

TOYOTA'S CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC EMOTIONS:  
IMPLICATIONS FOR TRUST REPAIR

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## ABSTRACT

### TOYOTA'S CRISIS COMMUNICATIONS AND PUBLIC EMOTIONS: IMPLICATIONS FOR TRUST REPAIR

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This study aims to combine the trust repair and crisis communications literatures to analyze Toyota's responses when faced with the problem of unintended acceleration in its vehicles and the effects of these responses on public emotions. Data on public sentiment was collected via a computer-aided content analysis of blog comments of Autoblog and Jalopnik readers using Diction, LIWC, and CATScanner software packages. The results of the multiple regressions investigating the effects of Toyota's crisis communication tactics on public emotions are discussed in light of extant empirical studies on Image Restoration Theory (IRT) and the Situational Crisis Communications Theory (SCCT). One of the main findings of this thesis is that the negative emotions of the Autoblog readers are increased by denying the occurrence of the wrongful act and providing unclear explanations. Another finding is that claiming that another party is responsible for the crisis decreased both the negative and the positive emotions in the Autoblog reader comments. Additionally, it is found that expressing sympathy resulted in decreased positive emotions among the Jalopnik readers. This thesis contributes to the literature by the usage of the real case study and the real emotional data as public.

**Keywords:** Trust repair, Image Restoration Theory, Situational Crisis Communications Theory, Content Analysis, Toyota.

## ÖZ

### TOYOTA'NIN KRİZ İLETİŞİMİ VE KAMU DUYGULARI: GÜVEN TAMİRİ İÇİN ÇIKARIMLAR

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Bu çalışma, Toyota'nın gaz pedalı skandalıyla yüzleştğinde kamuya verdiği açıklamaları ve bu açıklamaların kamu duyguları üzerindeki etkisini kriz iletişimi ve güven tamiri yazınına birleştirerek incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Kamunun duygularıyla ilgili veriler Autoblog ve Jalopnik okur yorumlarının bilgisayar destekli içerik çözümleme yazılımları olan Diction, LIWC ve CATScanner ile analiz edilmesi sonucu elde edilmiştir. Toyota tarafından kullanılan kriz iletişimi taktiklerinin kamu duygularına olan etkisini araştıran çoklu regresyon analizlerinin sonuçları İmaj Onarım Kuramı ve Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramı alanlarında yapılan deneysel çalışmalar doğrultusunda analiz edilmiştir. Bu tezin temel bulgularından biri, Autoblog okurlarının olumsuz duygularının hatalı davranışı inkar etme ve açık olmayan açıklamalarla artmasıdır. Bir başka bulgu ise başka bir tarafın sorumlu olduğunu iddia etmenin Autoblog okurlarındaki hem olumlu hem de olumsuz duyguları azaltmasıdır. Bunlara ek olarak, sempati duymanın Jalopnik okurlarındaki olumlu duyguları azalttığı bulunmuştur. Bu tez, gerçek vaka analizi ve kamu tepkisi olarak gerçek duygu verileri kullanımıyla yazına katkı sağlamıştır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Güven Tamiri, İmaj Onarım Kuramı, Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramı, İçerik Çözümleme, Toyota.

To My Parents and Fiancé

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AWB	Australian Wheat Board
CATA	Computer-Assisted Text-Analysis
IRT	Image Restoration Theory
NYT	New York Times
OVO	Organizational Virtue Organization
SCCT	Situational Crisis Communications Theory
WSJ	Wall Street Journal

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

The popularity of trust has been increasing in the organizational studies literature (Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman, 1995; Kramer, 2014). The concept of trust has been studied by many researchers (e.g. Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995; Nooteboom, 2011) and therefore there are various definitions of it. According to Mayer et al. (1995), the use of synonymous terms such as “cooperation” and “confidence” leads to obfuscation in the context of trust. Despite the different definitions, one can say that the definitions generally point to two core components: willingness and risk. Trust can be formed between individuals and is called interpersonal trust. Although there are numerous studies regarding interpersonal trust (e.g. Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, and Dirks, 2004; Brower, Lester, and Korsgaard, 2009; Kramer and Lewicki, 2010; Gillespie and Dietz, 2009), the trust between the public and the organizations (i.e., public trust) is gaining popularity among researchers (e.g. Wicks, Moriarty, and Harris, 2014; Coombs, 2015).

According to Poppo and Schepker (2014), public trust stands for the “collective trust orientation” towards an organization and although it is an important concept, it is understudied in the literature. Building the bond of trust with the public is shaped by the information available to stakeholders in the media or any other interaction channels (Coombs, 2007), and it should be a priority for organizations since it is a necessity to function in “modern networked economies” (Woolthuis, Nooteboom and Jong, 2014). In a world where building trust is critical, the importance of maintaining public trust in organizations and rebuilding it when necessary is inevitable.

Violating the trust of stakeholders poses a serious threat to organization (Coombs, 2007; Utz, Schultz and Glocka, 2013). According to Chen, Wu, and Chang (2013), the detrimental impact of a trust violation underscores the importance of trust repair. Therefore, an organization should have the proper equipment to act upon a crisis situation that damages its reputation. Heller and Darling (2012) state that the organization would not function without knowing which situation needs immediate attention when a crisis occurs.

Trust is a dynamic concept and violations undermine its production (Poppo and Schepker, 2010). So what should organizations do when trust is violated? Even though there are studies in the literature that investigate the answer to this question (e.g., Kim, Cooper, Dirks, and Ferrin, 2013; Jin, 2014), how an organization should repair its public trust is still an understudied concept (Poppo and Schepker, 2014). Since the public cannot contact the organization directly and observe the acts of the organization, their access is limited and generally filtered by the media (Poppo and Schepker, 2014). Similarly, Romenti and Valentini (2010) suggest that the characteristics of the media and how the media frames the organization's trust rebuilding tactic is a vital factor that affects the reaction of the public and stakeholders.

Toyota, one of the first companies that comes to mind in the automotive industry, had serious damage to its reputation of quality and reliability during 2009-2010 when some of its cars sped out of control even though the brakes were pressed, and many people were harmed. Toyota faced serious criticism in media circles, national business forums, and automotive trade publications for this unintended acceleration problem when accidents and failures gained high visibility in the media. The importance of the sudden acceleration crisis case is not just because Toyota is one the most successful automotive brands, it is also because the case incorporates both competence-based and integrity-based trust violations. Competence-based trust is related the product, performance, or business skills of an organization, while integrity-based violations are the intentional dishonest and/or unethical acts of the organization's members (Poppo and Schepker, 2014). In the automotive industry, competence-based problems such as

recalls due to faulty designs are not unusual. However, in Toyota's case, the main criticism towards the brand was the fact that it overlooked similar problems and ignored quality and prioritized market competition, which points to an integrity-based trust violation. Studies (e.g., Andrews, Simon, Tian, and Zhao, 2011; Cole, 2011; Dietz and Gillespie, 2012; Seiffert, Bentele, and Mende, 2011) indicate that the 2010 recall crisis severely damaged Toyota's "fortress-like reputation" (Lange, Lee, Dai, 2011). According to Piotrowski and Guyette (2010), the 2010 recall crisis affected about 8 million cars and repair costs have been estimated to exceed \$2 billion. Moreover, favorable views of Toyota went down to 23% from nearly 60%, and the reliability ratings of the company decreased to 72% from 95% (Piotrowski and Guyette, 2010).

The purpose of this study is to investigate links between the communication responses of Toyota throughout the crisis to regain its U.S. stakeholders' trust and the public. According to Yu, Wu, and Lin (2017), trust is built on expectations and is connected to emotions; therefore, emotions play an important role in developing trust. When a trust violation occurs, the victims experience strong negative emotions towards the transgressor and repairing the trust should focus on resolving these negative emotions (Bachmann, Gillespie, and Priem, 2015; Tomlinson and Mayer, 2009). The crisis communication tactics of the organizations should be used with the consideration of the public emotions in order to shape the perceived future reputation (Jin, Pang, and Cameron, 2010; Coombs and Holladay, 2005). In this thesis, the public emotions will be used as proxies for the public trust since emotions can be the determinants of the communication tactics' effectiveness (Coombs and Holladay, 2005), and they are the most direct way to determine the level of trust (Yu, Wu, and Lin, 2017). Many experimental studies have been conducted to analyze people's reactions towards various organizational crisis communication tactics. Casidy and Shin (2015) designed an experimental study where a hypothetical airline company overbooked a flight and assessed the positive (forgiveness) and negative (word-of-mouth) feelings of the customers via surveys after the company (1) apologized, (2) offered compensation such as free hotel accommodation, (3) both apologized and offered compensation and (4) offered no apology or compensation. Pace, Fediuk and Botero (2010) investigated



the effects of expressing regret and apologizing on the reputational damage and anger towards the company. This thesis differs from experimental studies since it uses a real case study of Toyota and real and immediate public reaction data to the crisis in order to investigate the public emotions.

### **1.1. Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study is its contribution to the trust repair and crisis communication literatures. It uses both Toyota's communication tactics and the stakeholders' reactions in the analysis. Another significance of the Toyota case is that it involves examples of both competence- and integrity-related trust breaches. Since stakeholders expect different tactics for different violation types (Poppo and Schepker, 2014), the results are expected to have important implications. The study also aims to generate managerial implications by developing a framework for managers to use appropriate communication tactics in times of crises. Even though one may argue a single case is not typically generalizable (c.f., Tsang, 2014), the attention the Toyota gas pedal crisis got in the media and the public, in part due to its established reputation for top quality manufacturing, and the salience of the product and defect for large numbers of stakeholders, makes it special enough to gain insights not all cases would be able to provide (Siggelkow, 2007).

### **1.2. Research Questions**

The main research questions of this thesis are:

1. What are the emotional reactions towards the Toyota news? How did these emotions evolve, and which events caused them to increase or decrease?

2. Given the usage of various tactics and their impact on public emotions, what recommendations can be developed from the Toyota case for trust repair?

The emotional reactions towards Toyota will be investigated by the analysis of the reader comments on Autoblog and Jalopnik blogs' crisis-related posts using computer-aided text-analysis (CATA) tools: LIWC, Diction, and CATScanner. These software packages' content analysis results in terms of emotions will be grouped into weeks to show the evolution of public emotions throughout the crisis. Lastly, recommendations for trust repair will be made in light of the regression results of public emotions and Toyota's communication tactics as dependent and independent variables, respectively.

The following chapter will give a literature overview of trust, Image Restoration Theory (IRT), Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), and how the IRT and SCCT theories apply to the Toyota case. Prior to a section describing the methods of the study, the thesis will develop a brief timeline of events in the Toyota accelerator pedal crisis, beginning on August 2009 and ending in December 2010. Afterwards, the evolution of public emotions towards Toyota and the events which caused the fluctuations in emotions will be discussed. This will be followed by a quantitative exploratory analysis investigating the impact of Toyota's crisis communication tactics on interested stakeholders' emotions. The thesis is concluded with a discussion of findings, limitations, and avenues for future research.

## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter will provide a literature review of the concept of trust and its public form. After the definition of public trust, crisis communication frameworks in the literature will be discussed.

#### 2.1. The Definition of Public Trust

Trust is a complex and multifaceted construct (c.f., Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt, and Camerer, 1998; Kim, Ferrin, Cooper, and Dirks, 2004; DiStaso, Vafeiadis, and Amaral, 2014), and due to its nature, several researchers have produced their own definitions of trust. Rousseau et al. (1998) defined trust as “a psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behavior of another”. Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) conceptualized trust as “willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party”. Additionally, Nooteboom (2011) described the concept of trust as “I trust when I am vulnerable to actions of another but I believe that no significant harm will be done”. The most salient elements of these definitions are (1) vulnerability and (2) expectation or belief. In his literature review, Bozic (2017) defined these two components as “behavioral intention (or willingness) and expectation (or confidence, belief)”.

Mayer et al. (1995) highlighted the three common factors that indicate the trustworthiness of a trustee in interpersonal and inter-organizational relationships: ability, benevolence, and integrity; which are also commonly used in the literature (e.g. Yang, Brennan, and Wilkinson, 2014; Pirson, Martin, and Parmar, 2017). A group of

skills and competencies that gives the trustee influence in a domain represents *ability*. *Benevolence* is the “perception of a positive orientation of the trustee toward the trustor”. Lastly, *integrity* is the belief that the trustee will conform to the principles that the trustor finds acceptable (Mayer et al., 1995). Although these three factors are independent and separable, they are interrelated (Mayer et al., 1995). While the aforementioned dimensions of trustworthiness were developed for interpersonal trust, one can infer that the concepts are applicable to public trust as well. Any individual, group, or organization can be the receiver of trust, and from an organizational point of view, trust towards an organization legitimizes it as a business (Pirson, Martin, and Parmar, 2017).

Even though there are extensive studies in interpersonal and inter-organizational trust (e.g. Brower et al, 2009; Kramer and Lewicki, 2010; Gillespie and Dietz, 2009), the public trust concept lacks attention in the literature (Wicks et al., 2014; Pirson, Martin, and Parmar, 2014). Wicks et al. (2014) claim that trust in business is as important as economic value for an organization. Reputation and integrity should be given priority to maintain a successful business. BP’s 40 percent market capitalization loss after the Gulf of Mexico oil spill is given as an evidence by Wicks et al. (2014) to show that trust violations result in balance sheet failures. Through this, the authors try to answer the main question of “how are business leaders to build and maintain public trust in this complex and dynamic environment?” The answer lies in the understanding of three “core dynamics” of public trust. The first core dynamic is *mutuality*, which refers to “shared values, purpose, or interests”, and is defined as the most significant dynamic that creates value for society. Another dynamic of public trust is *balances of power*, which is defined as “not being able to unfairly impose its will upon another”. Lastly, there should be a protection or regulation for the trusting party in case of a violation. Wicks et al. (2014) define this final core as *trust safeguards* and underline the importance of all three in building and maintaining public trust.

A similar study in trust building was conducted by Argenti (2014), who notes that in the United States, trust in business has been declining for decades and this decline

results in financial losses, supporting Wicks et al. (2014). Argenti (2014), gives advice on building public trust by using three case studies involving Netflix's pricing strategy failure, BP's faulty marketing strategy and oil spill crisis, and lastly the hacking scandal of the News of the World. The study findings are parallel to Wicks et al. (2014): An organization should emphasize values and it should be transparent and authentic. Leaders should be direct and sincere in the eyes of the public. Lastly, Argenti (2014) underlines the importance of social media and suggests that organizations should adapt their internal structures, such as gathering a communications team that specializes in social media and business-related online platforms (blogs, portals, etc.), in order to boost their reputation and initiate interactive communications with the stakeholders.

Pirson, Martin, and Parmar (2014) contribute to the literature by arguing that there are four streams of public trust: (1) generalized trust, (2) institutional trust, (3) reputation-based trust, and (4) stakeholder trust. *Generalized trust* is a form of trust that represents a general attitude towards the business without any particular context. *Institutional trust* represents the trust form that relates to the industry and the size of the business. *Reputation-based trust* draws attention to the perception of the organization through third parties, such as the media. Lastly, *stakeholder trust* represents the level of accepted vulnerability of the stakeholders. By these trust forms, Pirson et al. (2014) define public trust as "the willingness of the public as a stakeholder to become vulnerable to the actions of business as a general institution". They employ a factorial survey methodology with vignettes to study public trust with both trustor-related determinants (level of experience, age, gender, and general attitude towards business) and trustee-related determinants, which consist of the size of business, industry, objective function, and trustworthiness dimensions<sup>1</sup>. While it may be reasonable to assume that public trust would be affected more by trustee-related determinants, the

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<sup>1</sup> The objective function combines the intention and the level of benevolence and it ranges from profit maximization to societal well-being (Pirson et al., 2014). The trustworthiness dimensions of the trustee-related determinants include the *ability*, *benevolence*, and *integrity* of Mayer et al. (1995), as well as transparency and value congruence (the organization's ability to identify with the business) (Pirson et al., 2014).

researchers concluded that the trustor-related determinants are more predictive in public trust, which indicates the need of deeper research in the public trust field.

Trust shapes the relationship between an organization and its stakeholders (DiStaso et al., 2014), and therefore after a trust violation trust repair efforts should be chosen with a consideration of the trustor's (in our case stakeholders') trusting beliefs and trusting intentions (Kim et al., 2004). Communication should be one of the repair efforts in crisis situations since it has influence on how the stakeholders interpret the crisis (Coombs and Holladay, 1996) and provides stakeholders with important information (Sturges, 1994). Therefore, the next chapter will review the crisis communication frameworks in the literature.

## **2.2. Crisis Communication Frameworks**

Crises are unexpected situations that threaten organizations in terms of finance, reputation, and operation (Coombs, 2007). People who witness a crisis are given reasons to "attribute responsibility" for the crisis and "think badly" of the organization, and consequently the reputation of the organization gets damaged (Coombs, 2007). Reputation is an asset to an organization (Benoit, 1997; Coombs, Frandsen, Holladay, and Johansen, 2010) since the survival of the organization may depend on the public trust towards the organization (Poppo and Schepker, 2010). To protect the reputation of an organization, communication plays a vital role during crisis situations (Coombs, 1998; Coombs et al., 2010).

Sturges (1994) draws attention to crisis communication and suggests that crises are more like a series of stages rather than singular events. He defines the life cycle of a crisis in four stages: (1) *build up*, (2) *break out*, (3) *abatement*, and (4) *termination* (Sturges, 1994). The *build up* stage corresponds to the appearance of symptoms related to the crisis. The signals of the crisis emerge long before the triggering event of the crisis occurs. Therefore, the organizations which are sensitive and observant of their

stakeholders have a greater chance at recognizing crises than others (Sturges, 1994). The *break out* stage is when a triggering event causes the crisis to begin and threaten the organization and its stakeholders. The third stage, *abatement*, represents the lingering effects of the crisis for long periods of time, such as legal actions, inquiries, and media coverage. *Termination* is the last stage where the crisis no longer poses a threat and is resolved. Sturges (1994) implies that since each stage in a crisis has different dynamics and dimensions, communication tactics should be employed accordingly in order to protect the positive opinion of the public. During the life cycle of a crisis, organizations should consider their communication regarding three categories of information (Sturges, 1994). The first category of information is called *instructing information* and its purpose is to guide people affected by the crisis on how to react to the crisis physically. *Adjusting information* is the second information type that helps the affected people deal with the crisis psychologically. Lastly, the information type that aims to rebuild reputation is called *internalizing information* (Sturges, 1994). Although the contents of the communication during a crisis would vary, it is essential to benefit from the relevant information category at each stage of the crisis life cycle (Sturges, 1994). For example, an organization can rely heavily on *internalizing information* during the *build up* stage in order to boost its reputation, whereas *instructing* and *adjusting information* should gain more importance when a crisis is triggered (Sturges, 1994). Although many researchers study crisis communication primarily within the context of *internalizing information* (e.g., Casidy and Shin, 2015; Choi and Lin, 2009; Utz, Schultz, and Glocka, 2013), Coombs (2006) states that *instructing information* should be the first response of the organization after a crisis.

Utz et al. (2013) suggest that the primary goal of crisis communication is to restore trust between the organization and its stakeholder. Poppo and Schepker (2010) outline the critical aspects of trust repair: (1) communication quality, timeliness, and acknowledgement, (2) denial (denying the responsibility for the offense) or apology (accepting the responsibility for the failure) alongside with the type of crisis (competence vs. integrity). The firm should acknowledge the trust failure and respond

because it has the power to frame the crisis in the stakeholders' perspectives (Poppo and Schepker, 2010). However, in order for a communication response to be able to remedy the negative reaction of the public, it should be given immediately after the crisis erupts (Poppo and Schepker, 2010). The response of the firm should also be transparent and honest so that the response forms an impression that the firm has nothing to hide from the public (Poppo and Schepker, 2010). Moreover, according to Poppo and Schepker (2010), when forming a response regarding the failure, organizations should consider whether to apologize or deny the responsibility according to the type of the trust violation. The types of the trust violation mentioned by Poppo and Schepker (2010) are competence-based and integrity-based violations. Competence-based trust violations are generally related to the organization's inability to successfully maintain its operations or products. On the other hand, integrity-based violations are intentional deceiving acts of specific members of the organization (Poppo and Schepker, 2010). Poppo and Schepker (2010) state that apology, which is an indicator of responsibility, is more likely to be used in competence-related issues, whereas denial would be used in integrity-based trust violations.

Pfarrer, Decelles, Smith, and Taylor (2008) introduce a four-staged reintegration model that guides organizations in the way to trust repair. The first stage, *discovery*, answers the question "what happened?" and refers to the information gathering by stakeholders regarding the crisis. The organization should consider the information available to the stakeholders and engage in the disclosure of the transgression. The second stage is *explanation*, where the stakeholders need clarification on why the wrongdoing occurred. Pfarrer et al. (2008) suggest that an appropriate explanation can draw sympathy from the stakeholders. *Penance* is the third stage where the organization should have a punishment that aligns with the explanation so that the explanation would not be considered as "cheap talk" (Bottom, Gibson, Daniels, and Murnighan, 2002). The last stage, *rehabilitation*, refers to the organizational changes that ensure the transgression will not be repeated. Another four-staged trust repair model that is quite similar to Pfarrer et al.'s (2008) model was created by Gillespie and Dietz (2009), named as the organizational trust repair model. The stages are *immediate*



*response, diagnosis, reforming interventions, and evaluation*, the first three of which respectively resemble the *discovery, explanation*, and a combination of *penance and rehabilitation* stages of Pfarrer et al.'s (2008) model. The main difference between these models is that while Pfarrer et al. (2008) developed the model for stakeholder trust, the model by Gillespie and Dietz focuses on repairing trust between the organization and its employees. Additionally, the reintegration model does not have a stage that corresponds to the *evaluation* stage of the organizational trust repair model, which refers to assessing the effectiveness and the progress of the interventions of the previous stage (Gillespie and Dietz, 2009).

Another conceptual framework for trust repair on an organizational level is introduced by Bachmann et al. (2015). The authors underline the communication during the crisis by presenting *sense-making*, a communication-related trust repair mechanism, which corresponds to the consensus on what happened and what reasons caused the trust failure (Bachmann et al., 2015). According to Bachmann et al. (2015), *sense-making* contains the *discovery* and *explanation* stages of the reintegration model (Pfarrer et al., 2008) and the *immediate response* and the *diagnosis* stages of the organizational trust repair model (Gillespie and Dietz, 2009). After a crisis breakout, if the stakeholders are not provided with an explanation, they tend to “assume the worst”, so therefore it is a must for organizations to acknowledge the failure and offer credible explanations (Bachmann et al., 2015).

According to Avery, Ruthann, Sora, and Hocke (2010), the majority of published studies on crisis management and communication in public relations use the theory of image restoration<sup>2</sup> (IRT) (Benoit, 1995, 1997) and the situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) (Coombs, 1998). Benoit's (1995) work on image restoration tactics offers a comprehensive list of crisis communication tactics for crisis managers, whereas Coombs' (1997) work focuses more on understanding the crisis situation so that managers can select the most appropriate response for the crisis. An important

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<sup>2</sup> Benoit (2000) notes that he now tends to prefer image “repair” to image “restoration” as “restoration” may imply that one's image has been restored to its prior state. However, in this study, the framework is used in its original form and hence with its original name.

objective for managers is to choose the right response for the right situation. According to Jin et al. (2010), organizations should shape their crisis responses with a consideration for public emotions. Clearly, an organization can use more than one tactic at any given stage of a crisis (Benoit, 1997).

Benoit's (1995) Image Restoration Strategies are organized into five broad categories, some of which have subcategories. The five categories and their subcategories are:

1. Denial
  - a. Simple denial
  - b. Rejection/Shifting the blame
2. Evasion of responsibility
  - a. Provocation/scapegoating
  - b. Defeasibility
  - c. Accident
  - d. Good intentions
3. Reducing offensiveness of event
  - a. Bolstering
  - b. Minimization
  - c. Differentiation
  - d. Transcendence
  - e. Attack the accuser
  - f. Compensation
4. Corrective action
5. Mortification.

Denial is the first main category of communication tactics of IRT which comes with two variants. One of variants is *simple denial*, where the accused party denies the occurrence of the act. The second form of denial is *shifting the blame* which is stating that another party is responsible for the act. The accused may choose to evade his or her responsibility in the act in case denial is not the appropriate tactic. In this case, the

accused may claim that the *provocation* of others led to the wrongful act (i.e., *scapegoating*). Another way to evade responsibility is via *defeasibility*, where the accused asserts the act was the result of his or her lack of information or ability. On the other side, the accused party may claim that the wrongful act was an *accident*. Another form of responsibility evasion is *good intentions*, which is used to claim the offensive action meant well and the accused had good intentions. In addition to evading responsibility, the accused may mitigate the negative reactions towards himself or herself by reducing the offensiveness of the wrongful act in six forms. *Bolstering* is one of these forms used to remind the effected audience of the good and favorable actions in the past. Another form is *minimization*, where the accused tries to understate the seriousness or the extent of the act. *Differentiation* may be used to state that the offensiveness of the act is less than other wrongful acts. *Transcendence* is used to frame the act in a more positive way and to show that the good outcomes outweighs the damage. The accused party may also try to reduce the credibility of the accuser by *attacking the accuser*. The accused may use *compensation* to play the victim and compensate negative feelings towards himself or herself. Another main communication tactic is *corrective action* which can take two forms: restoring the situation and making changes so that the situation will not be repeated. The last tactic is *mortification* which is used to admit responsibility of the act and apologize.

Numerous studies concerning individuals such as celebrities or politicians and organizations have been conducted by adopting IRT in the crisis communications literature by Benoit and his colleagues and by other academics (e.g., Blaney, Benoit, and Brazeal, 2002; Brinson and Benoit, 1999; Caldiero, Taylor, and Ungureanu, 2009; Erickson, Weber, and Segovia, 2010; Romenti and Valentini, 2010). Although these studies give useful insights about the companies' choice of communication tactics during crises, these case studies fall short when it comes to providing information about how stakeholders react to crises or to the crisis response tactics used to manage crises (Coombs, 2007). According to Coombs (2007), IRT is a descriptive system used to analyze crisis cases and he uses the term "speculative" for such case analyses since these analyses are not empirical tests of hypotheses. These case studies show

which crisis response tactics were used and generate conclusions about the effectiveness of these crisis response tactics.

The concern about the gap between communication tactics and the reaction of stakeholders has led to the development of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory, or SCCT, which builds upon attribution theory. According to attribution theory, people tend to make judgements about the causes of events (Coombs, 2004). Attributions are inevitable when the events are sudden, and the outcomes are expected to be negative (Coombs, 2004). To identify how key facets of the crisis situation influence attributions about the crisis and the reputations held by stakeholders, SCCT relies on experimental work rather than case studies. According to SCCT, three factors in the crisis situation shape reputational threat: (1) *initial crisis responsibility*, (2) *crisis history*, and (3) *prior relational reputation* (Coombs, 2007). The attributions of stakeholders about the role of the organization in the crisis presents itself as *initial crisis responsibility* (Coombs, 2007). Threat to an organizational reputation intensifies when the stakeholders' belief that the organization caused the crisis increases (Coombs, 2007). *Crisis history* is whether an organization has had a similar crisis in the past. If crisis history exists, the organization is perceived to have an ongoing problem that needs to be resolved (Coombs, 2007). *Prior relational reputation* is how well the stakeholders were treated by the organization in the past. A poor prior relational reputation can portray an organization as inconsiderate towards its stakeholders (Coombs, 2007).

In addition to crisis situation factors, SCCT defines three crisis clusters that can be referred to as crisis types: (1) the *victim cluster*, (2) the *accidental cluster* and (3) the *intentional/preventable cluster* (Coombs, 2007). The victim cluster represents weak crisis responsibility and a mild reputational threat since the organization itself is also the victim. Random and uncontrollable situations such as natural disasters and rumors (circulation of false and damaging information about the organization) are the examples of victim cluster crises (Coombs, 2007). In the accidental cluster, the actions of the organization are unintentional (e.g., product recalls or industrial accidents) and

these crises reflect more crisis responsibility and threat compared to first cluster (Coombs, 2007). The last cluster (e.g., management misconduct, human-error accident, and product harms) corresponds to preventable crisis situations where the organization deliberately put people at risk (Coombs and Holladay, 2002). The result of an intentional crisis damages the reputation the most since the responsibility level is highest (Coombs, 2007). It is important to identify the crisis responsibility according to crisis type in a trust violation, and consequently, crisis managers should focus on crisis history and prior reputation to benefit from SCCT (Coombs, 2007). Coombs (2007) claims that a history of crises or an unfavorable prior relational reputation intensify attributions of crisis responsibility, and therefore the reputational threat. According to SCCT, organizations should move to trust repair only after eliminating physical harm to victims (i.e., giving instructing information) (Coombs, 2006). The crisis response tactics of SCCT constitute three categories according to the level of acceptance of the crisis responsibility (Coombs, 2006). These main categories and their subcategories are:

1. Deny
  - a. Attack the accuser
  - b. Denial
  - c. Scapegoat
2. Diminish
  - a. Excuse
  - b. Justification
3. Deal/Rebuild
  - a. Ingratiation
  - b. Concern
  - c. Compassion
  - d. Regret
  - e. Apology.

The accused organization uses the deny response option to claim that the crisis does not exist (*denial*) or some other person or group is responsible for the crisis (*scapegoat*). Another form of deny response option is *attack the accuser*, which is the act of confronting the accuser party. If the organization accepts the occurrence of the crisis, it may use the diminish response option to change the attributions of the stakeholders about the crisis. The *excuse* tactic is when the organization defends itself by asserting that the crisis was the result of its inability to control the triggering events and that its intentions were good. Moreover, the organization may use *justification* to reduce the perceived damage of the crisis. The deal (i.e. rebuild) tactics are used to mitigate the negative reactions of stakeholders with both past and current favorable actions. *Ingratiation* is one variant of rebuilding tactics, where the organization praises stakeholders. Additionally, the organization may show *concern* for the victims of the crisis or offer victims money and/or gifts (*compassion*). *Regret* is when the organization expresses bad feelings about the crisis. The organization can also take full responsibility of the crisis and ask for forgiveness (*apology*). Coombs (2007) introduces two more response tactics: *reminder* (reminding past good works, similar to *bolstering* in IRT) and *victimage* (claiming the organization is also a victim). According to Coombs (2007), *reminder* and *victimage*, along with *ingratiation*, form the bolstering tactic, which should be used with other tactics since its effect on rebuilding organizational reputation are minimal.

Reputation building tries to protect and/or repair the threat of/damage from a crisis. The tactics of reputation building range according to their level of accommodation and how much emphasis is placed on the victim (Marcus and Goodman, 1991). Low accommodation tactics include denial and scapegoating. Moderate accommodative tactics include providing an excuse and justification. Lastly, high accommodative tactics include compensation and apology (Benoit, 1995).

Coombs (2007) combines crisis types and the factors that shapes crises in a conceptual study to provide a guideline for crisis response tactics:

1. For victim cluster crises: With neutral or positive prior relationship reputation and no history of similar crises, informing and adjusting information (Sturges, 1994) alone can be enough. It can be reminded that the organization is also a victim (*victimage*).
2. With a history of similar crises and/or negative prior relationship reputation, diminishing crisis response tactics (*excuse* and *justification*) should be used.
3. For accidental crises: Diminishing response tactics should be used with no history of similar crises and a neutral or positive prior relationship reputation. Rebuilding response tactics (*concern, regret, compassion, ingratiation, and apology*) should be used with a history of similar crises and/or negative prior relationship reputation.
4. For preventable crises: Rebuilding crisis response tactics should be used regardless of the prior history and relation reputation.
5. Denial should be used for rumors (e.g., false information circulation) and challenges (e.g., accusations of operating in an inappropriate manner).
6. Crisis response tactics should be consistent (e.g., denial should not follow apology, or corrective action should not follow denial).

There are many studies that investigate the effects of the crisis response tactics used after a crisis. One of these studies is conducted by Coombs and Holladay (2012) in order to investigate the effectiveness of apology by the content analysis of the reactions regarding the Amazon's Kindle crisis, where Amazon erased "illegal books" from Kindles without informing users in July 2009. After the crisis occurred, an apology from Amazon was posted on the Kindle Community discussion board (Coombs and Holladay, 2012). To analyze the reactions to the apology, Coombs and Holladay (2012) coded the online responses on the discussion board in three categories: (1) acceptance of the apology, (2) conditional acceptance of the apology (e.g., comments in the form of "yes [...] but [...]"), and (3) rejection of the apology. After the coding the online postings, the authors found that apology was accepted by many customers (71.4 percent); however, there were customers who expected corrective actions as well (15.7 percent). Similarly, Kim et al. (2004) measured the responses to apology and

compared it to denial in a laboratory experiment using the case of an interpersonal trust violation. In the experiment, 200 participants were asked to assume the role of a manager and to watch interview videos of job applicants. The videos of the applicants were filmed with two manipulations: (1) violation type (competence- and integrity-based) and (2) violation response (apology and denial). After watching the interviews, participants were asked to complete questionnaires about their trusting beliefs about the job candidate. As a result, Kim et al. (2004) concluded that apology is effective in rebuilding trust after a competence-based trust violation, whereas denial works better in an integrity-based trust violation where there is evidence that the accused person is not responsible for the act. Coombs (2015) inferred similar results for denial and apology in competence-based and integrity-based trust violations in a conceptual study where he examined the impact of the crisis communication tactics on organizational reputation. He suggests that integrity-based and competence-based trust violations are similar to intentional acts and accidental acts, respectively, and that denial works better for integrity-based violations whereas apology is well-received in competence-based violations. Additionally, it is pointed out by Coombs (2015) that scapegoating generally results in negative feedback since people would prefer organizations to deal with the crisis situation even if the crisis is not entirely the organization's fault. Coombs (2015) recommends that apology and compensation tactics should be used together if the damage to the organization's reputation is expected to be present throughout the crisis life cycle and if the perceived crisis responsibility of the organization is high.

Another apology and denial comparison was made by Utz, Matzat, and Snijders (2009), who employed a similar experiment as Kim et al. (2014). Utz et al. (2009) investigated the effectiveness of apology, denial, and no reaction in trust repair among 1,141 Dutch eBay users under two types of trust violation situations (integrity-based and competence-based). Two scenarios of violations were created regarding an online shop on eBay: one with late shipment (integrity-based) and with a broken product (competence-based). The participants were asked to provide their buying intentions regarding the seller under the scenarios with different violation types and different



response tactics. Unlike the findings of Kim et al. (2004), Utz et al. (2009) concluded that the type of trust violation does not have an impact on the reactions towards the response tactics and that apology was more successful in trust repair than denial and no comment, regardless of the trust violation type. Utz et al. (2009) also stated that apologies without explanations were more effective than apologies with explanation in rebuilding trust.

While more widely investigated, apology and denial are not the only crisis response tactics studied. McDonald, Sparks, and Glendon (2010) empirically examined stakeholder reactions to five communication tactics (no comment, denial, excuse making, justification, and confession) combined with crisis locus factor (internal and external) and crisis controllability factor (controllable and uncontrollable)<sup>3</sup>. The stakeholder reactions that McDonald et al. (2010) investigated are emotions (anger, fear, joy, sympathy, and surprise), behaviors (negative word-of-mouth, loyalty), the stakeholders' attitude towards the organization, involvement (the stakeholder's personal interest to the crisis (Choi and Lin, 2009)), and perceived responsibility of the organization in the crisis. For the experiment, the participants were exposed to newspaper stories involving an air crash scenario of an airline company portrayed as long-established and reputable, with no prior crash history, and the participants' reactions to the crisis responses of the airline's CEO were collected by surveys. The results found that regardless of the crisis cause, the confession (apology) response was the most successful response since it mitigated anger and negative word-of-mouth, and increased sympathy, loyalty, and favorable attitude towards the organization. The "no comment" tactic where the company declined an answer had similar results in terms of emotional response. On the other hand, the use of denial, excuse making, and justification received strong negative reactions and increased perceived crisis responsibility rather than decreasing it.

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<sup>3</sup> The crisis locus is whether the cause of the crisis is inside or outside the organization, while the crisis controllability is the ability of the organization to control the crisis cause (McDonald et al., 2010).

Another crisis communication tactic comparison was made by DiStaso et al. (2014). The authors conducted an experimental study that compared the tactics of apology, sympathy, and information (telling the stakeholders only what happened). Sympathy is used by companies to show stakeholders that the company cares about them, without fully apologizing, hence without taking full responsibility (Englehardt, Sallot, and Springston, 2004). This tactic prevents the company from financial burden since explicitly apologizing opens the doors to liability lawsuits against the company (Coombs and Holladay, 2008; Englehardt et al., 2004; Johar, Birk, and Einwiller, 2010). The authors designed a mock-Facebook post about a hypothetical hospital crisis with the hospital response and used surveys to measure the trust level. The results showed that apology and information tactics resulted in similar perceived reputation levels. On the other hand, the researchers stated that managers should avoid sympathy since it was the least successful tactic in rebuilding trust.

Dutta and Pulling (2011) designed an experimental study that adopted a 2 x 3 factorial design in order to investigate the effects of crisis responses on the level of confidence in a brand. The first independent variable was brand crisis type: (1) performance-related and (2) values-related. Performance-related crises are related to the ability of the brand to maintain its operations, whereas values-related crises are related to the social or ethical values of the brand (Dutta and Pulling, 2011). Performance-related crises can be thought of as competence-based crises while values-related crises are similar to integrity-based crises. According to the authors, a brand is expected to provide functional (related to product or service) and symbolic benefits (related to ethics or psychological expectations), and performance-related crises largely affect the confidence related to functional benefits, whereas values-related crises largely affect the symbolic benefits (Dutta and Pulling, 2011). The second independent variable of this study was the crisis response tactic: (1) simple denial, (2) minimization, and (3) corrective action from IRT (Benoit, 1995). For the experiment, the Adidas brand was chosen for its positive crisis history. Two scenarios were created using this brand: (1) scenario with defective material usage and (2) scenario with child labor issues. Dutta and Pulling (2011) found that denial was the least effective communication tactic in

restoring brand confidence regardless of the crisis type, while the results for corrective action showed that it is the most successful tactic in increasing trust in the brand after a performance-related crisis. For values-related crises, minimization and corrective action were equally effective in terms of perceived brand confidence (Dutta and Pulling, 2011).

Contrary to the aforementioned conceptual and empirical studies, this thesis will examine the emotional public reactions to the crisis communication tactics by using the real case study of Toyota. Besides using a real case, this thesis will investigate effects of numerous communication tactics in restoring trust rather than comparing a limited number of tactics. Before moving further to the analysis of the public emotions, an evolution of the Toyota gas pedal crisis during the August 2009-December 2010 time period and the methodology of the thesis will be given in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODS

This thesis investigates the public's emotional reactions towards related Toyota news stories during the sudden acceleration crisis, the evolution of these emotional reaction, and the events that cause these emotions to increase or decrease. Moreover, the thesis aims to develop recommendations for trust repair given the communication tactics and public's emotional reactions. In order to determine the public emotions and to provide the evolution of these emotions, it is important to draw a picture of the Toyota case and understand how the public emotions are gathered. Therefore, this chapter will provide a brief timeline of the crisis using articles from the New York Times (NYT) over the course of the crisis and the methodology used in this thesis.

#### **3.1. Research Context: The Timeline of Events in the Toyota Case**

Four members of the same family were killed in car crash involving a Lexus ES 350 on August 28, 2009, and the police officer in charge said that the accident might be the result of improperly installed mat. In late September of the same year, Toyota announced a recall of 3.8 million vehicles with the suspicion that floor mats caused the accelerator pedal to stick (NYT, September 29, 2009). Shortly after the recall announcement, Toyota's chief executive Akio Toyoda publicly apologized (NYT, October 3, 2009). Later that year, several lawsuits were filed against Toyota, and the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (N.H.T.S.A.) revealed that Toyota did not take action when a similar gas pedal problem occurred in 2008 (NYT, November 26 and 29, 2009). The tension rose when a Toyota Avalon sped off the road and four passengers died on December 26, 2009. After the crash, Toyota announced a

second recall covering 2.3 million vehicles and halted sales of eight models including Avalon (NYT, January 21, 26 and 27, 2009). Furthermore, several congressional hearings were scheduled for February 2010. One of them was announced by the House Committee on Energy and Commerce to investigate the documentation and actions taken by Toyota and N.H.T.S.A. regarding the safety defects (NYT, January 28, 2010). Another congressional committee hearing was scheduled with the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform and Toyota offered its full cooperation (NYT, February 1, 2010). The third hearing on February 2010 damaged Toyota when the Toyota owners were advised to stop driving their vehicles (NYT, February 3, 2010). On top of the congressional hearings, Toyota got sued by the relatives of the family who died in August 2009 (NYT, March 3, 2010) and paid \$10 million for an out-of-court settlement (NYT, December 23, 2010). Moreover, the U.S. Transportation Department charged Toyota with a \$16.4 million fine due to Toyota's slow reactions to the potential problems (NYT, April 5, 2010). The crisis resulted in a 16 percent decrease in Toyota's U.S. sales and a 3.8 percent decrease in its market share. It was the first time Toyota sold fewer than 100,000 vehicles in a month since 1999 (NYT, February 2, 2010). During the crisis, Toyota always denied the accusations that problematic electrical control systems caused the accelerator pedals to stick. In hindsight, Toyota was vindicated when NASA's Toyota study revealed that the unintended accelerations were not caused by any malfunction in electronics (NYT, February 9, 2011). The study also showed only one instance where the gas pedal got stuck under the floor mat which indicated that the accidents were mostly due to human error (NYT, February 9, 2011).

### **3.2. Methodology**

In order to investigate the emotional reactions of the public, 178 blog posts dating from September 2009 to February 2012 related to the Toyota crisis and Toyota's responses were collected from "Autoblog", an online media platform selected for this study as it is the best-known blog for the automotive industry according to Forbes magazine. In

addition to Autoblog posts, 77 blog posts related to the crisis dating from September 2009 to September 2011 were collected from “Jalopnik”<sup>4</sup>, a news and opinion website about cars and motors. The posts were collected by the search of the following tags: “Toyota recall”, “sudden acceleration”, “unintended acceleration”, “pedal recall”, “Toyota pedal”, “gas pedal recall”, “gas pedal fix”, “Toyota floor mat recall”, “Toyota floor mats”, “unintended acceleration”, “sudden unintended acceleration”, “Toyota pedal recall” and “Toyota floor mat”. Jin and Liu (2010) point out that during crises the public turns to blogs for both immediate and in-depth crisis information, hence using blog comments can allow us to capture the emotions of the most interested stakeholder groups. The coding of the comments posted by automotive industry enthusiasts under the actual news on the Toyota crisis is done to capture emotions generated by the news material since a careful content analysis of media coverage may be used as a measure of the success of image restoration discourse (Burns and Bruner, 2000). Only the first level comments by the readers were coded since it is difficult to distinguish whether the secondary reaction is towards Toyota or towards the reader being replied to. The content analysis of reader comments was conducted using the computer-assisted text-analysis (CATA) programs LIWC, CATScanner, and Diction. LIWC has a standard dictionary which counts words related to “positive emotion”, “negative emotion”, “anxiety”, “anger” and “sadness”<sup>5</sup> and finds the percentage of these words in the total word count. The LIWC software package has been gaining popularity for the past few years and it has been generally used for psychological research topics such as interpreting dreams (Bulkeley and Graves, 2018; Hawkings and Boyd, 2017) and the mental status of patients (e.g., Schoch-Ruppen, Ehlert, Uggowitz, Wrymerskirch, and Marca-Ghaemmaghami, 2018; Newell, McCoy, Newman, Wellman, and Gardner, 2018; Goranson, Ritter, Waytz, Norton, and Gray, 2017). CATScanner has a standard dictionary related to “Organizational Virtue Orientation” (OVO), which is defined as an organization’s integrated set of values and

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<sup>4</sup> Jalopnik is a part of the Gizmodo Media Group, a division of Univision Communications Inc.

<sup>5</sup> LIWC’s standard dictionary of “negative emotion” includes the anxiety, anger, and sadness sub-categories but also has other negative emotions; I have henceforth analyzed these sub-categories and the major category of “negative emotion” separately.

beliefs supporting ethical character traits and virtuous behaviors (Payne, Brigham, Broberg, Moss, and Short, 2011). Lastly, Diction was used with its standard dictionaries for the general concepts of “praise”, “satisfaction”, “inspiration,” and “blame”. With its 31 standard dictionaries, Diction is generally used by many researchers for the content analysis of CEO letters to stakeholders and public (e.g., Craig, Mortensen, and Iyer, 2013; Kim and Kim, 2017; Craig and Amernic, 2018). The definitions in the user manual for the Diction dictionaries used are as follows (Hart, 2000):

- Praise: Affirmations of some person, group, or abstract entity. Included are terms isolating important **social qualities** (dear, delightful, witty), **physical qualities** (mighty, handsome, beautiful), **intellectual qualities** (shrewd, bright, vigilant, reasonable), **entrepreneurial qualities** (successful, conscientious, renowned), and **moral qualities** (faithful, good, noble).
- Satisfaction: Terms associated with **positive affective states** (cheerful, passionate, happiness), with moments of **undiminished joy** (thanks, smile, welcome), and **pleasurable diversion** (excited, fun, lucky), or with **moment of triumph** (celebrating, pride, auspicious). Also included are **words of nurturance**: healing, encourage, secure, relieved.
- Inspiration: Abstract virtues deserving of universal respect. Most of the terms in this dictionary are nouns isolating **desirable moral qualities** (faith, honesty, self-sacrifice, virtue) as well as **attractive personal qualities** (courage, dedication, wisdom, mercy). **Social and political ideals** are also included: patriotism, success, education, justice.
- Blame: Terms designating **social inappropriateness** (mean, naïve, sloppy, stupid) as well as downright evil (fascist, blood-thirsty, repugnant, malicious) compose this dictionary. In addition, adjectives describing **unfortunate circumstances** (bankrupt, rash, morbid, embarrassing) or **unplanned vicissitudes** (weary, nervous, painful, detrimental) are included. The dictionary also contains **outright denigrations**: cruel, illegitimate, offensive, miserly.

After analyzing the blog posts using the three software programs, the results were grouped according to the weeks of the relative blog posts’ dates so as to match the communication tactics used by Toyota over the duration of the crisis. While grouping the coded data, the CATScanner results were added together since this software gives a word count. For Diction and LIWC, the result of the week was calculated according to total word count since these programs gives results in percentages. As a result, the

data of both communication tactics and public reactions for 68 weeks were obtained, dating from the 40<sup>th</sup> week of 2009 to 7<sup>th</sup> week of 2012 (some of the weeks were disregarded for not having any data). Finally, in order to analyze the effect of the communication tactics on the public's emotional reactions, several linear regressions were performed for Autoblog and Jalopnik posts separately. The dependent variables are "positive emotion", "negative emotion", "anxiety", "anger", "sadness", "OVO", "praise", "satisfaction", "inspiration" and "blame" values for each blog site. The independent variables are the frequencies of communication tactics' usage which are the findings of the content analysis study by Wasti, Biliciler, Güngör, and Tanrıverdi (2013). Wasti et al. (2013) determined the frequencies of communication tactics using content analysis of news articles on the Toyota crisis, with the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal selected as preliminary information sources. The scanning of the articles focused on Toyota gas pedal crisis during August 2009-December 2010. Based on this scanning, 136 articles from the New York Times and 47 from the Wall Street Journal (hereby NYT and WSJ) were deemed inputs to the content analysis of crisis communication tactics. According to Wasti et al.'s (2013) study, ingratiation ("boosting" and "bolstering") has the major share with 32% of all tactics used, followed by 31% for rectification ("cooperation", "corrective action," and "compensation"). These are followed by denial ("simple denial", "shifting the blame," and "vague response") with 20%, and reducing offensiveness ("minimization", "attack the accuser" and "differentiation") with 9%. Mortification tactics ("apology" and "sympathy") have a share of 8%, and evasion of responsibility ("defeasibility") has the minimum percentage of usage (1%)<sup>6</sup>. Therefore, for the rest of the thesis, the crisis communication tactics of "apology", "sympathy", "attack accuser", "differentiation", "minimization", "bolstering", "boosting", "compensation", "cooperation", "corrective action", "shifting the blame", "simple denial", and "vague response" will be used as independent variables.

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<sup>6</sup> Wasti et al. (2013) adopted the additional tactics "boosting" (increasing morale without referencing the past), "sympathy" (expressing care without formally apologizing), "vague response" (declining an answer) and "cooperation" (cooperating with the other parties).



## CHAPTER 4

### RESULTS

This chapter will provide the emotional response results during the Toyota crisis derived from LIWC, Diction, and CATScanner software packages. Firstly, the evolution of emotions in Autoblog and Jalopnik reader comments will be provided. This section will be followed by the regression analyses investigating the effects of Toyota's crisis communication tactics on the emotional reactions towards the company.

#### 4.1. The Evolution of Public Emotions

Figure 1 provides the distribution of *negative emotions*<sup>7</sup> from LIWC and *blame* from Diction from the Autoblog reader comments. According to the figure, *negative emotions* and *blame* are strong from the date of the car crash on August 2009 until the end of 2010. At the beginning of the crisis, the frequencies of these emotions are notably high on the 50<sup>th</sup> and 52<sup>nd</sup> weeks of 2009. The rise on the 50<sup>th</sup> week of 2009 can be tied to several problems that Toyota was having. First of all, the speculations that the sudden acceleration was caused by an electronics system failure were increasing and Toyota continuously denied the accusations (NYT, November 29, 2009). Additionally, several lawsuits were filed against Toyota for not investigating the sudden acceleration problem thoroughly when the trapped gas pedal problems were reported in 2008 (NYT, November 29, 2009). When the second car accident occurred in December 2009, the negative reactions towards Toyota rose again on the 52<sup>nd</sup> week

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<sup>7</sup> Since LIWC's negative emotion contains anxiety, anger, and sadness as dictionaries, they were not included in the figure.

of 2009. According to Figure 1, the level of the negative reactions did not change drastically after the beginning of 2010 until the 18<sup>th</sup> week of 2010 when another rise occurred. The rise in negative reactions coincides with Toyota’s acceptance of the \$16.4 million fine and an email from former Toyota executive urging his colleagues to “come clean” (NYT, April 7 and 19, 2010).

*Negative emotions* and *blame* were at their peak on the 18<sup>th</sup> week of 2010 when the N.H.T.S.A. announced that 93 deaths were possibly the result of sudden acceleration problem, whereas Toyota stated that there was no electronics problem and that the complaints received by the N.H.T.S.A. were mostly due to human error (NYT, July 14, 2010). Eventually, the government’s investigation stating that the car crashes were not the result of a faulty electronics system and many cases were due to human error (NYT, August 10, 2010) seems to lower the negative reactions towards Toyota after the 32<sup>nd</sup> week of 2010.

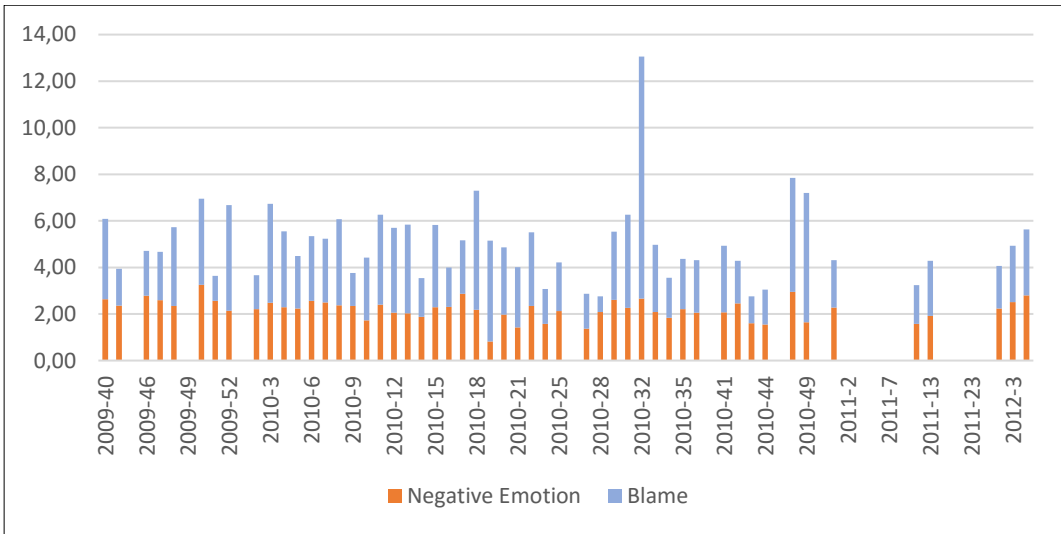


Figure 1. Frequency distribution of *negative emotion* and *blame* in Autoblog reader comments

Figure 2 depicts a frequency distribution of results of *positive emotion* from LIWC and *praise, satisfaction, and inspiration* from Diction using the Autoblog reader comments. According to the results, positive reactions are low at the beginning of the crisis. However, positive reactions (especially *praise* and *satisfaction*) seem to rise on the 41<sup>st</sup> week of 2009 when Toyota's chief executive apologizes and shows sincere remorse for the victims of the crash (NYT, October 3, 2009). In addition to its apology, Toyota's instructing information to Toyota drivers in case of unintended acceleration may have also affected the reactions positively (NYT, October 4, 2009).

After the rise on 41<sup>st</sup> week of 2009, positive reactions hit a peak when the *praise* emotion increases drastically on the 46<sup>th</sup> week of 2009. Although the 46<sup>th</sup> week started on a negative note when N.H.T.S.A. accused Toyota for inadequate and misleading information about the cause of the pedal problem, Toyota seems to dodge the negative reactions by stating that the firm agrees with the agency and is working on vehicle-based remedies (NYT, November 8, 2009). After the peak, the positive reactions remain strong with Toyota's corrective actions, boosting, and cooperation tactics until mid-June. Towards the end of June, Toyota's attention shifts from the gas pedal crisis to the upcoming 2011 model Sienna (NYT, June 25, 2010). This shift probably resulted in the decrease of positive reactions to Toyota until the 27<sup>th</sup> week of 2010. After that, the positive reactions gradually increase and hit another high point at the first week of August 2010 when the chief executive of Toyota assured the public that Toyota will pay more attention to its customers with the new organizational division that they have formed (NYT, August 4, 2010).

It is interesting that both negative and positive reactions show similar patterns in the first half of August (32<sup>nd</sup> and the 33<sup>rd</sup> weeks of 2010) as they both increase at the former week and decrease notably at the latter week. The mentioned time period includes both Toyota's denial for faulty electronics systems and the government's accident reports. Therefore, a similar pattern could be formed by the reactions of readers with opposite attributions of Toyota. For example, Toyota's denial could have

gained positive reactions from loyal customers while increasing negative responses from sceptics.

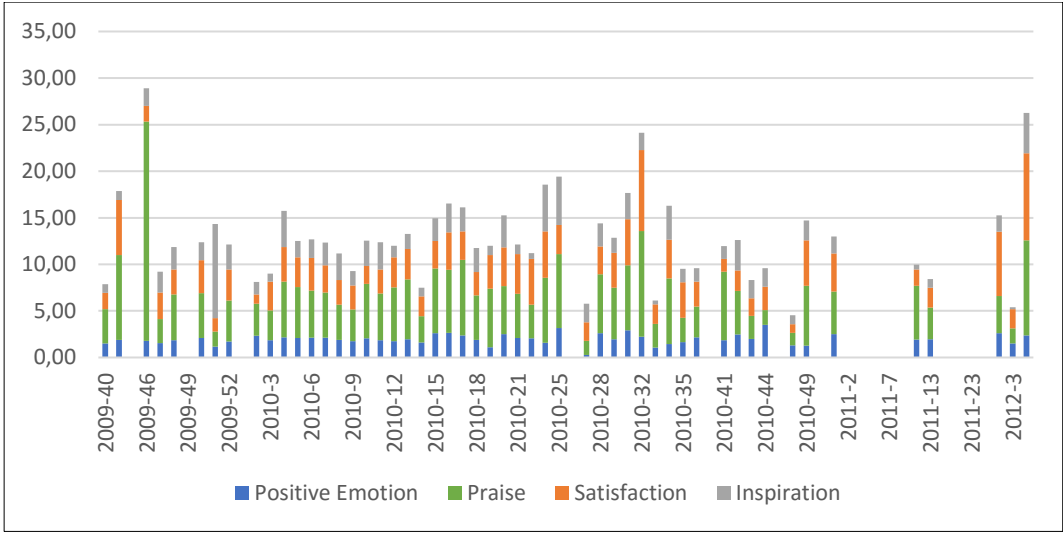


Figure 2. Frequency distribution of *positive emotion, praise, satisfaction, and inspiration* in Autblog reader comments

Figure 3 shows the distribution of *Organizational Virtue Organization* from CATScanner using Autblog reader comments. *Organizational Virtue Orientation* is salient during late January to mid-March, which can be tied to Toyota’s increased efforts to cooperate with N.H.T.S.A. to find a technical solution to repair the faulty gas pedals.

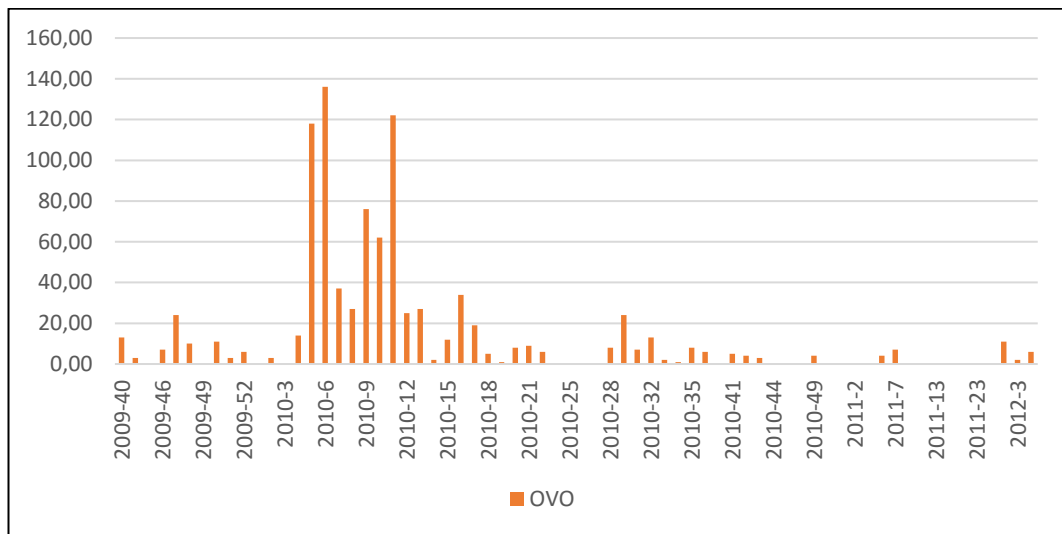


Figure 3. Frequency distribution of *OVO* in Autoblog reader comments

Figure 4 is the distribution of *negative emotions* from LIWC and *blame* from Diction in Jalopnik reader comments. The frequencies of *negative emotion* and *blame* are notably high at the beginning of the crisis. With Toyota’s instructing information and statements that assures people that Toyota is working on a solution, negative reactions seem to have decreased around mid-November of 2009. However, with the rising number of trapped gas pedal complaints, the speculations that the unintended acceleration was caused by electrical systems and the tragic car accident that killed four people on December 2009, negative reactions increased gradually and peaked on the third week of 2010 (NYT, November 26 and 29, 2009). After that, negative reactions generally remained at the same level. However, *blame* towards Toyota increased again at the end of 2010 when Toyota was surrounded by investigations, lawsuits, and new recalls related to steering problems and stalling cars.

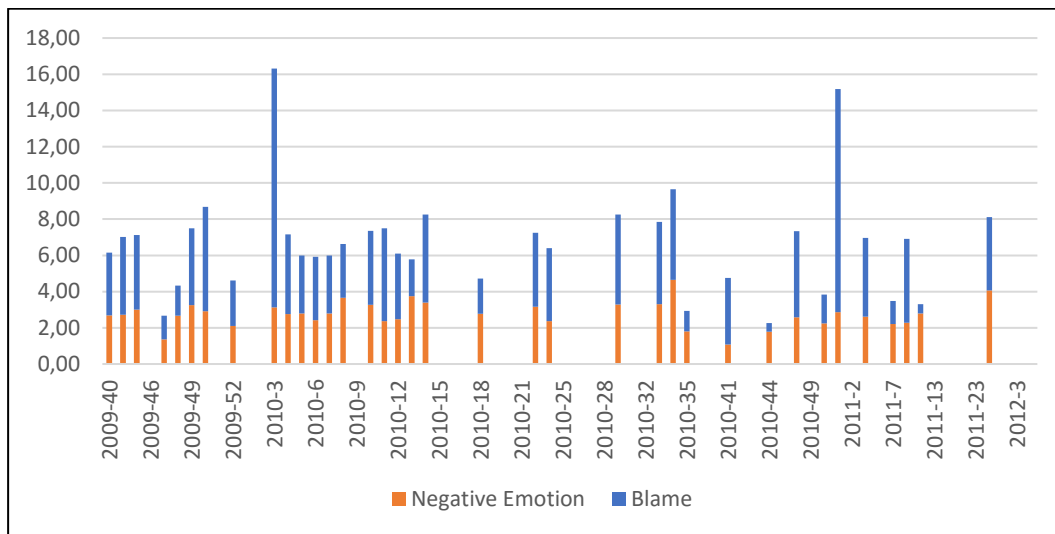


Figure 4. Frequency distribution of *negative emotion* and *blame* in Jalopnik reader comments

Figure 5 depicts a frequency distribution of results of *positive emotion* from LIWC, *praise*, *satisfaction*, and *inspiration* from Diction using Jalopnik reader comments. The frequencies of positive reactions towards Toyota remain high throughout the crisis. The positive reactions reach their peak around late February (the 9<sup>th</sup> week of 2011). At the time, questions were raised about whether Toyota had recalled a sufficient number of vehicles regarding the gas pedal entrapment although the firm recalled more than 14 million vehicles in total globally. The positive reactions may have risen when the N.H.T.S.A. stated that the number of recalled vehicles is enough (NYT, February 25, 2011).

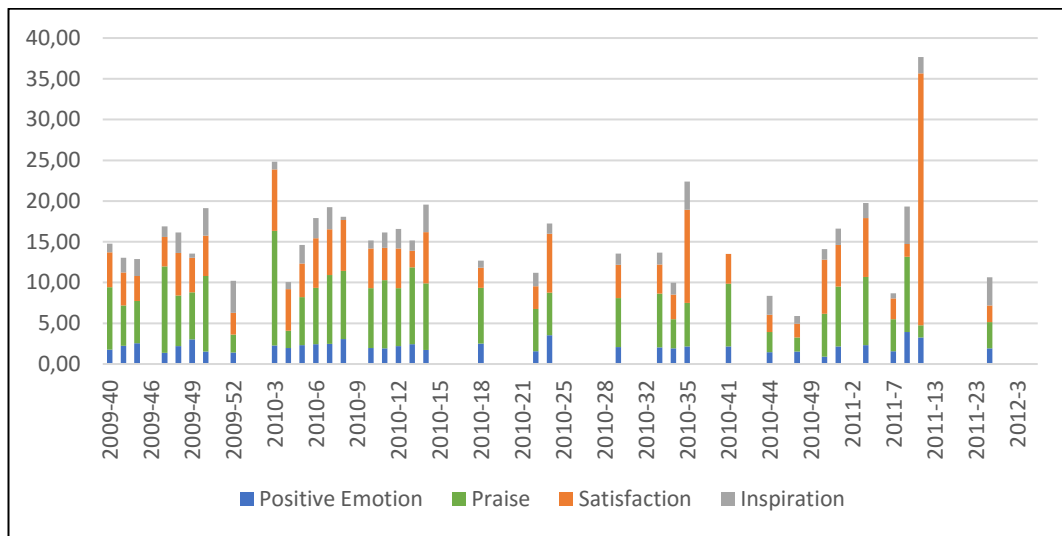


Figure 5. Frequency distribution of *positive emotion, praise, satisfaction, and inspiration* in Jalopnik reader comments

Lastly, the frequency distribution of *Organizational Virtue Organization* from CATScanner using the Jalopnik reader comments is shown in Figure 6. According to the figure, *Organizational Virtue Organization* value is prominent among Jalopnik reader comments between late January and late March. During this period, Toyota offered an apology and assured a solution while offering its full cooperation with the government to figure out what caused the sudden acceleration problem (NYT, January 30, 2010; NYT, March 30, 2010).

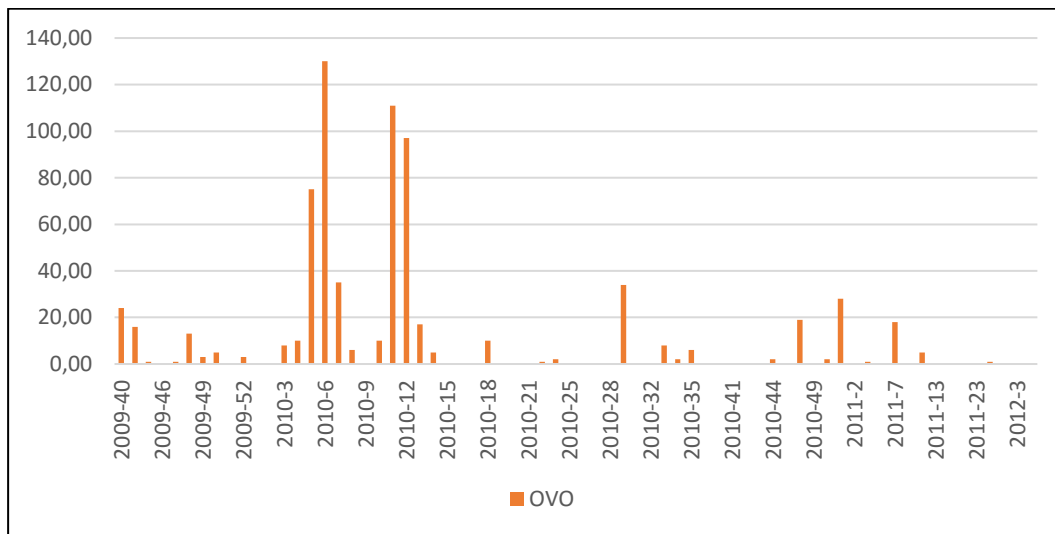


Figure 6. Frequency distribution of OVO in Jalopnik reader comments

The positive emotional reactions towards Toyota are higher than the negative emotional reactions among both Autoblog and Jalopnik readers. This may be tied to the Toyota’s positive prior history. In terms of *Organizational Virtue Orientation*, the reactions show a similar pattern in both of the blogs. On the other hand, the patterns of the positive and the negative emotions are different in the blogs.

#### 4.2. Regression Analyses Results

This section will provide the results of the regression analyses with the crisis response tactics as independent variables and the emotional reactions as dependent variables. The emotional reactions in Autoblog and Jalopnik reader comments are analyzed separately, and therefore the results will be given in two sections. The descriptive statistics of the independent variables, which are *apology*, *sympathy*, *attack the accuser*, *differentiation*, *minimization*, *bolstering*, *boosting*, *compensation*,



*cooperation, corrective action, shifting the blame, simple denial, and vague response* are given in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Descriptive Statistics for the Crisis Communication Tactics of Toyota*

Tactic	M (frequency)	SD	N	Max	Min
Apology	0.11	0.40	68	2.25	0.00
Sympathy	0.37	1.18	68	8.50	0.00
Attack the Accuser	0.27	0.73	68	4.00	0.00
Differentiation	0.09	0.29	68	1.50	0.00
Minimization	0.18	0.51	68	3.00	0.00
Bolstering	0.79	1.83	68	9.00	0.00
Boosting	1.21	3.06	68	20.00	0.00
Compensation	0.24	0.55	68	2.00	0.00
Cooperation	0.34	0.95	68	4.50	0.00
Corrective Action	1.35	3.52	68	23.50	0.00
Shifting the Blame	0.15	0.51	68	2.50	0.00
Simple Denial	0.56	1.35	68	8.00	0.00
Vague Response	0.55	1.45	68	9.50	0.00

#### **4.2.1. Results for Autoblog Reader Comments**

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics for the dependent variables (*positive emotion, negative emotion, anxiety, anger, sadness, praise, satisfaction, inspiration, blame, and OVO*) from Autoblog. This will be followed by the regression results with public emotions collected from Autoblog reader comments.

Table 2

*Descriptive Statistics for Public Emotions Derived from Autoblog Reader Comments*

Emotion	M	SD	N	Max	Min
Positive Emotion	1.51 %	0.97	68	3.49	0.00
Negative Emotion	1.68 %	1.02	68	3.25	0.00
Anxiety	0.15 %	0.12	68	0.42	0.00
Anger	0.50 %	0.32	68	1.14	0.00
Sadness	0.27 %	0.19	68	0.71	0.00
Praise	4.08 %	3.73	68	23.54	0.00
Satisfaction	2.53 %	2.03	68	9.34	0.00
Inspiration	1.69 %	1.66	68	10.10	0.00
Blame	2.17 %	1.81	68	10.40	0.00
OVO	13.75 (word count)	27.84	68	136.00	0.00

The results of the regression analyses which test the impacts of the crisis communication tactics on the emotions in Autoblog reader comments are given below in terms of emotions.

- *Negative emotion* is affected significantly in a negative way by *shifting the blame* ( $p < .05$ ). In contrast, negative emotion increases with both *simple denial* ( $p < .05$ ) and *vague response* ( $p < .05$ ).
- *Anxiety* is affected significantly in a positive way by *boosting* ( $p < .05$ ), *simple denial* ( $p < .01$ ), and *vague response* ( $p < .05$ ). The results also show that *corrective action* and *shifting the blame* have a significant negative effect on *anxiety* ( $p < .05$  for both).
- *Anger* decreases with the use of *bolstering* ( $p < .05$ ) and *shifting the blame* ( $p < .05$ ). *Simple denial* and *vague response* have a significant positive effect on *anger* with the significance level less than .05 for both tactics.

- *Praise* shows similar results to *anger*. It is affected negatively by *bolstering* ( $p < .01$ ) and *shifting the blame* ( $p < .05$ ) while *simple denial* has a significant positive effect with  $p < .05$ .
- According to the regression results shown in Table 10, *blame* is decreased by *bolstering* ( $p < .05$ ), *compensation* ( $p < .05$ ), and *shifting the blame* ( $p < .01$ ), while it is increased by *simple denial* ( $p < .01$ ) and *vague response* ( $p < .05$ ).
- *Organizational Virtue Organization* is positively affected by *cooperation* ( $p < .05$ ) and *corrective action* ( $p < .01$ ). On the other hand, *apology* and *shifting the blame* have a significantly negative effect on *OVO*, with  $p < .05$  for both tactics.
- For *positive emotion*, *sadness*, *inspiration*, and *satisfaction*, no significant effects of communication tactics were found.

The regression results of the crisis communication tactics and the coded Autoblog reader emotions are provided in Tables 3 to 12. However, Tables 3, 7, 9, and 10, which show the regression results with *positive emotion*, *sadness*, *satisfaction*, and *inspiration*, do not show any significant results.

Table 3

*Regression Results with Positive Emotion Derived from Autblog Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	1.416	.142		9.989	.000
Apology	-1.643	1.050	-.675	-1.565	.123
Sympathy	.370	.309	.450	1.197	.236
Attack the Accuser	-.221	.369	-.167	-.599	.552
Differentiation	.250	1.028	.074	.243	.809
Minimization	.575	.518	.301	1.110	.272
Bolstering	-.626	.402	-1.179	-1.556	.126
Boosting	.159	.206	.501	.773	.443
Compensation	-.342	.396	-.193	-.865	.391
Cooperation	.533	.372	.520	1.434	.157
Corrective Action	-.031	.142	-.111	-.216	.830
Shifting the Blame	-.736	.444	-.387	-1.657	.103
Simple Denial	.291	.278	.404	1.049	.299
Vague Response	.489	.283	.727	1.725	.090

Dependent Variable: Positive Emotion

N = 68

R Square = .147

Adjusted R Square = -.058

F = .716, Significance = .000

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 4

*Regression Results with Negative Emotion Derived from Autoblog Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	1.577	.142		11.108	.000
Apology	-.796	1.051	-.312	-.758	.452
Sympathy	.387	.309	.450	1.250	.217
Attack Accuser	-.056	.370	-.041	-.152	.880
Differentiation	-.561	1.029	-.158	-.545	.588
Minimization	.572	.519	.286	1.103	.275
Bolstering	-.768	.403	-1.382	-1.907	.062
Boosting	.322	.206	.967	1.559	.125
Compensation	-.770	.396	-.416	-1.944	.057
Cooperation	.231	.372	.215	.621	.537
Corrective Action	-.169	.142	-.585	-1.188	.240
Shifting the Blame	-1.003	.445	-.504*	-2.254	.028
Simple Denial	.697	.278	.924*	2.509	.015
Vague Response	.592	.284	.841*	2.087	.042

Dependent Variable: Negative Emotion

N = 68

R Square = .220

Adjusted R Square = .032

F = 1.171, Significance = .325

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 5

*Regression Results with Anxiety Derived from Autblog Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	.128	.016		7.869	.000
Apology	-.012	.121	-.040	-.101	.920
Sympathy	.007	.036	.070	.203	.840
Attack Accuser	.028	.043	.170	.662	.511
Differentiation	-.138	.118	-.325	-1.167	.248
Minimization	.062	.060	.261	1.046	.300
Bolstering	-.076	.046	-1.143	-1.637	.107
Boosting	.053	.024	1.347*	2.255	.028
Compensation	-.052	.046	-.236	-1.145	.257
Cooperation	-.020	.043	-.159	-.475	.636
Corrective Action	-.040	.016	-1.162*	-2.449	.018
Shifting the Blame	-.111	.051	-.468*	-2.172	.034
Simple Denial	.108	.032	1.200**	3.381	.001
Vague Response	.071	.033	.840*	2.162	.035

Dependent Variable: Anxiety

N = 68

R Square = .276

Adjusted R Square = .102

F = 1.584, Significance = .119

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 6

*Regression Results with Anger Derived from Autoblog Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized		Standardized		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	.497	.045		11.033	.000
Apology	-.270	.333	-.338	-.811	.421
Sympathy	.193	.098	.715	1.965	.055
Attack Accuser	-.074	.117	-.170	-.629	.532
Differentiation	-.272	.326	-.243	-.832	.409
Minimization	.224	.164	.358	1.363	.178
Bolstering	-.327	.128	-1.873*	-2.556	.013
Boosting	.096	.065	.922	1.470	.147
Compensation	-.225	.126	-.388	-1.792	.079
Cooperation	.143	.118	.426	1.215	.230
Corrective Action	-.051	.045	-.565	-1.134	.262
Shifting the Blame	-.310	.141	-.497*	-2.199	.032
Simple Denial	.207	.088	.873*	2.344	.023
Vague Response	.209	.090	.948*	2.326	.024

Dependent Variable: Anger

N = 68

R Square = .203

Adjusted R Square = .011

F = 1.056, Significance = .405

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 7

*Regression Results with Sadness Derived from Autblog Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	.247	.027		9.036	.000
Apology	-.132	.203	-.281	-.649	.519
Sympathy	.058	.060	.367	.974	.334
Attack Accuser	.038	.071	.149	.532	.597
Differentiation	-.096	.199	-.146	-.481	.632
Minimization	.090	.100	.244	.898	.373
Bolstering	-.128	.078	-1.255	-1.652	.104
Boosting	.067	.040	1.095	1.684	.098
Compensation	-.102	.076	-.300	-1.338	.187
Cooperation	.020	.072	.100	.275	.784
Corrective Action	-.025	.027	-.474	-.918	.363
Shifting the Blame	-.156	.086	-.427	-1.822	.074
Simple Denial	.102	.054	.734	1.901	.063
Vague Response	.061	.055	.467	1.106	.274

Dependent Variable: Sadness

N = 68

R Square = .142

Adjusted R Square = -.064

F = .689, Significance = .765

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001



Table 8

*Regression Results with Praise Derived from Autoblog Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	3.833	.524		7.318	.000
Apology	-4.664	3.879	-.499	-1.202	.234
Sympathy	1.399	1.141	.444	1.226	.225
Attack Accuser	.751	1.364	.148	.550	.584
Differentiation	-3.826	3.798	-.293	-1.008	.318
Minimization	2.878	1.913	.393	1.505	.138
Bolstering	-4.307	1.486	-2.113**	-2.898	.005
Boosting	1.378	.761	1.130	1.811	.076
Compensation	-1.800	1.462	-.265	-1.232	.223
Cooperation	1.907	1.373	.484	1.389	.171
Corrective Action	-.248	.526	-.234	-.473	.638
Shifting the Blame	-3.956	1.641	-.542*	-2.410	.019
Simple Denial	2.630	1.026	.950*	2.564	.013
Vague Response	1.557	1.047	.603	1.488	.143

Dependent Variable: Praise

N = 68

R Square = .211

Adjusted R Square = .021

F = 1.108, Significance = .373

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 9

*Regression Results with Satisfaction Derived from Autoblog Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized		Standardized		Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	2.436	.304		8.008	.000
Apology	-1.535	2.253	-.302	-.681	.499
Sympathy	.551	.663	.321	.831	.410
Attack Accuser	-.211	.793	-.076	-.266	.791
Differentiation	-1.420	2.206	-.200	-.644	.523
Minimization	1.027	1.111	.258	.924	.359
Bolstering	-1.213	.863	-1.093	-1.405	.166
Boosting	.367	.442	.553	.830	.410
Compensation	-.707	.849	-.191	-.833	.409
Cooperation	.497	.798	.232	.624	.536
Corrective Action	-.243	.305	-.421	-.796	.430
Shifting the Blame	-1.547	.953	-.390	-1.622	.111
Simple Denial	1.027	.596	.682	1.724	.090
Vague Response	1.012	.608	.720	1.664	.102

Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

N = 68

R Square = .106

Adjusted R Square = -.116

F = .466, Significance = .934

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 10

*Regression Results with Inspiration Derived from Autblog Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	1.645	.256		6.435	.000
Apology	-.610	1.894	-.146	-.322	.749
Sympathy	.108	.557	.077	.194	.847
Attack Accuser	-.030	.666	-.013	-.045	.964
Differentiation	.774	1.854	.133	.418	.678
Minimization	.311	.934	.095	.333	.740
Bolstering	-.448	.726	-.494	-.618	.539
Boosting	.159	.371	.292	.427	.671
Compensation	-.475	.714	-.157	-.665	.509
Cooperation	.375	.670	.214	.559	.579
Corrective Action	-.084	.257	-.178	-.328	.744
Shifting the Blame	-.755	.801	-.232	-.942	.351
Simple Denial	.299	.501	.243	.598	.553
Vague Response	.300	.511	.261	.588	.559

Dependent Variable: Inspiration

N = 68

R Square = .051

Adjusted R Square = -.178

F = .223, Significance = .998

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 11

*Regression Results with Blame Derived from Autoblog Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	2.052	.245		8.363	.000
Apology	-1.250	1.818	-.275	-.688	.495
Sympathy	.336	.535	.219	.629	.532
Attack Accuser	.422	.639	.171	.660	.512
Differentiation	-1.420	1.780	-.224	-.798	.428
Minimization	.679	.896	.191	.758	.452
Bolstering	-1.537	.696	-1.552*	-2.207	.032
Boosting	.564	.357	.951	1.582	.120
Compensation	-1.509	.685	-.457*	-2.204	.032
Cooperation	.573	.643	.299	.890	.377
Corrective Action	-.339	.246	-.658	-1.377	.174
Shifting the Blame	-2.135	.769	-.602**	-2.777	.008
Simple Denial	1.508	.481	1.120**	3.137	.003
Vague Response	1.192	.490	.950*	2.431	.018

Dependent Variable: Blame

N = 68

R Square = .266

Adjusted R Square = .090

F = 1.509, Significance = .144

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 12

*Regression Results with OVO Derived from Autoblog Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	3.278	2.161		1.517	.135
Apology	-37.140	16.007	-.532*	-2.320	.024
Sympathy	1.700	4.709	.072	.361	.720
Attack Accuser	10.761	5.631	.284	1.911	.061
Differentiation	12.598	15.672	.129	.804	.425
Minimization	11.627	7.894	.213	1.473	.147
Bolstering	-2.754	6.133	-.181	-.449	.655
Boosting	-3.054	3.140	-.336	-.972	.335
Compensation	-9.232	6.032	-.182	-1.530	.132
Cooperation	11.593	5.667	.395*	2.046	.046
Corrective Action	6.438	2.169	.814**	2.968	.004
Shifting the Blame	-15.743	6.773	-.289*	-2.325	.024
Simple Denial	1.738	4.232	.084	.411	.683
Vague Response	8.439	4.319	.438	1.954	.056

Dependent Variable: OVO

N = 68

R Square = .758

Adjusted R Square = .700

F = 13.041, Significance = .000

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

#### 4.2.2. Results for Jalopnik Reader Comments

Table 13 shows the descriptive statistics for the dependent variables (*positive emotion, negative emotion, anxiety, anger, sadness, praise, satisfaction, inspiration, blame, and OVO*) from Jalopnik. This is followed by the regression results with the emotional reactions of Jalopnik readers as the dependent variables and the crisis communication tactics (*apology, sympathy, attack the accuser, differentiation, minimization, bolstering, boosting, compensation, cooperation, corrective action, shifting the blame, simple denial, and vague response*) as the independent variables.

Table 13  
*Descriptive Statistics for Public Emotions Derived Jalopnik Reader Comments*

Emotion	M	SD	N	Max	Min
Positive Emotion	1.15 %	1.18	68	3.91	0.00
Negative Emotion	1.46 %	1.48	68	4.65	0.00
Anxiety	0.17 %	0.24	68	0.96	0.00
Anger	0.57 %	0.62	68	2.03	0.00
Sadness	0.19 %	0.26	68	1.28	0.00
Praise	3.35 %	3.74	68	14.04	0.00
Satisfaction	2.75 %	4.37	68	30.91	0.00
Inspiration	0.98 %	1.21	68	4.63	0.00
Blame	2.07 %	2.72	68	13.20	0.00
OVO	10.43 (word count)	25.22	68	130.00	0.00

The results of the regression analyses with the public emotions in Jalopnik reader comments coded by using LIWC, Diction, and CATScanner dictionaries showed significant results for only *positive emotion, praise, and Organizational Virtue Orientation*.

- *Positive emotion* is affected significantly in a negative way by *sympathy* ( $p < .05$ ). In contrast, it increases with both *apology* ( $p < .05$ ) and *shifting the blame* ( $p < .05$ ).
- *Praise* is only affected by *sympathy*, with the significance level less than .05.
- *Organizational Virtue Orientation* increases with the use of the *attack the accuser* ( $p < .05$ ) tactic.

The regression results of the crisis communication tactics and the Jalopnik reader emotions are given in Tables 14 to 23. Only Tables 14, 19, and 23 show significant results.

Table 14

*Regression Results with Positive Emotion Derived from Jalopnik Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized		Standardized		Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	1.035	.160		6.482	.000
Apology	2.440	1.183	.826*	2.064	.044
Sympathy	-.709	.348	-.711*	-2.037	.047
Attack Accuser	.243	.416	.151	.584	.562
Differentiation	.811	1.158	.196	.700	.487
Minimization	-.682	.583	-.295	-1.170	.247
Bolstering	.245	.453	.380	.540	.591
Boosting	.177	.232	.459	.762	.450
Compensation	-.346	.446	-.161	-.777	.441
Cooperation	-.414	.419	-.333	-.988	.327
Corrective Action	.028	.160	.082	.172	.864
Shifting the Blame	1.064	.500	.462*	2.127	.038
Simple Denial	.038	.313	.043	.121	.904
Vague Response	-.572	.319	-.701	-1.793	.079

Dependent Variable: Positive Emotion

N = 68

R Square = .265

Adjusted R Square = .088

F = 1.499, Significance = .148

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001



Table 15

*Regression Results with Negative Emotion Derived from Jalopnik Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	1.305	.206		6.343	.000
Apology	2.157	1.524	.582	1.415	.163
Sympathy	-.644	.448	-.515	-1.436	.157
Attack Accuser	.107	.536	.053	.199	.843
Differentiation	.798	1.492	.154	.535	.595
Minimization	-.696	.751	-.240	-.927	.358
Bolstering	-.064	.584	-.079	-.110	.913
Boosting	.381	.299	.788	1.274	.208
Compensation	-.448	.574	-.167	-.781	.438
Cooperation	-.259	.539	-.166	-.480	.633
Corrective Action	-.087	.206	-.206	-.420	.676
Shifting the Blame	1.022	.645	.354	1.585	.119
Simple Denial	.283	.403	.258	.702	.486
Vague Response	-.414	.411	-.405	-1.006	.319

Dependent Variable: Negative Emotion

N = 68

R Square = .224

Adjusted R Square = .037

F = 1.198, Significance = .306

\*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01, \*\*\*p < 0.001

Table 16

*Regression Results with Anxiety Derived from Jalopnik Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	.152	.036		4.239	.000
Apology	.111	.265	.188	.418	.678
Sympathy	-.114	.078	-.575	-1.467	.148
Attack Accuser	.028	.093	.086	.297	.768
Differentiation	.065	.259	.079	.252	.802
Minimization	-.093	.131	-.201	-.711	.480
Bolstering	.036	.102	.278	.352	.726
Boosting	-.003	.052	-.037	-.054	.957
Compensation	-.001	.100	-.002	-.009	.993
Cooperation	-.068	.094	-.272	-.721	.474
Corrective Action	.015	.036	.222	.415	.680
Shifting the Blame	.029	.112	.063	.259	.797
Simple Denial	.050	.070	.287	.715	.478
Vague Response	-.002	.071	-.012	-.028	.978

Dependent Variable: Anxiety

N = 68

R Square = .075

Adjusted R Square = -.148

F = .336, Significance = .983

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 17

*Regression Result with Anger Derived from Jalopnik Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	.506	.086		5.874	.000
Apology	1.062	.638	.685	1.664	.102
Sympathy	-.234	.188	-.446	-1.244	.219
Attack the Accuser	.055	.225	.065	.244	.808
Differentiation	.093	.625	.043	.149	.882
Minimization	-.307	.315	-.253	-.975	.334
Bolstering	-.026	.245	-.077	-.107	.915
Boosting	.212	.125	1.050	1.697	.096
Compensation	-.037	.241	-.033	-.153	.879
Cooperation	-.209	.226	-.319	-.923	.360
Corrective Action	-.095	.086	-.542	-1.103	.275
Shifting the Blame	.384	.270	.317	1.421	.161
Simple Denial	.135	.169	.294	.800	.427
Vague Response	-.181	.172	-.422	-1.048	.299

Dependent Variable: Anger

N = 68

R Square = .224

Adjusted R Square = .037

F = 1.196, Significance = .308

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 18

*Regression Results with Sadness Derived from Jalopnik Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	.183	.038		4.757	.000
Apology	.251	.284	.390	.884	.381
Sympathy	-.038	.084	-.173	-.451	.654
Attack the Accuser	-.026	.100	-.075	-.261	.795
Differentiation	.066	.278	.074	.238	.813
Minimization	.018	.140	.035	.126	.901
Bolstering	.005	.109	.035	.045	.964
Boosting	.036	.056	.434	.653	.516
Compensation	-.106	.107	-.226	-.986	.328
Cooperation	-.027	.101	-.100	-.269	.789
Corrective Action	-.025	.039	-.349	-.662	.511
Shifting the Blame	.091	.120	.182	.760	.450
Simple Denial	.010	.075	.054	.138	.891
Vague Response	-.009	.077	-.049	-.115	.909

Dependent Variable: Sadness

N = 68

R Square = .107

Adjusted R Square = -.108

F = .497, Significance = .917

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 19

*Regression Result with Praise Derived from Jalopnik Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized		Standardized		Sig.
	Coefficients		Coefficients		
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	2.782	.521		5.340	.000
Apology	3.829	3.858	.409	.992	.325
Sympathy	-2.364	1.135	-.749*	-2.082	.042
Attack the Accuser	1.343	1.357	.264	.989	.327
Differentiation	2.751	3.778	.210	.728	.470
Minimization	-1.787	1.903	-.244	-.939	.352
Bolstering	.565	1.478	.277	.382	.704
Boosting	.775	.757	.635	1.024	.310
Compensation	-1.274	1.454	-.187	-.876	.385
Cooperation	-1.189	1.366	-.302	-.870	.388
Corrective Action	-.061	.523	-.058	-.118	.907
Shifting the Blame	1.441	1.633	.197	.883	.381
Simple Denial	.743	1.020	.268	.728	.470
Vague Response	-.922	1.041	-.357	-.885	.380

Dependent Variable: Praise

N = 68

R Square = .220

Adjusted R Square = .033

F = 1.174, Significance = .323

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 20

*Regression Results with Satisfaction Derived from Jalopnik Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	2.488	.665		3.741	.000
Apology	3.184	4.926	.291	.646	.521
Sympathy	-1.768	1.449	-.478	-1.220	.228
Attack Accuser	.303	1.733	.051	.175	.862
Differentiation	2.869	4.823	.187	.595	.554
Minimization	-1.694	2.429	-.197	-.697	.489
Bolstering	.868	1.887	.363	.460	.648
Boosting	.040	.966	.028	.041	.967
Compensation	-.020	1.856	-.003	-.011	.991
Cooperation	-.480	1.744	-.104	-.275	.784
Corrective Action	.392	.667	.316	.588	.559
Shifting the Blame	2.082	2.084	.244	.999	.322
Simple Denial	-.261	1.302	-.081	-.201	.842
Vague Response	-1.336	1.329	-.442	-1.005	.319

Dependent Variable: Satisfaction

N = 68

R Square = .073

Adjusted R Square = -.150

F = .328, Significance = .984

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 21

*Regression Results with Inspiration Derived from Jalopnik Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.832	.175		4.743	.000
Apology	-.117	1.300	-.038	-.090	.929
Sympathy	-.541	.382	-.527	-1.414	.163
Attack the Accuser	.197	.457	.119	.430	.669
Differentiation	-.102	1.273	-.024	-.080	.937
Minimization	-.040	.641	-.017	-.062	.951
Bolstering	.244	.498	.368	.490	.626
Boosting	.228	.255	.574	.892	.376
Compensation	-.498	.490	-.225	-1.016	.314
Cooperation	-.376	.460	-.294	-.817	.418
Corrective Action	-.071	.176	-.205	-.402	.689
Shifting the Blame	.099	.550	.042	.180	.857
Simple Denial	.280	.344	.311	.814	.419
Vague Response	.048	.351	.057	.136	.892

Dependent Variable: Inspiration

N = 68

R Square = .162

Adjusted R Square = -.040

F = .803, Significance = .654

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

Table 22

*Regression Results with Blame Derived from Jalopnik Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	1.830	.409		4.472	.000
Apology	1.291	3.031	.190	.426	.672
Sympathy	-1.346	.892	-.586	-1.509	.137
Attack the Accuser	.012	1.066	.003	.011	.991
Differentiation	1.376	2.968	.145	.464	.645
Minimization	-1.148	1.495	-.215	-.768	.446
Bolstering	.715	1.161	.482	.616	.541
Boosting	-.066	.595	-.074	-.111	.912
Compensation	.513	1.142	.104	.449	.655
Cooperation	-.489	1.073	-.171	-.456	.650
Corrective Action	.229	.411	.297	.558	.579
Shifting the Blame	1.693	1.282	.319	1.320	.192
Simple Denial	-.063	.801	-.031	-.079	.937
Vague Response	-.532	.818	-.283	-.650	.518

Dependent Variable: Blame

N = 68

R Square = .090

Adjusted R Square = -.129

F = .410, Significance = .960

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001



Table 23

*Regression Results with OVO Derived from Jalopnik Reader Comments*

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta	t	
(Constant)	3.699	2.651		1.395	.169
Apology	-16.101	19.636	-.255	-.820	.416
Sympathy	-7.147	5.777	-.335	-1.237	.221
Attack the Accuser	16.874	6.907	.491*	2.443	.018
Differentiation	-25.335	19.225	-.287	-1.318	.193
Minimization	16.387	9.683	.331	1.692	.096
Bolstering	4.771	7.523	.346	.634	.529
Boosting	-3.517	3.852	-.427	-.913	.365
Compensation	-11.795	7.400	-.257	-1.594	.117
Cooperation	5.891	6.952	.221	.847	.400
Corrective Action	2.793	2.661	.390	1.050	.298
Shifting the Blame	-1.007	8.308	-.020	-.121	.904
Simple Denial	-.322	5.191	-.017	-.062	.951
Vague Response	6.688	5.298	.383	1.262	.212

Dependent Variable: OVO

N = 68

R Square = .557

Adjusted R Square = .451

F = 5.225, Significance = .000

\*p &lt; 0.05, \*\*p &lt; 0.01, \*\*\*p &lt; 0.001

## CHAPTER 5

### DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As noted in the literature review, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SSCT) argues that not all communication responses fit a given crisis situation. In other words, organizations should tailor their responses to maximize the reputational protection provided by the communication.

When it comes to the regression analyses regarding the impacts of Toyota's crisis communication tactics, as the literature suggests, communication tactics such as cooperation and corrective action increase Organization Virtue Orientation, and corrective action also decreases anxiety among Autoblog readers (Dutta and Pulling, 2011). Likewise, compensation also decreases the negative emotion of blame. Coombs and Holladay (2007) suggest that the response tactics should be considered according to the level of anger in stakeholders; i.e., with strong anger levels where there is management misconduct or preventable crisis situation, compensation and/or full apology should be applied. Although our findings about corrective action, cooperation, and compensation support this statement, our apology results point to contradictory directions in the different blogs. Organizational Virtue Organization decreases among Autoblog readers with the use of apology. This finding supports Kim et al. (2004), who suggest that apology receives negative reactions in an integrity-based crisis. The act of apology showed the public that Toyota took responsibility for both its faulty pedals and its late reaction to the crisis. This might be perceived as unethical and untrustworthy among the Autoblog readers and may have reignited their anger if the apology was perceived as not genuine (Grebe, 2013). A similar interpretation is made by Zhang (2012) in terms of apology, who conclude that consumers in some cases do not accept the apology and stick with revenge. However, apology increases positive

emotions among Jalopnik readers, which supports the existing literature (e.g., Coombs and Holladay, 2012; McDonald et al., 2010; Utz, Matzat, and Snijders, 2009).

The results also show that sympathy decreases positive emotions and praise among Jalopnik readers, even though SCCT suggests that “expressions of sympathy help to reduce anger while counseling helps with extreme anxiety” (Coombs, 2015). It would be natural to think that sympathy would gain positive reactions from the public, since it indicates that the organization shows concern. However, in Toyota’s case, the results are counter-intuitive but supportive to the findings of DiStaso et al. (2014), who suggest that sympathy should be avoided since it indicates that the firm is avoiding responsibility. If the responsibility level is not clear, sympathy might be acceptable, otherwise organizations should take responsibility in all cases (Coombs and Holladay, 2008).

The results of the denial tactics (attacking the accuser, shifting the blame, and simple denial) are difficult to interpret. For example, shifting the blame decreases negative emotions, anxiety, anger, blame, praise, and Organizational Virtue Orientation among Autoblog readers, and also increases positive emotions among Jalopnik readers. It makes sense that Toyota’s detaching itself from the crisis would reduce its responsibility and therefore decrease negative reactions, as Kim et al. (2004) suggest. On the other hand, decrease in praise and OVO by shifting the blame confirms Coombs’ (2015) statement that shifting the blame draws negative reaction. One explanation might be the fact that justifications of firms with prior positive reputations may more easily accepted by the public (c.f., Coombs, 2007) to the point that any show of weakness of these firms provoke disappointment, reflected in a decrease in positive feelings. This also clarifies the increase in OVO among Jalopnik readers by using the attacking the accuser tactic; the readers might have reacted to Toyota positively because of its positive prior reputation despite the fact that Coombs (2007) claims that attacking the accuser results in negative reactions if the organization is perceived as responsible for the crisis. The simple denial tactic resembles the shifting the blame tactic in terms of contradictory results. It increases negative emotions, anxiety, anger, and blame among Autoblog readers. This is in line with McDonald et al. (2010), who

suggest that denial generates strong negative reactions. Our findings are also consistent with the recommendation that denial tactics should be used for victim cluster crises (Coombs, 2007), which is not the case for Toyota. In contrast, simple denial also increased praise among Autoblog readers. The study of NASA that proved Toyota right in denying the faulty electronics system might be the cause of the increased praise.

The literature suggests that when faced with crises that have a strong organizational crisis responsibility attribution, the organization should not be meager in its efforts to regain stakeholder trust. According to SCCT, the organization should match the crisis response level to the level of crisis responsibility; i.e., the greater the crisis responsibility, the more accommodative and stakeholder-oriented the response should be. In Toyota's case, simple denial might be perceived as "cheap talk" by the stakeholders (Poppo and Schepker, 2010) and gain negative reactions considering the responsibility level of Toyota is high. This could be another reason for the increased negative emotions towards Toyota by the usage of the simple denial tactic.

Extant literature suggests that stakeholders need credible explanations of the crisis (Pfarrer et al. 2008; Bachmann et al., 2015). In spite of this, McDonald et al. (2010) studied the effects of the "no comment" tactic and found it to be successful in mitigating anger and negative word-of-mouth. However, the vague response tactic in Toyota's case has the opposite effect on Autoblog readers. It increases negative emotions, anxiety, anger, and blame, which supports Pfarrer et al. (2008) and Bachmann et al. (2015).

Coombs (2007) suggests that bolstering tactics should be used for accidental types of crises. Since Toyota's gas pedal crisis falls into the intentional category and not the accidental category, bolstering tactics might not be perceived positively. The decrease in praise by bolstering, and the increase in anxiety by boosting in our findings match Coombs' statement. Bolstering tactics might have portrayed Toyota as a company that gives priority to its reputation rather than the serious accidents that endangered its customers. However, according to our results, bolstering also helped Toyota by

reducing anger and blame. It could be that the increased corrective actions of Toyota during the crisis helped bolstering tactics to be perceived positively since corrective action reinforces hope that the brand will deliver benefits in the future (Dutta and Pulling, 2011).

As a general discussion, the findings of this thesis which are contradictory to the extant literature might be the result of the timeline of the Toyota's gas pedal crisis. Crises can be pictured as series of events that form a life cycle rather than a single incident. According to Sturges (1994), each crisis has a life cycle consisting different stages, and the expectations of the stakeholders differ in these stages. Therefore, in the Toyota case, the usage of the same tactic in different times of the crisis might have gained different reactions from the public. For example, using the bolstering tactic at the early stages and at the late stages of the crisis might result in an increase in both positive and negative emotions. Toyota's reminding of its past acts at the beginning of the crisis when the customers feared for their lives might have increased anger in the public since customers probably expected an explanation about the cause of the accidents and a solution. However, the increase in positive emotions is expected with bolstering used at the late stages where the problems are resolved. Similarly, it is natural for negative emotions to rise with the apology issued by Toyota after the initial car accident since it is an indication of Toyota's acceptance of responsibility. However, the same tactic might have been perceived as a noble act at the later stages and resulted in the increase of Organizational Virtue Orientation.

SCCT aims to provide recommendations to managers on how to choose the appropriate crisis communication tactic (Coombs, 2007). One of the main purposes of this thesis is also to provide managerial implications in light of the results discussed above. Before noting the implications, it should be reminded that the perceived crisis responsibility level of Toyota is high, the unintended acceleration crisis falls within the definition of a preventable crisis, and the prior reputational history of Toyota is positive. Therefore, the following recommendations should be adopted in the crises with similar parameters (crisis responsibility, prior history, and crisis type (Coombs, 2007)). One important implication is that the managers should avoid vague response

tactic in a crisis. Managers should provide the stakeholders with clear information about the crisis and never leave them in the dark. Another conclusion to draw from the results is that denying responsibility for the crisis by shifting the blame should be avoided since it receives both positive and negative responses from the stakeholders. Instead of shifting the blame, managers should reduce the company's crisis responsibility by attacking the accuser tactic. The simple denial tactic should be used carefully since it increases both positive and negative reactions. An organization should deny the existence of the crisis only when the innocence of the organization is certain. Furthermore, managers should use rectification tactics (cooperation, corrective action, and compensation) since they mitigate the negative emotions while boosting the positive emotions of stakeholders. Nevertheless, managers should be careful when using the bolstering tactic since it decreases both positive and negative emotions. Moreover, the boosting tactic should be avoided since it reignites negative emotions. In addition to boosting and bolstering, mortification tactics (apology and sympathy) are also not fully successful in enhancing positive emotions. Therefore, while apologizing, managers should keep in mind that positive emotions of stakeholders might either increase or decrease. Lastly, the sympathy tactic should not be used in crises since it decreases positive emotions.

The studies that employ SCCT to investigate the effectiveness of crisis communication tactics in rebuilding trust towards the organizations are generally experimental studies (e.g. Coombs and Holladay, 2007; McDonald et al., 2010; Pace et al., 2010). This thesis contributes to the SCCT by examining public reactions to the communication tactics using real public reaction data to the real case of Toyota crisis. Consequently, the counter-intuitive findings of this thesis are the indicators that the reactions to crises and crisis response tactics are different from experimental environments. Additionally, the majority of the studies that use SCCT compare only a few communication tactics while this thesis investigates the reactions towards thirteen communication tactics. Moreover, the present study extends the recommendations of SCCT (Coombs, 2007) by analyzing the reactions to the additional communication tactics (vague response, sympathy, cooperation, and boosting (Wasti et al., 2013)) that SCCT does not employ.

This thesis has several limitations. One limitation of the study is that it takes into account only print media to elucidate Toyota's crisis communication tactics, even though increasingly visual media is gaining importance. However, the experimental study by Coombs and Holladay (2009) found little meaningful difference between print and video delivery of a crisis response message, which perhaps reduces the severity of this limitation. Furthermore, the usage of blogs for part of the data collection may help alleviate this limitation's effects. Another limitation of the study is that only two online blogs (Autoblog and Jalopnik) were suitable for the collection of readers' emotional data. In addition, the characteristic attributes of the readers of these blogs were not clear. The results could be interpreted more thoroughly if the readers' profiles were known.

One interesting avenue of research would be to numerically analyze the variances of the presentations of news across media outlets (including online social media), given that a single text is conveyed by the organizations at a given point in time. This would give an indication of how the same message gets filtered differently before it reaches the public eyes and ears, resulting in varying degrees of positive public sentiment. Similarly, the analysis of how Autoblog and Jalopnik represented the news of Toyota crisis would be used as a mediator to investigate how the public emotions derived from the reader comments are affected by the framing of the news. Another future research area may be the analysis of public emotional data under the influence of multiple crisis communication tactics. This could clarify the emotional reactions after the usage of different combinations of communication tactics. Lastly, the gas pedal crisis can be divided into stages as in the life cycle stages of Sturges' (1994) study and the effectiveness of crisis response tactics can be investigated for each stage independently.

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## APPENDICES

### A. DICTIONARY OF ORGANIZATIONAL VIRTUE ORIENTATION

Organizational Virtues	Content Analysis Words With Expert Validation
Integrity	authentic, believable, credible, creditable, decent, devoted, earnest, equitable, ethical, even-handed, fair, faithful, forthright, genuine, highly-respectable, honest, honorable, ingenuous, law-abiding, lawful, loyal, objective, principled, resolute, respectable, sincere, socially-responsible, transparent, true, trusted, trustworthy, trusty, truthful, upright, upstanding, values-based, virtuous
Empathy	accepting, aidful, assuring, caring, charitable, compassionate, considerate, empathetic, encouraging, forgiving, helpful, humane, kind, listening, merciful, patient, ready-to-help, supportive, sympathetic, thoughtful, tolerant, understanding, well-being
Warmth	agreeable, amiable, benevolent, cordial, courteous, diplomatic, familiar, friendly, generous, genial, gracious, grateful, hospitable, neighborly, open, pleasant, polite, receptive, straightforward, tender
Courage	achievement-oriented, adept, aggressive, aspiring, assertive, bold, brave, capable, climbing, competent, courageous, daring, desirous, determined, effectual, enduring, enterprising, entrepreneurial, exploitative, foremost, goal-oriented, hardy, heroic, hungry, impenetrable, in-charge, knowledgeable, leading, overcoming, prevailing, ready, self-reliant, skilled, skillful, staunch, stout, striving, strong, tenacious, topmost, top-ranked, valiant, valorous, willful
Conscientiousness	accomplished, accountable, accurate, attentive, at-work, businesslike, bustling, busy, careful, certain, confident, conscientious, conscionable, Customer-centric, demanding, dependable, detailed, diligent, dutiful, effective, efficacious, efficient, engaged, hard-working, heedful, impressive, judicious, laudable, meticulous, mindful, notable, painstaking, persistent, planning, praiseworthy, prepared, productive, protected, proud, regardful, reliable, reputable, responsible, scrupulous, solicitous, stable, steadfast, steady, thorough, tireless, unyielding, value-added, vigilant, watchful
Zeal	alive, anxious, ardent, astonishing, avid, breakthrough, captivating, compelling, creative, dazzling, dogged, dynamic, eager, electrifying, energetic, enthusiastic, enticing, exceptional, excited, exciting, extraordinary, fabulous, fascinating, fervent, fiery, gung-ho, impassioned, ingenious, inspiring, intriguing, invigorating, lively, novel, passionate, provocative, reinvigorated, renewed, resourceful, revolutionary, rousing, spirited, stimulating, stirring, thrilling, transformative, trendsetting, unconventional, unprecedented, vehement, vigorous, visionary, vivacious, vivid, zealous



## B. TÜRKÇE ÖZET

Örgütsel çalışmalarda güven kavramının önemi gün geçtikçe artmaktadır (Mayer, Davis ve Schoorman, 1995; Kramer, 2014). Güveninarmaşık yapısından dolayı güven alanında yapılan birçok çalışma sonucunda (örneğin, Rousseau, Sitkin, Burt ve Camerer, 1998; Mayer vd., 1995; Nooteboom, 2011) birden fazla güven tanımı ortaya konulmuştur. Örneğin, Rousseau ve arkadaşları (1998) güvenin tanımını karşı tarafın niyet veya davranışlarıyla ilgili olumlu beklenti olarak sunmuşlardır. Diğer bir tanım ise Mayer, Davis ve Schoorman (1995) tarafından, “bir tarafın diğer tarafı kontrol edebilme özelliğinden bağımsız olarak kendine yönelik olumlu davranışlarına karşı savunmasız kalma isteği” olarak yapılmıştır. Daha yeni bir tanım ise güveni, güvenilen tarafın olumsuz olmayacağına inanılan davranışlarına karşı savunmasız kalmak olarak betimler (Nooteboom, 2011). Kişiler arasındaki güven kavramıyla ilgili yazında birçok çalışma bulunmasına rağmen (örneğin, Brower, Lester ve Korsgaard, 2009; Kramer ve Lewicki, 2010; Gillespie ve Dietz, 2009); örgütün davranışlarına karşı zafiyet (Pirson, Martin ve Parmar, 2014) ve toplu güven yönelimi (Poppo ve Schepker, 2014) olarak tanımlanan kamu güveni üzerinde daha çok çalışılması gereken bir konudur (Wicks, Moriarty ve Harris, 2014; Pirson, Martin ve Parmar, 2014).

Örgütlerin kamuyla olan güven bağı, medya veya diğer iletişim kanallarıyla elde edilen bilgiler doğrultusunda şekillenir (Coombs, 2007). Bu güveni kurmak günümüz ekonomisinde örgütün fonksiyonlarını sürdürebilmesi için büyük önem teşkil etmektedir (Woolthuis, Nooteboom ve Jong, 2014). Güvenin kurulmasının bu kadar kritik olduğu bir zamanda bu güveni sürdürmek ve gerektiği zaman bu güveni tamir etmek önemlidir.

Paydaşlara karşı işlenen güven ihlali durumu örgütler için büyük tehdit arz etmektedir (Coombs, 2007; Utz, Schultz ve Glocka, 2013). Bu nedenle örgütler itibarlarını zedeleyecek kriz durumlarında harekete geçmek için uygun araçlara sahip olmalıdırlar. Halk kurumlarla doğrudan iletişim kuramayacağı ve kurumların

faaliyetlerini ayrıntılı olarak gözlemleyemeyeceği için (Poppo ve Schepker, 2014) medyanın kamu güvenindeki rolü büyüktür (Romenti ve Valentini, 2010).

Bu tezin konusu olan ve otomotiv endüstrisi denince akla ilk gelen markalardan olan Toyota, 2009 ve 2010 yılları arasında güvenilir olarak nitelendirilen itibarına derin yara aldı. Ürettiği arabalarının gaz pedalları sıkışıp birçok kişi zarar gördüğünde dünya çapında medya tarafından ağır bir şekilde eleştirildi. Global ve başarılı bir marka olmasından çok, Toyota vakasının önemi, gaz pedalı sorununun bünyesinde hem kabiliyet hem de dürüstlük tabanlı kriz türü bulundurmasından kaynaklanmaktadır. Kabiliyet tabanlı güven ihlali kurumun ürünü veya performansı ile ilişkilidir ve Toyota'nın arabalarındaki gaz pedalının hatalı işlevi bu kategoriye girmektedir. Diğer bir yandan, dürüstlük tabanlı güvenlik ihlali kurumun kasıtlı olarak etik olmayan aktivitelerde bulunmasıdır ve Toyota tarafından önceki hatalı üretimlerin üstünün kapatılması iddiaları bu kategoriye örnektir.

Bu çalışmanın cevaplamaya çalıştığı sorular şunlardır:

1. Toyota'nın bu krizle ilgili haberlerine karşı gösterilen duygusal tepkiler nelerdir? Bu duygular nasıl bir gelişim göstermiştir ve hangi olaylar bu duyguları artırmış/azaltmıştır?
2. İletişim taktikleri ve bu taktiklere verilen tepkilerin analizleri sonucunda Toyota vakasından güven tamiri alanıyla hangi öneriler verilebilir?

Yukarıda verilen sorulara cevap arama doğrultusunda kamu güveni ve kriz iletişimi konularında yazın taraması yapılmıştır. Argenti (2014) kamu güveninin kurulması ve idamesi alanında çeşitli vaka analizleri yapmış ve analiz sonucunda çeşitli önerilerde bulunmuştur. Argenti (2014) örgütlerin kamu değerlerine önem vermesi gerektiğini ve kamuya karşı şeffaf olunması gerektiğini vurgulamıştır. Bunların yanında Argenti (2014) sosyal medyaya önem verilmesi gerektiğini ve sosyal medya aracılığıyla kamuyla etkileşim kurulması gerektiğini belirtmiştir.

Coombs ve Holladay'e (1996) göre, kurum ve kamu arasındaki ilişkiyi şekillendiren güvenin (DiStaso, Vafeiadis ve Amaral, 2014) ihlali sonrasında kurumlar güven tamiri için iletişim taktiklerini kullanmalıdır.

Bu tezde bahsi geçen Toyota'nın kriz iletişimi taktikleri Benoit'ın (1995) İmaj Onarım Kuramı ve Coombs'un (1997) Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramı temel alınarak incelenmiştir. İmaj Onarım Kuramı kriz iletişim taktiklerini sunarken Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramı daha çok krizin analiz edilmesi ve duruma uygun taktiklerin belirlenmesi doğrultusunda çözüm sunar.

İmaj Onarım Kuramı beş temel kategori tanımlar: *İnkâr*, *Sorumluluktan Kaçma*, *Eylemin Olumsuzluklarını Azaltma*, *Düzeltilici Eylem* ve *Kabullenme* (Benoit, 1995). Bu temel taktiklerin alt kategorileri ve tanımlamaları aşağıda verilmektedir.

*İnkâr:*

- *Basit İnkâr:* Hata olduğunu reddetmek.
- *Suçtu Başkasına Atma:* Durumun sorumluluğu başka tarafa yıkmak.

*Sorumluluktan Kaçma:*

- *Provokasyon:* Başka tarafın yanlısına tepki olduğunu savunmak.
- *Eksiklik:* Bilgi eksikliğinin hataya yol açtığını söylemek.
- *Kaza:* Durumun kaza sonucu olduğunu söylemek.
- *İyi Niyet:* Kurumun niyetinin iyi olduğunu savunmak.

*Eylemin Olumsuzluklarını Azaltma:*

- *Destekleme:* İyi tarafları ve geçmişteki iyi özellikleri vurgulamak.
- *Minimize Etme:* Durumun sonuçlarının küçük olduğunu savunmak.
- *Ayırt Etme:* Hatanın sonuçlarının başkalarının hatalarına oranla daha zararsız olduğunu söylemek.
- *Üstünlük:* Durumun yarattığı faydanın zarardan daha büyük olduğunu savunmak.
- *İtham Edene Saldırma:* Suçlama yapanlara karşı sempatiyi azaltmak.

- *Tazminat*: Hata sonucu mağdurların zararlarını karşılamak.

*Düzeltilici Eylem*: Hatayı çözümlemek.

*Kabullenme*: Hatayı kabullenip özür dilemek.

Bu kuram birçok araştırmacı tarafından vaka analizlerinde kullanılmaktadır (örneğin, Blaney, Benoit ve Brazeal, 2002; Brinson ve Benoit, 1999; Caldiero, Taylor ve Ungureanu, 2009; Erickson, Weber ve Segovia, 2010; Romenti ve Valentini, 2010). Coombs'a (2007) göre bu kuramı kullanan çalışmalar kriz iletişim taktiklerinin paydaşlar tarafından nasıl karşılandığı hakkında fazla ayrıntı vermemekle birlikte "spekülatif" çalışmalardır. Bu eksiklik Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramının ortaya çıkmasına yol açmıştır. Bu kuram vaka analizlerinden çok, kriz sonrasında paydaşların itibar düzeltme çalışmalarına olan tepkisini ölçen deneysel çalışmaları kullanır. Kurama göre kriz durumu üç temel etmenle ilişkilidir: (1) krizdeki sorumluluk oranı, (2) kriz tarihçesi ve (3) kriz öncesi itibar. Bununla birlikte üç çeşit kriz tipi tanımlanır: (1) mağdur, (2) kaza temelli ve (3) kasıtlı krizler. Mağdur kriz kümesi örgütün de mağdur olduğu beklenmedik olaylardan kaynaklanan krizi betimler. Kaza temelli olan krizlerde örgütün sorumluluğu mağdur tipi krizlere oranla daha fazladır. Son küme olan kasıtlı krizler, paydaşların bilerek riske atıldığı ve sorumluluk oranının en yüksek olduğu düşünülen kriz tipidir (Coombs ve Holladay, 2002). Kurama göre krizdeki sorumluluk oranı kriz tipine göre belirlendikten sonra örgütün kriz tarihçesi ve geçmişteki itibar durumuna bakılarak uygun taktikler geliştirilmelidir. Coombs (2007) yukarıda belirtilen sorumluluk seviyesi ve kriz tiplerine göre seçilmesi gereken iletişim taktiklerine yönelik aşağıdaki önerileri vermiştir:

- Mağdur kümesi kriz tipleri için nötr veya pozitif itibar geçmişi ile benzer kriz tarihçesi bulunmayan güven ihlallerinde mağdurları bilgilendirmek ya da kriz durumuna uyum sağlayıcı bilgi vermek yeterlidir. Aynı zamanda, bu kriz tipleri için örgütün de mağdur olduğu mesajını vermek gerekir. Eğer benzer kriz tipi geçmişte meydana gelmişse ve/veya geçmiş itibar olumsuz ise *gereğe gösterme* (niyetin iyi olduğu ve krizin kaza sonucu oluştuğunu belirtmek) veya *haklı çıkarma* (krizin zararlarını küçük göstermek) taktikleri uygulanmalıdır.

- Kaza temelli krizler için nötr veya pozitif itibar geçmişi ile benzer kriz geçmişi bulunmayan durumlarda olumsuzlukları minimize etme taktikleri (*gerekçe gösterme ve haklı çıkarma*) kullanılmalıdır. Benzer kriz tarihçesi ve/veya olumsuz itibar varsa itibarı yapılandırıcı (*özür dileme, tazminat, hatırlatma* (geçmişteki iyi işleri hatırlatma) ve *destekleme*) taktikleri kullanılmalıdır.
- Kasıtlı/önlenebilir kümesindeki krizler için benzer kriz tipi tarihçesi ve kriz öncesi itibara bakılmaksızın itibar yapılandırıcı taktikler kullanılmalıdır.
- Örgüt hakkında çıkarılan asılsız dedikodu tarzı krizler için inkar etme taktikleri kullanılmalıdır.
- Kriz iletişim taktikleri genel olarak birbiriyle tutarlı olmalıdır. İnkâr ettiği bir durum için örgüt sonrasında özür dilememelidir.

Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramı birçok deneysel çalışmaya konu olmuştur. Örneğin, Amazon'un kullanıcıların haberleri olmadan Kindle'larından kitap silmesinden sonra özür dilemesinin çoğu müşteri tarafından kabul gördüğü ortaya çıkmıştır (Coombs ve Holladay, 2012). Kim, Ferrin, Cooper ve Dirks (2004) kişiler arası güven ihlalinde özür dileme ve suçu inkar etme taktiklerini görgül bir çalışmayla karşılaştırmıştır. Bu çalışmanın sonucuna göre, kabiliyet tabanlı güven ihlallerinde özür dilemek ve dürüstlük tabanlı güven ihlallerinde durumu inkar etmenin güveni onarmada başarılı olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. Bir başka özür dileme ve inkar etme karşılaştırması da Utz, Matzat ve Snijders (2009) tarafından deneysel bir çalışmayla yapılmıştır. Utz v.d. (2009) eBay üzerinden yapılan bir alışverişte siparişin geç kargoya verilmesi (dürüstlük tabanlı güven ihlali) veya gönderilen ürünün kırık çıkması (kabiliyet tabanlı güven ihlali) durumlarında katılımcıların özür dileme ve inkar etme taktiklerine olan tepkilerini ölçmüştür. Bu çalışmanın sonucu inkar etme taktiğinin güven onarımında, Kim ve arkadaşlarının (2004) bulgularına aksine, etkisiz olduğunu ve özür dilemenin her koşulda inkar etmekten daha etkili göstermiştir. Özür dileme ve inkar etme taktiklerinin yanında McDonald, Sparks ve Glendon (2010) deneysel bir çalışmayla beş iletişim taktiği (yorum yapmama, inkar, bahane üretme, gerekçe gösterme ve itiraf

etme), krizin kaynağı(iç kaynaklı, dış kaynaklı) ve krizin kontrol edilebilirliğinin güven onarımına etkisini test etmiştir<sup>8</sup>. Elde edilen sonuçlara göre itiraf etme (özür dileme) taktiği diğer değişkenlerden bağımsız olarak güven tamirinde en kabul gören iletişim yöntemidir ve itiraf sonucunda kamudaki öfke, negatif duygular ve kötü konuşma davranışı azalırken örgüte olan sempati ve bağlılık seviyesi artmıştır. Kriz sonrası yorum yapmamak da kamudaki öfke ve olumsuz duygularını azaltmıştır. Son olarak inkar etme ve gerekçe gösterme sonucunda şirketin krizdeki sorumluluğu kamu gözünde arttığı için şirkete yönelik olumsuz tepkiler artış göstermiştir (McDonald vd., 2010).

Bir başka taktik karşılaştırması da DiStaso, Vafeiadis ve Amaral (2014) tarafından özür dileme, sempati duyma (özür dilemeden kriz kurbanlarına sempati duyma) ve kriz hakkında bilgi verme taktikleri deneysel ortamda yapılmıştır. Facebook kullanıcılarının farazi bir hastane krizine olan tepkisini ölçmek amacıyla yapılan çalışmada özür dileme ve bilgi verme taktiklerinin güven onarımında benzer derecede etkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Buna karşın, sempati duyma taktiği örgütlerin sorumluluk almadan, sadece mağdurlar için endişe duymasını kapsaması ve örgütün hiçbir bedel ödemek zorunda kalmaması sebebiyle (Coombs ve Holladay, 2008; Englehardt vd., 2004; Johar, Birk ve Einwiller, 2010) güven onarımında bu taktiğin kullanılmaması gerektiği vurgulanmıştır.

Dutta ve Pulling (2011) deneysel bir çalışmayla inkar etme, sorumluluğu azaltma ve düzeltici eylem taktiklerinin kriz sonrası marka güvenine olan etkilerini kriz tipine (performans/kabiliyet kaynaklı ve değer/dürüstlük kaynaklı) bağlı olarak karşılaştırmıştır. Çalışmanın sonucunda inkar etme taktiğinin kriz tipinden bağımsız olarak diğer taktiklere oranla marka güvenini onarmada en zayıf taktik olduğunu ortaya koymuşlardır. Bunun yanında, performans kaynaklı krizler için düzeltici eylemin en doğru seçim olduğu vurgulanmıştır. Değer kaynaklı kriz tipleri için ise

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<sup>8</sup> Kriz nedeninin örgütten veya örgüt dışından olması kriz kaynağı etmenidir. Örgütün krizin ortaya çıkma nedeni üzerindeki kontrolü, krizin kontrol edilebilme seviyesini oluşturmaktadır (McDonald vd., 2010).

sorumluluğu azaltma ve düzeltici eylem iletişim yöntemlerinin marka güvenini aynı oranda onardığı gözlemlenmiştir.

Yukarıda bahsi geçen deneysel araştırmalardan farklı olarak bu tez Toyota'nın gaz pedal krizinde kullandığı iletişim taktiklerinin kamu duygularına olan etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Bunun için öncelikle Toyota gaz pedalı vakası ana hatlarıyla incelenmekte ve ardından araştırmada kullanılan yöntem anlatılmaktadır.

- 28 Ağustos 2009 tarihinde Lexus ES 350 modelinin yaptığı araba kazasında dört aile üyesi öldü.
- Kazadan kısa bir süre sonra Toyota, Camry, Avalon, Prius, Tacoma, Tundra ve Lexus modellerini kapsayan 3,8 milyon aracı gaz pedalının paspasa sıkışma tehlikesi nedeniyle geri çağıracağını açıkladı. Sürücülere de çözüm üretilene kadar arabadan sürücü paspasını kaldırmaları yönünde çağrı yaptı.
- Toyota'ya karşı dava açıldı (New York Times<sup>9</sup>, 29 Kasım 2009).
- 26 Aralık 2009 tarihinde bir Avalon modelinin hızla yoldan çıkması sonucu dört kişi öldü ve ardından Toyota 2,3 milyon aracını geri çağırdı (NYT, 21 Ocak 2010).
- Enerji ve Ticaret Komitesi<sup>10</sup>, Toyota ve Otoyol Trafik Güvenliği İdaresi<sup>11</sup>'nin kazalara ve potansiyel hatalı modellere ilişkin dokümanlarını incelemek için 25 Şubat 2010 tarihinde oturum yapacağını açıkladı (NYT, 28 Ocak, 2010).
- Bir başka davanın Gözetim ve Hükümet Reform Evi Komitesi<sup>12</sup> ile 2010'un Şubat ayı içerisinde görüleceği duyuruldu (NYT, 1 Şubat, 2010).
- 5 Nisan 2010 tarihinde Ulaştırma Bakanlığı gaz pedalları konusunda hükümete geç bilgi verdiği gerekçesiyle Toyota'ya 16,4 milyon dolar para cezası verdi (NYT, 5 Nisan 2010).
- Son olarak Toyota araçları üzerinde çalışma yapan NASA araçlarda elektronik bir sorun bulmadıklarını, kaza yapan 58 araçtan sadece birinde gaz pedalının

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<sup>9</sup> NYT, New York Times için kısaltma olarak kullanılmıştır.

<sup>10</sup> House Committee on Energy and Commerce

<sup>11</sup> National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

<sup>12</sup> House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform

paspara sıkıştığının ispat edildiğini ve çoğu kazanın insan hatası yüzünden olmuş olabileceğini açıkladı (NYT, 9 Şubat 2011).

Jin ve Liu (2010) kriz zamanlarında halkın güncel bilgileri edinmek adına bloglara yöneldiğini savunmuştur. Bu düşünceyle Toyota krizine ait kamu duygusu verileri için Eylül 2009 ve Şubat 2012 tarihleri arasında Autoblog ve Jalopnik bloglarından sırasıyla 178 ve 77 adet blog yazısı toplanmıştır. Toplanan blog yazılarındaki kullanıcı yorumlarından sadece birincil olanlar içerik analizlerine tabi tutulmuştur. Yorumların duygu bakımından analizi için bilgisayar destekli içerik analizi yazılımları olan LIWC, Diction ve CATScanner kullanılmıştır. Analizde bu yazılımlarda tanımlı olan standart sözlükler kullanılmıştır. Bu yazılımlardan LIWC'ta tanımlı *olumlu duygu*, *olumsuz duygu*, *endişe*, *öfke* ve *üzüntü* sözlükleri kullanılmış ve bu duyguların genel tepkilere olan yüzdesel oranı bulundu. Benzer bir şekilde, Diction yazılımı da *övgü*, *memnuniyet*, *ilham* ve *suçlama* kategorilerindeki yüzdesel oranı bulmak için kullanılmıştır. Son olarak, CATScanner yazılımı *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi* (diğer bir deyişle, örgütün etiğe uyma ve erdemli davranışlarda bulunma yönelimi (Payne, Brigham, Broberg, Moss ve Short, 2011)) sözlüğü için kullanıldı. Analizler yapıldıktan sonra kodlanan bütün duygu kodları hafta bazında toplanmış ve 68 haftadan oluşan bir veri seti hazırlanmıştır.

Araştırmanın daha sonraki safhasında Toyota'nın iletişim taktiklerinin kamu duygularına olan etkisini ölçmek için regresyon analizleri yapılmıştır. Regresyon analizlerinde bağımlı değişken olarak yukarıda belirtilen duygular (*olumlu duygu*, *olumsuz duygu*, *endişe*, *öfke*, *üzüntü*, *övgü*, *memnuniyet*, *ilham*, *suçlama* ve *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi*) kullanılırken, Wasti, Biliciler, Güngör ve Tanrıverdi (2013) tarafından yapılan çalışmanın bulguları bağımsız değişkenler olarak kullanıldı. Wasti ve diğerleri (2013) gaz pedalı krizinden sonra Toyota tarafından uygulanan kriz iletişimi taktiklerini New York Times ve Wall Street Journal gazetelerinde çıkan konuyla ilgili kriz haberlerine içerik analizi yaparak sınıflandırmıştır. Bu çalışmanın çıktısı olan *özür dileme*, *sempati duyma*, *itham edeni suçlama*, *ayırt etme*, *minimize etme*, *hatırlatma*, *destekleme*, *tazminat*, *iş birliği*, *düzeltilici eylem*, *suçu başkasına*



*atma, inkar etme ve belirsiz cevap* taktikleri regresyon analizlerinde bağımsız değişken olarak kullanılmıştır<sup>13</sup>.

Regresyon analizlerinin sonuçlarından önce kamu duygularının kriz süresince yaşadığı değişim anlatılmaktadır. Autoblog okur yorumlarında gözlenen *olumsuz duygu* ve *suçlama* duygularının krizin başından (Ağustos 2009) 2010 yılının sonuna kadar güçlü bir şekilde sürdüğü gözlemlenmiştir. Bu duygular 2010 yılının 18'inci haftasında Oto-yol Trafik Güvenliği İdaresi 93 ölümün muhtemel nedeninin Toyota'nın gaz pedalı problemi olduğunu açıkladığında (NYT, 14 Temmuz 2010) yükselmiştir. 2010 yılının 32'inci haftasında zirveyi gören olumsuz duygular Ağustos 2010 başında hükümet yetkililerinin kazaların çoğunun insan hatası kaynaklı olduğunu açıklamasıyla (NYT, 10 Ağustos 2010) düşmüştür. Autoblog okur yorumlarındaki *olumlu duygu*, *övgü*, *memnuniyet* ve *ilham* duyguları, olumsuz duygular gibi krizin başından 2010 yılının sonuna kadar yüksek sıklıkla gözlemlenmiştir. Olumlu duygular özellikle krizin başında, yani Toyota Ağustos 2009'da yaşanan kaza sonrasında özür dilediğinde (NYT, 3 Ekim 2009) ve sorunu gidermek için çalışmalara devam ettiğini duyurduğunda (NYT, 8 Kasım 2009), yükselmiştir. *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi*'nin Autoblog okurları arasında Ocak 2010 sonundan Mart 2010 ortasına kadar yüksek olması Toyota'nın bu süreç içerisinde hükümetle işbirliği yapmasına ve sorunu gidermek için çalışmasına bağlanabilir.

Jalopnik okur yorumlarında gözlenen *olumsuz duygu* ve *suçlama* duyguları krizin başında yüksek olmasına rağmen Toyota'nın krizle ilgili bilgi vermesi ve çözüm için çalışıldığını belirtmesi aynı duyguları Kasım 2009 ortalarında düşürmüş gözükmektedir. Ancak dört kişinin öldüğü trafik kazasından sonra (Aralık 2009) olumsuz duygular zirveye çıkmıştır. Aynı blog okurları için olumlu duygular (*olumlu duygu*, *övgü*, *memnuniyet* ve *ilham*) kriz süresince yüksek seyretmiştir. 2011 yılının 9'uncu haftasında zirveye çıkan olumlu duygular hükümetin Toyota'nın yeterli sayıda aracı geri çağırdığını açıklamasının sonucu olarak yorumlanabilir. Son olarak,

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<sup>13</sup> *Destekleme* (geçmişten bağımsız olarak paydaşlara moral aşılama), *sempati duyma* (özür dilemeden ilgilendiğini belirtme), *belirsiz cevap* (cevap vermeme veya belirsiz yanıt verme) ve *işbirliği* (başka taraflarla işbirliği yapmak) taktiklerini Wasti ve diğerleri (2013) eklemiştir.

Jalopnik okurlarının *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi* duygu dağılımı 2010'un Ocak ve Mart aylarında yükseldiği için Autoblog okurlarının *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi* duygu dağılımıyla benzerlik göstermektedir. Toyota'nın bu dönemde özür dilemesi ve çözüm için çalışmasının Jalopnik okurları arasında da *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi*'ni artırdığı düşünülebilir.

*Özür dileme, sempati duyma, itham edeni suçlama, ayırt etme, minimize etme, hatırlatma, destekleme, tazminat, işbirliği, düzeltici eylem, suçu başkasına atma, inkar etme* ve *belirsiz cevap* taktikleri bağımsız değişken ve *olumlu duygu, olumsuz duygu, endişe, öfke, üzüntü, övgü, memnuniyet, ilham, suçlama* ve *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi* duyguları bağımlı değişken olacak şekilde yapılan regresyon analizlerinin sonuçları aşağıdaki gibidir:

- Autoblog okurları için *hatırlatma* taktiği *öfke* ( $p < 0,05$ ), *övgü* ( $p < 0,01$ ) ve *suçlama* ( $p < 0,05$ ) duyguları üzerinde düşürücü etkiye sahiptir. *Destekleme* taktiği duygulardan sadece *endişe* üzerinde olumlu bir etkiye sahiptir ( $p < 0,05$ ). *Tazminat* taktiği *suçlama* duygusunu azaltmaktadır ( $p < 0,05$ ). *İşbirliği Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi* üzerinde olumlu etkiye sahiptir ( $p < 0,05$ ). Bunun yanında *düzeltilici eylem* de *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi* üzerinde olumlu etkiye sahiptir ( $p < 0,01$ ). Aynı zamanda *düzeltilici eylem* *endişe* duygusunu azaltır ( $p < 0,05$ ). *Suçlu başkasına atma* eyleminin *olumsuz duygu* ( $p < 0,05$ ), *endişe* ( $p < 0,05$ ), *öfke* ( $p < 0,05$ ), *övgü* ( $p < 0,05$ ), *suçlama* ( $p < 0,01$ ) ve *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi* ( $p < 0,05$ ) duygularını azalttığı gözlemlenmiştir. *İnkâr etme* taktiği ise, *suçu başkasına atma* taktiğinin aksine, *olumsuz duygu* ( $p < 0,05$ ), *endişe* ( $p < 0,01$ ), *öfke* ( $p < 0,05$ ), *övgü* ( $p < 0,05$ ) ve *suçlama* ( $p < 0,01$ ) duyguları üzerinde olumlu etkiye sahiptir. *Özür dileme* taktiği *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi* üzerinde olumsuz bir etkiye sahiptir ( $p < 0,05$ ). Son olarak *belirsiz cevap* taktiği *olumsuz duygu* ( $p < 0,05$ ), *endişe* ( $p < 0,05$ ), *öfke* ( $p < 0,05$ ) ve *suçlama* ( $p < 0,05$ ) duygularını olumlu etkiler.
- Jalopnik okurları için ise Autoblog okuyucu yorumları kadar anlamlı çıkarımlar yapılamamıştır. Bu okurlar için *özür dileme* iletişim taktiği *olumlu duygu* üzerinde pozitif etkiye sahiptir ( $p < 0,05$ ). *Sempati duyma* taktiğinin

*olumlu duygu* ( $p < 0,05$ ) ve *övgü* ( $p < 0,05$ ) üzerinde düşürücü etkisi olduğu ortaya çıkmıştır. *İtham edeni suçlama* taktiğinin ise *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi* olgusunu artırdığı gözlemlenmiştir ( $p < 0,05$ ). Son olarak, *suçu başkasına atma* taktiği, Autoblog sonuçlarından farklı olarak, Jalopnik okuyucuları için *olumlu duygu* üzerinde olumsuz bir etkiye sahiptir ( $p < 0,05$ ).

Bu çalışmanın asıl konusu olan kriz iletişim yöntemlerine karşı kamunun tepkisini ölçme kapsamında, yukarıda verilen regresyon analiz sonuçları mevcut yazın bulguları ışığında değerlendirilmektedir. Coombs ve Holladay (2007) iletişim taktiklerinin paydaşların öfke seviyesine göre seçilmesi gerektiğini vurgulamıştır. Örneğin, yönetimin kötü idaresinden veya önlenemez bir hatadan kaynaklı kriz durumlarında örgüte karşı öfke seviyesinin fazla olması beklenir. Bu durumda örgüte tazminat ve/veya özür dileme taktiği uygulaması önerilir. Bu çalışmadaki *Düzeltilici eylem* ve *işbirliği* taktiklerinin bulguları bu öneriyle aynı doğrultuda olduğu halde *özür dileme* taktiği Autoblog ve Jalopnik için çelişkili sonuçlar vermiştir. *Özür dileme* taktiğinin Autoblog okuyucuları arasında *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimini* azaltması “özür dilemek dürüstlük ihlallerinde olumsuz tepkiye yol açar” (Kim vd., 2004) savını desteklemektedir. Toyota’nın özür dilemesi kendisine yöneltilen suçlamaları kabul ettiğini ve krizin sorumluluğunu üstlendiğini göstermiştir. Bu özür Autoblog okurları tarafından yüzeysel olarak algılanıp güven sarsıcı bir hareket olarak algılanmış ve Toyota’ya karşı öfkeyi canlandırmış olabilir. Benzer bir bulgu Zhang (2012) tarafından da ortaya atılmıştır. Zhang (2012) tüketicilerin bazen özrü kabul etmeyip intikam duygusunu sürdürdüklerini iddia etmiştir. Autoblog okurları üzerindeki etkisinin aksine *özür dileme* taktiği, yazında da iddia edildiği gibi (örneğin, Coombs ve Holladay, 2012; McDonald vd., 2010; Utz, Matzat ve Snijders, 2009) Jalopnik okurlarının *olumlu duygularını* artırmıştır.

Regresyon sonuçlarına göre *sempati duyma* taktiği Jalopnik okurlarının Toyota’ya karşı olumlu duygularını azaltmaktadır. Bu sonuç Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramının örgütlerin sempati duymasının kamudaki öfkeyi azalttığı bulgusuyla (Coombs, 2015) ters düşse de DiStaso ve arkadaşlarının (2014) sempati kullanımından kaçınılması gerektiği bulgusunu desteklemektedir.

Suçlamaları reddetme taktikleri (*itham edeni suçlama, suçu başkasına atma ve inkar etme*) ilginç sonuçlar ortaya çıkarmıştır. Örneğin, *suçu başkasına atma* taktiği Autoblog okurları arasında negatif duyguları (*olumsuz duygu, endişe, öfke ve suçlama*), *övgü* ve *Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimini* azaltmakta ve Jalopnik okurlarının *olumlu duygularını* artırmaktadır. Toyota'nın kriz sorumluluğunu kaldırma çabasının kendisine karşı gösterilen olumsuz tepkileri azaltması Kim ve arkadaşları (2004) tarafından desteklense de aynı taktiğin Autoblog okurları arasında pozitif duyguları (*övgü ve Örgütsel Erdem Yönelimi*) azaltması da yazın tarafından desteklenmektedir (Coombs, 2015). Pozitif duyguların azalması, örgütlerin herhangi bir suç belirtisi gösterdiği zaman önceden uyguladıkları inkar taktiklerinin geri tepmesi olarak açıklanabilir (Coombs, 2007). Bu görüşe göre, Toyota'nın güçlü itibarını korumak için *suçu başkasına atma* iletişim taktiğiyle erdemli bir duruş sergilediği kanısı oluşmuş ve bu durum *Örgütsel Erdem Yöneliminin* artması ile sonuçlanmış olabilir. *İnkâr* taktiği de zıt düşen sonuçları açısından *suçu başkasına atma* taktiğine benzemektedir. Söz konusu taktik McDonald ve arkadaşları (2010) tarafından iddia edildiği gibi *olumsuz duygu, endişe, öfke ve suçlama* duygularını artırmaktadır. Bu sonuç aynı zamanda inkar taktiklerinin sadece mağdur kriz kümesi için kullanılması gerektiğini savunan Coombs'u (2007) da desteklemektedir. Bunlara rağmen *inkar* taktiğinin okurlar arasında *övgü* duygusunu artırması NASA'nın araçlarda (Toyota'nın da her zaman inkar ettiği gibi) elektronik sorun olmadığını belirterek Toyota'yı haklı çıkarmasının bir sonucu olabilir.

Pfarrer, Decelles, Smith ve Taylor (2008) ve Bachmann, Gillespie ve Priem (2015) paydaşların kriz durumunda güvenilir bilgi almak istediklerini belirtmiştir. Bu tezde elde edilen sonuçlar da belirsiz cevap vermenin olumsuz duyguları artırdığını göstermiştir.

Coombs'a (2007) göre hatırlatıcı iletişim taktikleri kaza temelli kriz tipleri için kullanılmalıdır. Toyota'nın gaz pedal krizi kaza temelli krizden çok önlenabilir kriz tipi kategorisine girdiği için hatırlatıcı iletişim taktiklerinin olumlu tepkiler alması Coombs'a (2007) göre olası değildir. *Hatırlatma* taktiğinin *övgü* duygusunu azaltması ve *destekleme* taktiğinin *endişe* duygusunu artırması bu kuramla desteklenebilir.

Kullanılan hatırlatıcı iletişim taktikleri kamuda “Toyota mağdurlardan çok kendi itibarına öncelik veriyor” düşüncesi yaratmış olabilir. Buna karşın, *hatırlatma* taktiğinin *övgü* duygusunu azaltsa da kamudaki *öfke* ve *suçlama* duygularını da azalttığı gözlemlenmiştir. Bunun nedeni Toyota’nın *hatırlatıcı* taktiğini kullanırken bir yandan da *düzeltilici eylem* taktiğini uygulayarak paydaşlara umut aşılması olabilir (Dutta ve Pulling, 2011).

Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramı kriz koşullarına uygun iletişim taktiklerini seçebilmeleri için yöneticilere öneriler sunar (Coombs, 2007). Bu tez de yöneticiler için faydalı çıkarımlar yapmayı amaçlamaktadır. Ancak çıkarımları sıralamadan önce Toyota’nın krizdeki sorumluluğunun yüksek olduğunu, gaz pedalı krizinin kasıtlı bir kriz olduğunu ve Toyota’nın kriz öncesi itibarının güçlü olduğunu hatırlatmak gerekir. Yapılan çıkarımlar bu parametrelere (kriz tipi, sorumluluk oranı ve geçmiş itibar (Coombs, 2007)) sahip krizler için daha uygundur. Çıkarımlardan biri yöneticilerin her zaman kriz hakkında açık bilgiler vermesidir. Bunun yanında, inkar etme taktiği genel olarak olumsuz duyguları artırdığı için kaçınılması gereken bir taktiktir. Benzer şekilde, suçu başkasına atma taktiği hem olumlu hem de olumsuz yönde tepki çektiği için yöneticiler için risklidir. İşbirliği, düzeltilici eylem ve tazminat taktikleri duygusal bağlamda güven tamirinde başarılı olduğu için yöneticiler bu taktiklere başvurmalıdır. Fakat yöneticiler hatırlatma taktiğini kullanırken dikkatli olmalıdır çünkü söz konusu taktiğin hem olumlu hem de olumsuz duyguları azalttığı gözlemlenmiştir. Buna ek olarak, destekleyici taktik kullanımından olumsuz duyguları artırdığı için kaçınılmalıdır. Özür dileme taktiği de olumlu duygular üzerinde hem artırıcı hem de azaltıcı etkiye sahip olduğu için risk taşımaktadır. Son olarak, yöneticiler sempati duyma taktiğinden olumlu duyguları azalttığı için kaçınılmalıdır.

Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramı kapsamında yapılan araştırmaların çoğu deneysel çalışmalardır (örneğin, Coombs ve Holladay, 2007; McDonald vd., Pace, Fediuk ve Botero, 2010). Deneysel araştırmalardan farklı olarak bu tez Toyota vakasında kullanılan iletişim taktiklerinin gerçek kamu duygu dataları üzerindeki etkilerini araştırdığı için Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramına katkı sağlamaktadır. Bu çalışmanın bir başka katkısı ise Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramında bulunmayan taktiklerle

(destekleme, işbirliği, sempati duyma ve belirsiz cevap (Wasti vd., 2013)) güven onarımı için çıkarım yapmasıdır.

Bu tezle ilgili kısıtlardan biri görsel medya kanallarının önemini artırmasına rağmen Toyota'nın kriz yönetimine dair taktiklerinin sadece yazılı medyadan alınmasıdır. Fakat Coombs ve Holladay'in (2009) yazılı ve görsel medya arasında çok az bir fark olduğunu iddia etmesi sadece yazılı medya kullanmanın öneminin azaldığına işaret etmektedir. Bunun yanında, Autoblog ve Jalopnik blog sitelerinden alınan kullanıcı yorumlarının da çalışmaya farklı bir kaynak katıp bu kısıtı azalttığı düşünülmektedir. Çalışmanın bir başka kısıtı ise kamu duygu durumu için sadece iki adet kaynak kullanılmasıdır. Daha fazla kaynak ve toplanılan daha fazla duygu verisiyle daha derinlemesine sonuçlar elde edilebilir. Son olarak, yorumların alındığı sitelerde okuyucuların profillerine dair herhangi bir bilgi bulunamamıştır. Okuyucular hakkında bilgi bulunması, duyguların yorumlarını ve sitelerin okuyucularını birbirleriyle karşılaştırmayı kolaylaştırıcı bir etmen olacaktır.

Yapılan bu çalışma sonucunda kriz iletişimi taktiklerinin sonuçları gerçek kamu duygu verileriyle ölçülmüştür. Globalleşmenin arttığı günümüzde krizlere müdahale etmemek örgütler için bir seçenek değildir ve yapılan her eylemin ve kullanılan her taktiğin kamu tarafında olumlu veya olumsuz tepkiye yol açtığı aşikardır. Durumsal Kriz İletişimi Kuramında olmamasına rağmen yorum yapmamanın da bir iletişim yolu olduğu ve ciddi sonuçlara yol açtığı gözlemlenmiştir. Gelecekte bu çalışmayı ilerletmek için medya kanallarının Toyota ile ilgili haberlerini sunma şekillerindeki farklılıklar incelenebilir ve medyanın sonuçlar üzerindeki etkileri gözlemlenebilir. Buna ek olarak, çoklu regresyon analizleri kullanılarak kamu duygularının hangi iletişim taktiklerinin kombinasyonlarından etkilendiği araştırılabilir.

### C. TEZ İZİN FORMU/ THESIS PERMISSION FORM

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**TEZİN TÜRÜ / DEGREE:** Yüksek Lisans / Master  Doktora / PhD

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