ABSTRACT

RESEARCH PAPER: Crisis Communication and Image Repair From A Cultural Aspect: A Case Study of King Car’s Image Repair Program in Taiwan

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King Car, one of the leading food and beverage companies in Taiwan, suffered from a melamine scandal and conducted a successful image repair program in 2008. Through a case study, this study was trying to figure out: (1) Can a well-established western theory, the image repair model, be useful in an eastern culture, particularly Taiwan? (2) What strategies, if any, worked in the King Car melamine contamination case in responding to this crisis? (3) How did those strategies, employed by King Car, work to diffuse the crisis situation? And (4) What, if any, strategies must be given special attention in image repair in eastern cultures, particularly Taiwan?

The content analysis results of 45 local news reports discussing King Car’s image repair program showed seven image repair strategies (corrective action, bolstering, shift the blame, mortification, defeasibility, minimization, and good intentions) were used. These strategies were useful and worked in Taiwan without significant difference from the western culture in corrective action, defeasibility, minimization, and good intentions strategies. However, with the soft appeal, humbleness, and sympathy preferences of Taiwanese culture, mortification is recommended to use unless there is no relationship between the person or the organization and the mistake; bolstering and shift the blame are suggested used in different strength levels for different timings.