

Brand Restoration Mechanisms for Multinational Enterprises from the Perspective of Crisis Communication and Implications for Business Education

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Abstract

Under the dual background of globalization and social media, transnational enterprises' public opinion crises have become normalized and cross-cultural. Based on crisis communication theory, this paper explores the formation mechanism and evolution path of brand crises, constructs a brand repair mechanism in cross-cultural contexts, and finds that effective crisis communication can reduce brand damage and accelerate trust reconstruction. The research proposes synergistic brand repair from the dimensions of information response, emotional communication, responsibility fulfillment, and value identification, and integrates crisis communication and cross-cultural communication into business education to optimize curriculum structure, strengthen practical teaching, and cultivate composite business talents adapted to global competition.

Keywords

Crisis communication, multinational enterprise, brand restoration, business education, cross-cultural communication.

1. Theoretical Foundation

1.1. Crisis Communication Theory

Crisis communication refers to systematic organizational behaviors that reduce negative crisis impacts and maintain organizational reputation through information dissemination, discourse construction, media communication, and public interaction when facing sudden risk events[1]. From the interdisciplinary perspective of communication and management studies, crisis communication has developed a relatively mature theoretical system, providing a core analytical framework for corporate crisis response.

Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is one of the most influential crisis communication theories[2]. It posits that enterprises should select matching communication strategies based on different crisis responsibility attributions: when the public attributes crisis responsibility to the enterprise itself, responsibility-accepting strategies such as apology, correction, and compensation should be adopted; when responsibility is unrelated to the enterprise, defensive strategies such as denial, justification, and downplaying may be employed; when responsibility is ambiguous, compromise strategies such as sympathy, concern, and information disclosure are appropriate. This theory provides direct basis for analyzing how multinational enterprises choose appropriate crisis response methods.

With globalization and digital development, crisis communication theory has extended to cross-cultural crisis communication[3]. Cultural dimensions, value concepts, media ecology, and public opinion habits of different countries significantly influence crisis information interpretation and diffusion paths. Therefore, modern crisis communication emphasizes not

only the appropriateness of response strategies but also cross-cultural adaptability, global information coordination, and emotional communication effectiveness.

1.2. Brand Crisis and Brand Restoration Theory

Brand crisis refers to sudden states where brand image is damaged, consumer trust declines, and market evaluation deteriorates due to external environmental changes, operational errors, or negative public opinion interpretation. Brand crises facing multinational enterprises possess greater complexity[4]: they may stem from internal issues such as product quality and service experience, or be triggered by external factors such as geopolitical conflicts, cultural misunderstandings, and public opinion hype, with negative impacts often spanning multiple countries and cultural circles.

Brand restoration theory focuses on how enterprises rebuild brand trust and restore brand reputation through a series of strategic behaviors after crises occur. Cognitive restoration emphasizes correcting public negative perceptions through information clarification, fact disclosure, and responsibility definition; emotional restoration focuses on alleviating public negative emotions and rebuilding emotional connections through empathy expression, caring communication, and value resonance; behavioral restoration requires enterprises to fulfill promises and prevent crisis recurrence through actual rectification, compensation measures, and process optimization.

For multinational enterprises, brand restoration must also balance localization and globalization: implementing targeted restoration measures in affected markets while maintaining global brand image consistency to avoid local crises evolving into overall brand collapse.

1.3. Cross-cultural Communication and Transnational Operation Theory

Cross-cultural communication theory provides important perspectives for understanding the generation and diffusion of multinational brand crises. This theory holds that cultural differences lead to deviations in information encoding and decoding, with the same communication content potentially producing completely opposite interpretation effects in different cultural contexts. In brand crisis scenarios, cultural factors such as language habits, religious beliefs, social norms, and political sensitivities may amplify crises, intensify conflicts, and even elevate general public opinion into confrontational events with political color and ethnic emotions.

The above theories collectively constitute the theoretical support for this study: crisis communication theory provides strategy selection frameworks, brand restoration theory clarifies trust rebuilding paths, and cross-cultural communication theory offers analytical perspectives for understanding the particularities of multinational scenarios. These three theories interconnect, laying a solid foundation for subsequent exploration of multinational enterprise brand restoration mechanisms and further extraction of implications for business education.

2. Communication Characteristics and Practical Dilemmas of Multinational Enterprise Brand Crises

2.1. Communication Characteristics of Multinational Enterprise Brand Crises

2.1.1. Complex Crisis Inducements with Prominent Geopolitical Color

Traditional brand crises mostly originated from internal enterprise factors such as product quality, safety accidents, and operational misconduct, while current multinational enterprises face significantly increased external risks. Such crises are not directly caused by enterprise faults but are easily amplified by public opinion and interpreted by external forces, evolving

into public opinion confrontations targeting enterprises and even home country images, with more complex crisis nature and greater response difficulty.

2.1.2. Fast and Wide-ranging Diffusion with Global Spread Trends

Overseas social media platforms possess instantaneous and fission-style communication characteristics. Once negative brand information emerges, it can break through geographical and language limitations in a short time, spreading from single markets to global scope. Traditional "region-by-region, time-period-by-time-period" response models cannot keep pace with public opinion evolution speed, with small-scale negative public opinion in local markets easily escalating into global brand crises, increasing the difficulty of coordinated enterprise response and brand restoration.

2.1.3. Obvious Cross-cultural Communication Deviations Easily Triggering Emotional Confrontation

Different countries and regions exhibit significant differences in cultural values, social norms, media habits, and emotional sensitivity points. Expression methods, response attitudes, and narrative logic applicable in home countries or other markets may be misinterpreted or even trigger aversion and boycott in host country cultural contexts. Encoding-decoding dislocations caused by cultural differences lead to continuous reconstruction and amplification of crisis information in cross-cultural communication, intensifying public negative emotions and hindering brand trust restoration.

2.1.4. Multi-party Game in Public Opinion Field with Increased Difficulty in Discourse Control

After multinational brand crises occur, public opinion fields are typically co-constructed by multiple subjects including enterprises, host country governments, media, opinion leaders, ordinary public, and external forces, with dispersed information sources, diverse positions, and varied demands. Enterprises find it difficult to achieve public opinion guidance through single information releases, easily falling into passive situations where "the more explanation, the more questioning," with brand reputation continuously damaged in multi-party games.

2.2. Practical Dilemmas in Multinational Enterprise Brand Crisis Communication and Restoration

2.2.1. Ambiguous Crisis Responsibility Definition with Difficult Strategy Selection

In brand crises dominated by external factors such as geopolitical conflicts and cultural misunderstandings, enterprise responsibility boundaries are often unclear. Complete denial may be accused of ignoring public emotions, while excessive responsibility acceptance may be over-interpreted and incur undue costs. The complexity of crisis responsibility attribution makes it difficult for enterprises to directly apply mature crisis communication strategies, easily leading to inappropriate responses, rhythm dislocations, and position swings.

2.2.2. Insufficient Cross-cultural Communication Capability with Lacking Communication Adaptability

Many multinational enterprises still conduct overseas crisis communication using home country thinking, neglecting host country cultural contexts and social psychology, manifested as: homogeneous response content, stiff language expression, insufficient emotional care, and absent localized communication. Crisis communication lacking cultural sensitivity not only fails to alleviate contradictions but intensifies public resistance emotions, delaying brand restoration timing.

2.2.3. Emphasis on Post-event Response with Neglect of Pre-event Warning and Long-term Governance

Currently, most enterprises still focus on "firefighting after the event," lacking normalized overseas public opinion monitoring, risk identification, and crisis contingency systems. Facing sudden public opinion events, they often respond passively and hastily, lacking systematic and forward-looking crisis governance thinking. Brand restoration also mostly stays at short-term public relations operations, neglecting long-term trust rebuilding and value identification cultivation, making it difficult to fundamentally restore brand image.

2.2.4. Difficulty in Balancing Global Coordination and Localization

In crisis response, multinational enterprises often face contradictions between global unified messaging and local flexible handling. Over-emphasis on global unity easily neglects host country special public opinion and cultural differences; excessive decentralization of localized response may lead to inconsistent information and asynchronous actions across regions, further intensifying public opinion confusion. This balance dilemma directly affects crisis communication effectiveness and brand restoration efficiency.

Multinational enterprise overseas brand crises possess distinct contemporary characteristics, with traditional response models difficult to adapt to current environments. Constructing brand restoration mechanisms adapted to cross-cultural contexts and balancing public opinion and geopolitical risks possesses both theoretical value and practical significance, providing basis for integrating crisis communication and cross-cultural capability cultivation into business education.

3. Brand Restoration Mechanisms for Multinational Enterprises from the Perspective of Crisis Communication

3.1. Precise Crisis Response Mechanism Based on Responsibility Attribution

First, establish rapid crisis type identification mechanisms. Quickly judge crisis inducements, distinguishing whether caused by internal enterprise errors, external environmental triggers, or multiple responsibility superposition, avoiding "one-size-fits-all" responses.

Second, implement differentiated response strategies: when enterprise responsibility is dominant, adopt responsibility-accepting strategies of acknowledgment, apology, and rectification; when triggered by external factors, rationally clarify facts, reasonably justify, and soothe emotions; when responsibility is unclear, prioritize information disclosure, continuous communication, and expression of concern to stabilize public emotions.

Third, ensure response timeliness and consistency. Speak quickly in the early crisis fermentation stage, unify global core messaging, while synchronizing key information across regions to reduce space for rumors and misunderstandings.

3.2. Emotional Restoration Mechanism for Cross-cultural Publics

First, strengthen localized emotional expression. Respect host country cultural habits, social psychology, and emotional sensitivity points, using language and narrative methods conforming to local contexts to avoid cultural offense and emotional alienation.

Second, highlight human-centered care and social responsibility. Weaken commercial color in crisis response, strengthen care for consumers, communities, and related stakeholders, conveying enterprise warmth through public welfare actions and livelihood support to soften confrontational emotions.

Third, build diverse interactive communication channels. Conduct two-way communication through overseas social media, local opinion leaders, and industry associations, listening to

public demands, timely responding to concerns, transforming one-way information release into two-way emotional interaction, and gradually restoring brand emotional connections.

3.3. Behavioral Restoration Mechanism Centered on Rectification Implementation

First, establish visible and tangible rectification measures. Launch specific, transparent, and supervisable improvement plans targeting problems exposed by crises, such as product upgrades, process optimization, management standardization, and risk prevention system construction, and proactively disclose rectification progress to the outside world.

Second, perfect compensation and remedy mechanisms. Take reasonable compensation, after-sales guarantees, and service upgrades for interest-damaged subjects, demonstrating enterprise responsibility through actual actions to reduce crisis damage.

Finally, strengthen internal crisis management capability construction. Improve overseas risk warning, public opinion monitoring, and emergency response systems, enhancing coordinated response capabilities of global branches to reduce crisis recurrence probability from the source.

3.4. Brand Value Reconstruction Mechanism Based on Long-term Development

Short-term responses can only alleviate crises; long-term restoration depends on brand value reconstruction.

On one hand, return to core brand values. After crises subside, continuously convey enterprise mission vision, quality concepts, and social responsibility, re-strengthening positive brand associations and gradually diluting negative memories. On the other hand, promote localized value integration. Combine brand values with host country social development, cultural concepts, and consumer demands, transforming from "foreign brand" to "localized symbiotic brand," enhancing brand legitimacy and identification in local society. Through long-term, stable, and consistent value communication, achieve the leap from "crisis restoration" to "brand upgrading."

4. Implications of Multinational Enterprise Brand Restoration from the Perspective of Crisis Communication for Business Education

4.1. Clarifying Crisis Communication Literacy Cultivation Goals for Business Talents

Traditional business education mostly focuses on professional knowledge transmission such as international trade, marketing, and enterprise management, with insufficient emphasis on crisis management, public opinion response, and brand communication, leading to weak response capabilities when students face complex overseas risks after entering the workplace.

Business education should reconstruct cultivation goals: strengthen risk prediction capabilities to identify potential crises from geopolitics, culture, and social media; enhance cross-cultural communication and public opinion response skills; establish full-process brand governance concepts of "prevention-response-restoration-reconstruction"; shape global vision and local adaptation awareness, balancing cultural respect, social responsibility, and value identification. Through clarifying cultivation goals, promote the transformation of business talents from "professional type" to "compound, practical, and internationalized type."

4.2. Constructing Curriculum Systems Integrating Crisis Communication and Brand Restoration

First, add or integrate crisis management and public opinion response courses. In majors such as international business, marketing, and business administration, offer courses such as "International Enterprise Crisis Management," "Cross-cultural Communication Practice," and

"Brand Public Opinion and Reputation Management," or embed related modules into existing core courses such as "International Marketing," "Brand Management," and "Cross-cultural Communication," forming "core courses + elective courses + practice modules" course clusters. Second, strengthen cross-cultural communication and global governance related content. Add teaching content such as cultural differences, value conflicts, overseas media ecology, and geopolitical risks to help students understand communication contexts and public opinion logic in transnational operations, enhancing cultural sensitivity and communication adaptability. Third, highlight brand crisis and brand restoration theory and practice. Incorporate situational crisis communication theory, brand restoration mechanisms, and multinational enterprise cases into teaching to enable students to systematically master core knowledge such as crisis response strategies, emotional communication, behavioral rectification, and value reconstruction, achieving connection between theory and enterprise practice.

4.3. Innovating Case-driven and Practical Teaching Models

First, build authentic, localized, and internationalized case databases. Select typical multinational enterprise overseas crisis events in recent years, such as brand public opinion crises under geopolitical conflicts, boycott events triggered by cross-cultural misunderstandings, and social media public opinion out-of-control events, for in-depth disassembly and classroom discussion, guiding students to analyze crisis inducements, communication characteristics, response gains and losses, and brand restoration paths to achieve "from practice, to practice."

Second, conduct scenario simulation and practical drills. Set up simulation scenarios such as crisis press conferences, overseas public opinion response, cross-cultural communication negotiations, and brand restoration scheme design, having students group-play roles as enterprise parties, media, public, and opinion leaders to train information release, emotion soothing, logical expression, and emergency response capabilities in simulated environments.

Third, introduce digital tools and new media platforms. Combining overseas social media communication characteristics, guide students to use public opinion analysis tools, content editing tools, and cross-cultural translation tools to complete practical tasks such as crisis copywriting, communication content design, and communication effect evaluation, enhancing crisis communication skills in the digital era.

4.4. Promoting Industry-education Integration and Practice Platform Construction

University business education should break barriers between campuses and enterprises, introducing enterprise real demands and industry resources into the entire talent cultivation process.

On one hand, deepen school-enterprise collaborative education. Invite multinational enterprise public relations directors, brand managers, and overseas market leaders into classrooms to share frontline crisis response experience and brand restoration practice, helping students understand real workplace capability requirements. On the other hand, build off-campus practice teaching bases. Cooperate with foreign-related enterprises, cross-border e-commerce platforms, brand consulting institutions, and cultural media companies to provide students with internship positions such as overseas public opinion monitoring, brand communication planning, and crisis response assistance, enhancing crisis communication and brand management practical capabilities in real projects.

Meanwhile, encourage students to participate in brand planning, business negotiation, and innovation-entrepreneurship discipline competitions, integrating crisis communication and brand restoration concepts into competition work design to promote learning and practice through competitions.

5. Conclusion

In the context of globalization and social media, brand crises of multinational enterprises are characterized by cross-cultural differences, global diffusion, and multi-stakeholder dynamics in public opinion, accompanied by practical dilemmas including ambiguous crisis responsibility attribution, insufficient cross-cultural communication competence, overemphasis on post-crisis response while neglecting pre-crisis warning, and difficulty in balancing global coordination and localization. Based on crisis communication theory, brand restoration theory and cross-cultural communication theory, this paper constructs a four-dimensional brand restoration mechanism for multinational enterprises, namely precise crisis response based on responsibility attribution, cross-cultural public emotional restoration, behavior restoration centered on rectification and implementation, and brand value reconstruction oriented toward long-term development. The study confirmed that effective cross-cultural crisis communication can reduce brand damage and accelerate the reconstruction of brand trust. Meanwhile, this study offers clear implications for business education: business education should clarify the cultivation objectives of crisis communication literacy for business talents, build a curriculum system integrating crisis communication and brand restoration, innovate case-driven and practical teaching models, and promote the integration of industry and education as well as the construction of practical platforms, so as to cultivate compound international business talents with global vision, cross-cultural adaptability and crisis governance ability, and provide talent support for multinational enterprises to effectively respond to cross-cultural brand crises and achieve sustainable brand development.

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