Tweets and Benoit

	Livestrong	Red Cross	Susan G. Komen	Planned Parenthood
Denial	0	0	1	0
Evasion of Responsibility	2	3	1	1
Reducing Offensiveness of Event	6	20	2	0
Corrective Action	1	31	2	3
Mortification	0	0	1	0

Overall, the most used category regarding tweets across all four organizations was corrective action with 37 tweets. It seems that in light of the crises of each organization, they often responded in a way that either recognized a plan to solve or prevent a problem from occurring. The second most used category was reducing offensiveness of the event with 28 tweets. When coding tweets, the majority of them dealt with bolstering, minimization and transcendence.

Livestrong mainly used reducing offensiveness of the event when communicating its messages in tweets. This strategy allowed them to stress the good traits within the organization in light of the Lance Armstrong crisis. They continued to focus on the mission of their organization of "providing free cancer

support services to help people cope with the financial, emotional and practical challenges that accompany the disease,” (press release #1).

The Red Cross used a good mix of reducing offensiveness of the event and corrective action throughout their tweets. They used their Twitter account to share details about how they were correcting the action of not being prepared for Hurricane Sandy as well as stressing the good things they were doing since they started to respond.

Susan G. Komen used the widest variety of responses throughout its tweets. However, they still used corrective action and reducing offensiveness the majority of the time. While they focused on these areas, they also had responses in every other category. When responding on Twitter, they used all of Benoit’s image repair strategies. In order to gather more data on this crisis, Planned Parenthood’s tweets also were analyzed. When they were posting about this crisis, Planned Parenthood used corrective action frequently. They were proposing plans to their followers and to Susan G. Komen about how they could rectify the situation. It is also true however, that they also used evasion of responsibility in their tweets and put fault on Susan G. Komen and its decision.

2.2 Press Releases and Benoit

	Livestrong	Red Cross	Susan G. Komen
Denial	0	0	0
Evasion of Responsibility	0	0	0
Reducing Offensiveness of Event	1	10	0

Corrective Action	1	6	0
Mortification	0	0	2

Throughout the 60-day window after each crisis, there were only 20 press releases total that applied to these crises situations. Livestrong issued two press releases total in the specified time frame: one focused on reducing offensiveness of the event and the second dealt with corrective action. The corrective action that was used was the statement of Lance Armstrong stepping down as chairman in light of the crisis situation. The Red Cross had the most press releases within the time period that focused on Hurricane Sandy and their response. They mainly focused on reducing the offensiveness of the event through bolstering. They stressed the good traits and the good things that they were doing throughout their response efforts. They also talked about the plans of action that they were putting in place to solve the problem that occurred when they were unprepared for this large of a storm. Susan G. Komen took a different approach in its press releases than the other two organizations. They took responsibility and used mortification in both of their press releases. They made sure that the public knew that they were sorry that it was handled the way it was.

3) Type of Interactivity Used

Many of the tweets that were collected used interactivity as a way to share information with the organization's followers on Twitter.

3.1 Interactivity in Tweets

	Livestrong	Red Cross	Susan G. Komen	Planned Parenthood	Total Interactivity across organizations
Link (s)	5	28	2	3	35
Hashtag	6	26	1	2	35
Received a Re-Tweet	9	54	6	4	73
Photo (s)	0	5	0	0	5
Mention (s)	7	5	2	0	14
Favorite(s)	8	53	5	4	70

In analyzing interactivity, it is clear that the majority of the tweets received a re-tweet and were favorited by someone on Twitter. The least used method of interactivity across the four organizations was the use of a photo. The American Red Cross was the only organization that used photos in their response to a crisis. Additionally, from the data it seems that many of the tweets used links and hashtags. The use of links are beneficial to organizations because they allow for people to read more information or learn more about the tweet. The use of hashtags are also beneficial because they help people find a tweet and it also creates a web of all the tweets that are related through the inclusion of a hashtag. These were used frequently among all of the organizations.

4) Who does the Tweet/Press Release Refer

Throughout many of the responses from each organization, they each had a specific focus for each tweet and response they posted or published.

4.1 Who did the Tweets refer to?

	Livestrong	Red Cross	Susan G. Komen	Planned Parenthood
CEO	3	0	0	0
PR Person	0	0	0	0
Supporters/ people affected	3	42	5	4
Activist Group	2	0	0	0
Volunteers	0	10	0	0
Other	1	2	1	0

Overall, the majority of tweets that were coded were referring to supporters/people affected. This was true for Red Cross, Susan G. Komen and Planned Parenthood. However, it was not true for the Livestrong Foundation. The majority of their posts had to do with the Livestrong CEO and welcoming him into the foundation’s family. The Red Cross appealed to people in the northeast the most on Twitter because they are the people affected by Hurricane Sandy. They posted about where people could go to get help or find shelter. Susan G. Komen was appealing to its supporters in its tweets by explaining that they do care about mammograms for women, but they just wanted to put their funding where people would have direct access to their services. This made Planned Parenthood reach out to their supporters to get them to help gain traction against Susan G. Komen’s decision.

4.2 Who did the Press Release refer to?

	Livestrong	Red Cross	Susan G. Komen
CEO	0	0	0
PR Person	0	0	0
Supporters/ people affected	0	13	0

Activist Group	0	0	0
Volunteers	0	1	0
Other	2	2	2

Many of the press releases also focused on different people depending on the organization. For example, with Livestrong and Susan G. Komen, many of the press releases referred to other people than the options listed. Some of these were referring to the chairman or other people within the organization. This shows that the list should have been more exhaustive in examples. Additionally, with the Red Cross many of their press releases continued to address the people affected by Hurricane Sandy on the East Coast. They did have one press release that referred to volunteers. This particular press release discussed how more help was on the way and how people could volunteer to get involved. This could be done through financial donations and giving blood.

5) Focus of Tweet or Press Release

In every crisis situation, nonprofits have the decision of how are they going to respond. When a crisis occurs, nonprofits begin sharing different messages in order to focus on all aspects of the situation. Many organizations choose between a routine message, a general response or a response regarding their mismanagement.

5.1 Focus of Tweets

	Livestrong	Red Cross	Susan G. Komen	Planned Parenthood
Response of Nonprofit	7	40	4	4
Mismanagement by Nonprofit	0	0	1	0

Routine Message	2	11	2	0
Other	0	1	0	0

Many of the tweets across all four of these organizations dealt with a general response of the nonprofit to the situation. Livestrong used this messaging because there was nothing they could do in the situation without responding to Lance Armstrong and his situation. However, throughout the 60-day timeline, there were a few routine messages that were related to the crisis. The Red Cross used a lot of general responses of the nonprofit in order to respond to the situation at hand. However, they also used a lot of routine messages such as flooding tips or what to do when someone is without power. Many of their posts throughout this crisis were purely informational, which allowed for many routine messages to be produced. Susan G. Komen mainly responded to the situation the best they could on Twitter. Planned Parenthood also responded to the crisis by reaching out to its followers and supporters to try to reverse Susan G. Komen’s decision.

5.2 Focus of Press Release

	Livestrong	Red Cross	Susan G. Komen
Response of Nonprofit	2	15	1
Mismanagement by Nonprofit	0	0	1
Routine Message	0	1	0

Livestrong used press releases to respond as a nonprofit to Lance Armstrong. They allowed him to share in the press releases, but also turned the focus back onto their overall response and how they would move forward. The Red Cross used press

releases to respond to Hurricane Sandy as well. They responded with messages about how they were helping and what others could do to help. They also included one press release that was more of a routine message sharing general locations where people could go to receive food. Susan G. Komen also used a general response in one of the press releases, but in the other they directly addressed how they had mismanaged the situation. This was interesting because the other nonprofits avoided using mismanagement as a focus of any of their press releases.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

In analyzing the data on these four organizations regarding their press releases and tweets, it was insightful to see how they compared to one another. Oftentimes they used the same methods in their responses to their crisis situations, but sometimes they did use a method that others chose not to use. Susan G. Komen was willing to admit its mistake and move forward while Livestrong and the Red Cross just used corrective action and reducing offensiveness to move past their crises. One interesting fact about the tweets that were analyzed is that all but seven tweets used re-tweets as a method of interactivity. Additionally, with the press releases, it was interesting that 17 of the 20 press releases had a statement from an organization official. This supports previous research that states it is beneficial to have the leadership of the company fully involved with this crisis (Turk, et al. 2012). Additionally, this shows that the majority of the time they will get a statement to increase the credibility of the press release. Also, none of these press releases included a statement from an outside source. This shows that when in a crisis situation, organizations will handle it internally and not ask for input from anyone.

In comparison with previous literature this study showed how it is very important to preserve its image (Coombs, 1995). This study also showed that crises are turning points for organizations and how it is important for them to respond appropriately (Coleman, 2013; Siomkos & Kurzbard, 1994). This was apparent

particularly in Susan G. Komen's crisis because initially when they changed their relationship with Planned Parenthood they were not prepared for this to become a large crisis situation. Additionally this study aligned with previous research by showing that Twitter actively shapes how social media is communicated (Security Director's Report, 2009). In responding quickly on social media platforms, nonprofits show that they are not hiding anything like a delay would have. When nonprofits are transparent, they are able to move past crisis situations quicker than if they were withholding information. This study aligned with previous studies by expressing the importance of a quick and transparent response and addressing image repair.

Limitations & Recommendations

Some of the limitations of this study are that in researching tweets, the researchers were limited in the number of tweets they were able to find for each organization, as well as only studying three nonprofits and their crises that occurred in 2012. Another limitation of this study is the time frame used to gather the tweets and press releases. Because of the gap in time from 2012 to when this study was conducted, it is possible that some organizations may have deleted tweets from their records. It is also possible that multiple sources used the official organizations Twitter account to post information, which is another limitation. If this study would have been conducted closer to the crisis situations, there may have been other patterns or data that could have been analyzed. Additionally, press releases that

were within that time frame and found on each of these organizations websites were only considered.

In the future, it is recommended that researchers study a wider variety of nonprofits over a number of years instead of in the same one. In doing so researchers can assess if nonprofits methods change over time. Another recommendation is that the data gathered occurs over a time period before and after the crisis to assess how they transition to handling the issue as well as the transition back to normal messages of communication. Additionally, it would be beneficial to compare the results found within this study to other nonprofits to see whether the strategies used here are popular among other organizations.

Conclusion

Throughout this study, it has been revealed that the American Red Cross, Livestrong and Susan G. Komen used a variety of responses in crisis situations. In using Benoit's image repair strategies, many focused on corrective action and reducing offensiveness when dealing with these situations. Additionally, their tone of the text usually appeared to be neutral so that they could share the facts about their situations. Interactivity is a large part of crisis response as social media increases in popularity. It has become the fastest way to get a message out to a targeted group of people. These nonprofits also tended to focus their messaging to a general response from the nonprofit in these situations. Today, each organization has been able to recover to some degree from their crisis. The American Red Cross continues making a difference during disaster crisis situations, Livestrong has been

able to sustain itself after separating from Lance Armstrong and Susan G. Komen is still making a difference, however they did lose some support due to their crisis situation. Overall, this study has been beneficial to nonprofit and crisis management studies because of the practices that were shown in this particular study.

APPENDICIES

APPENDIX A

Coding Instrument

Analysis of Tweets & Press Releases 2012 Crisis Management: Livestrong, Red Cross and Susan G. Komen

Analysis of Tweets

1. Coder Name: _____
2. What is the contents tracking number: _____
3. Organization:
 - Red cross
 - Susan G. Komen
 - Livestrong
 - Planned Parenthood
4. Date of Twitter Post: _____
5. What is the overall tone of the text?
 - Positive
 - Neutral
 - Negative
6. Interactivity: Does the tweet contain _____
 - Link(s)
 - Hashtags
 - Re-tweets
 - Photo(s)
 - Mentions
 - Favorites
7. (if applicable) How many re-tweets did this post receive?

8. In using the Benoit image repair strategy, does the tweet or Facebook post use:
 - Denial
 - Evasion of Responsibility
 - Reducing Offensiveness of Event

- Corrective Action
- Mortification

9. To whom does the tweet or post refer?

- CEO
- PR Person
- Supporters/People Affected
- Activist Group
- Volunteers
- Other: _____

10. Focus of Tweet/Post

- Response of nonprofit
- Mismanagement by nonprofit
- Routine message
- Other: _____

Analysis of Press Releases

1. Coder Name: _____

2. What is the press releases tracking number: _____

3. Organization:

- a. Red cross
- b. Susan G. Komen
- c. Livestrong
- d. Planned Parenthood

4. Date of Press Release: _____

5. What is the overall tone of the text?

- Positive
- Neutral
- Negative

6. In using the Benoit image repair strategy, does the tweet or Facebook post use:

- Denial
- Evasion of Responsibility
- Reducing Offensiveness of Event
- Corrective Action
- Mortification

7. To whom does the press release refer?
- CEO
 - PR Person
 - Customers
 - Activist Group
 - Volunteers
 - Other: _____
8. Focus of Tweet/Post
- a. Response of nonprofit
 - b. Mismanagement by nonprofit
 - c. Routine message
 - d. Other: _____
9. Is there a statement from an organization official?
- a. Yes
 - b. No (if no, skip question 10)
10. Who was the statement from? (list name and position at organization)
- _____
11. Was there a statement from an external source?
- a. Yes
 - b. No (if no, skip question 12 and go to end of survey)
12. Who was the external source? (list name and affiliation to article if applicable)
- _____

APPENDIX B

Codebook

Code book for the analysis of Tweets & Press Releases
2012 Crisis Management: Red Cross, Susan G. Komen, Livestrong

Analysis of Tweets

Question 2:

- The tracking number is the number written in red at the top of the Tweet

Question 5:

- Positive – Text is positive and has a positive emotion behind it
- Neutral – Text with no emotion behind it
- Negative – Text is negative and has a negative emotion behind it

Question 6:

- Links- any re-direction to a website
- Hashtags- words following a pound sign (#)
- Re-Tweet- any tweet that has been reposted by another user. This is

generally known by (RT)

- Photo/Graphic- image
- Mentions- Including another person's username in a post. This is usually

found following (@)

- Favorites- The action of liking a tweet and sharing it with the public

Question 8:

- Denial
 - Simple denial: did not perform act
 - Shift of blame: act performed by another
- Evasion of Responsibility
 - Provocation: respond to act of another
 - Defeasibility: lack of information or ability
 - Accident: act was a mishap
 - Good intentions: meant well in act
- Reducing Offensiveness of Event
 - Bolstering: stress good traits
 - Minimization: act not serious

- Differentiation: act less offensive
- Transcendence: more important considerations
- Attack Accuser: reduce credibility of Accuser
- Compensation: reimburse victim
- Corrective Action – this can be recognized as a plan to solve or prevent a problem
- Mortification – apologizing for an act

Question 9:

- CEO – The tweet refers to the CEO in its message. If CEO is making the statement, it does not mean that he/she is referring to him/herself
- PR Person – The tweet refers to the PR Person when the message is directed towards them, not when the PR person is producing content
- Supporters/people affected- People who are getting help from organization or are in need. For example, for Livestrong and Susan G. Komen, it would be people who are impacted because of the organization and its research towards cancer. For The Red Cross, it would be the people affected by Hurricane Sandy on the East Coast.
- Activist Group- People who are actively supporting a cause
- Volunteers – people who are helping the organization. This can be through a donation from an individual or physically helping an organization in any way.

Question 10:

- Response of Nonprofit – The nonprofit taking strides to communicate information directly related to the issue. This is more of a physical response. For example, “x” event occurred; now this is what we are doing about it.
- Mismanagement by Nonprofit – When a decision or action was mishandled
- Routine Message – Any message that is informational on the basic level or is produced on a regular timeline

Analysis of Press Releases

Question 2:

- The tracking number is the number written in red at the top right corner of the press release

Question 5:

- Positive – Text is positive and has a positive emotion behind it
- Neutral – Text with no emotion behind it

- Negative – Text is negative and has a negative emotion behind it

Question 6:

- Denial- strategy types are simple denial: did not perform act and shift of blame: act performed by another.
- Evasion of Responsibility
 - Provocation: respond to act of another
 - Defeasibility: lack of information or ability
 - Accident: act was a mishap
 - Good intentions: meant well in act
- Reducing Offensiveness of Event
 - Bolstering: stress good traits
 - Minimization: act not serious
 - Differentiation: act less offensive
 - Transcendence: more important considerations
 - Attack Accuser: reduce credibility of Accuser
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- Corrective Action – this can be recognized as a plan to solve or prevent a problem
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Question 7:

- CEO – The tweet refers to the CEO in its message. If CEO is making the statement, it does not mean that he/she is referring to him/herself
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- Activist Group- People who are actively supporting a cause
- Volunteers – people who are helping the organization. This can be through a donation from an individual or physically helping an organization in any way.

Question 8:

- Response of Nonprofit – The nonprofit taking strides to communicate information directly related to the issue. This is more of a physical response. For example, “x” event occurred; now this is what we are doing about it.
- Mismanagement by Nonprofit – When a decision or action was mishandled

- Routine Message – Any message that is informational on the basic level or is produced on a regular timeline

APPENDIX C

Sample Tweets

 **LIVESTRONG**   [Following](#)

Official statement: @LanceArmstrong to Step Down as Chairman of @LIVESTRONG
bit.ly/P9E170

 **LIVESTRONG**

Lance Armstrong to Step Down as Chairman of LIVESTRONG
By LIVESTRONG @livestrong

Lance Armstrong, founder and chairman of LIVESTRONG, made the following announcement today regarding his status as chairman of the cancer non-profit organization's board of directors.



[View on web](#)

RETWEETS	FAVORITES
1,964	158



8:05 AM - 17 Oct 2012

 **LIVESTRONG**   [Following](#)

@LIVESTRONGCEO Welcome home!

RETWEETS	FAVORITES
5	4



8:36 PM - 19 Nov 2012

 **American Red Cross**   [Following](#)




It's no secret. When the need was great during #Sandy, with your help, we were there. #Sandy response numbers: rdcrss.org/sandy1

RETWEETS	FAVORITES
50	29




12:58 PM - 27 Jun 2014

 **American Red Cross**   **Following**




@RedCross

5,400 **#RedCross** disaster workers from all 50 states, DC and 3 territories deployed to support **#Sandy** relief operations. 90% are volunteers

← ↻ ☆ ...

RETWEETS **187** FAVORITES **29** 

12:45 PM - 6 Nov 2012


 **Susan G. Komen**   **Follow**

@SusanGKomen




We've decided not to fund pass-through grants. What we would like is to have clinics where we can directly fund mammograms -

Reply **lancyGBrinker**

← ↻ ☆ ...

RETWEETS **100** FAVORITES **4** 


7:16 PM - 2 Feb 2012

 **Susan G. Komen**   **Follow**

@SusanGKomen

We want to apologize for recent decisions that cast doubt upon our commitment to our mission of saving women's lives.

← ↻ ☆ ...

RETWEETS **699** FAVORITES **26** 

10:31 AM - 3 Feb 2012

 **Planned Parenthood**   **Follow**

@PPact

The Komen Foundation has decided to stop supporting women seeking care at PP health centers. Donate if you can: bit.ly/y0x7Of

← ↻ ☆ ...

RETWEETS **848** FAVORITES **23** 

4:28 PM - 1 Feb 2012

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