

Uber: Navigating the Crisis Environment



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This study provides an analysis of Uber’s communication messages to discover how it navigates through crisis situations. Qualitative content analysis was used to analyze 203 Uber Newsroom articles and 9 official press releases issued between Oct. 2014 and Oct. 2016. Six themes emerged from the analysis: lifestyle, partnership, drivers, customer service, legal & safety, and new beginnings. This study provides insight into how Uber breaks the rules of standard corporate communication and responds to crises indirectly by describing current partnerships and lifestyle activities it implements in hopes of fostering relationships and improving reputation with stakeholders.

Emergent Themes

Lifestyle



Legal & Safety



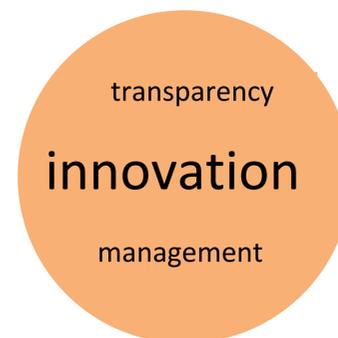
Customer Service



Partnership



New Beginnings



Legend *

legend	5
legend	4
legend	3
legend	2
legend	1

* Amount of times described in Newsroom and press release titles

Key Findings

- Uber’s employee competencies of “fierceness” and “super-pumpedness” encourage a culture of risk-taking and creativity so unconventional response strategies are implemented.
- Uber underplayed legal & safety issues by highlighting new lifestyle activities and partnerships.
- With the increased familiarity of the sharing economy, personalization and flexibility are emphasized.
- A recent focus on new beginnings suggest that Uber is shifting interests to prioritize their stakeholders and taking greater responsibility for their actions.
- Tips about surge pricing and other programs are provided to improve favorable views of their reputation.

Limitations

- The crisis timeline was not exhaustive.
- Only Newsroom and press release titles were analyzed.
- Data may be biased since only one researcher coded the data and interviews were not implemented.
- There is a lack of prior research studies completed.

Future Directions

- All of the text from Newsroom articles and press releases can be coded.
- One could expand timeline of the study.
- Content analysis and interviews could be completed for other startup organizations.

What’s New?

- “Delete Uber” campaign occurred.
- Video of Uber CEO Travis Kalanick mistreating an Uber driver emerged.
- Major sexual harassment claim from female engineer is investigated.