

Analysis and Strategy Research on Crisis Public Relations of Food Enterprises in the Internet Era

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Abstract: *The frequent occurrence of crisis events in food enterprises not only damages the interests of consumers, but also threatens the survival and development of enterprises themselves. The emergence of new media in the Internet era has changed the mode of information dissemination to a large extent. The diversified communication environment will increase the probability of food enterprise crisis events to a certain extent, and also make enterprise crisis public relations face a more serious situation. Especially in the current Internet era, when dealing with crisis events, the crisis public relations strategy of enterprises plays a crucial role. Through the analysis of the public relations strategies of various food enterprises in the "315 earth pit pickle" event, this paper discusses how food enterprises can effectively respond to the public relations crisis in the Internet era and help enterprises out of the crisis event.*

Keywords: *Tokeng pickles, crisis public relations, Internet era, food safety*

1. Research background

On the evening of March 15, CCTV's March 15 evening party revealed that many pickle production enterprises in Yueyang, Hunan Province had seriously affected food safety, such as the purchase of "soil pit pickle", the bad production environment, and the use of food additives beyond the scope. A number of enterprises, including Qianqi Cuisine and Jinrui Food, have also processed pickled cabbage products for many well-known brands, as well as some instant noodle enterprises.

Among them, the flag planting vegetable industry is a large vegetable reprocessing enterprise in Huarong County, Hunan Province. However, the pickled vegetables pickled from the enterprise's standardized salting pool are used for processing export products, and the pickled vegetables in the Laotan pickled cabbage bag are "pit pickled vegetables" purchased from outside. The investigation found that the workers poured the unwashed mustard into the soil pit, added water, salt, etc., wrapped it with film, covered it with soil, and pickled it directly. After pickling, manufacturers will come here to buy pickled vegetables one after another. Some of the workers were wearing slippers, and some were barefoot, stepping on pickles. After being pulled to the factory, sauerkraut is randomly stacked on the ground, and the production environment is filthy. After machine cleaning, chopping, mixing, packaging and sterilization, such pickles are made into old jars of pickles. When the enterprises involved purchase these pickles, they will not test the hygiene indicators. In the investigation of local pickle production enterprises, it was also found that the enterprises were outspoken about the excessive use of preservatives and color fixatives, with the maximum exceeding 10 times.

After the event was exposed, it caused a strong response from the public, and the entry of "Tukeng pickled cabbage" immediately became the first hot search on Weibo. The local regulatory authorities took measures to seal up the enterprises involved overnight and carried out law enforcement investigations. That night, the brands that have cooperative relations with the enterprises involved issued papers in succession, and various news media also reported the event.

2. Challenges faced by food enterprises in crisis public relations in the Internet era

2.1 The food industry itself is special, which is related to people's basic living security

In the traditional Chinese proverb, "food is the first priority for the people, and food safety is the first." Food safety is closely related to people's life, and it is related to everyone's life, health and safety. The use of raw materials with poor quality or the nonstandard operation in the production process will

lead to unsafe products, which will damage the people's health and their legitimate rights and interests, and even have a negative impact on the next generation of consumers. The food problem is no trivial matter. The public's attention and sensitivity to food safety are very high. Therefore, enterprises should firmly grasp the bottom line of food safety production in the process of food production. ^[1] Once there is a problem with food safety, it will cause widespread concern in the society, and the enterprise involved will lose the trust of many consumers. Even if the subsequent rectification is made, it will be difficult to return to its former glory.

With the continuous strengthening of China's national economy and the continuous improvement of the people's material living standards, the people are paying more and more attention to the quality of life, food quality and food safety. In the past, the masses only wanted to eat fully and have something to eat. Now, the masses are more concerned about whether they eat well and whether they can eat at ease. It shows that Chinese people are paying more attention to food safety and pay more attention to the quality of food itself. The public's general awareness of food safety has been improved, reflecting that the market is also improving the requirements for food on the market, which means that food enterprises need to strictly control the quality of food produced, so as to achieve the effect of ensuring that everyone can eat safely and safely. As a food producer, only by firmly holding the bottom line of food safety can enterprises go further.

2.2 Network public opinion is powerful and easy to attract widespread attention

2.2.1 Fast transmission speed and wide range

The communication mode in the Internet era is more flexible and fast. It can break through the limitations of time and space. It has changed the traditional way of receiving information in the past. ^[2] Now people can receive the latest information as long as they pick up their mobile phones. In just a few seconds, they can forward and spread public relations events with a few clicks, so that more and more people can understand and spread. The faster the speed of communication, the wider the scope of communication, and the faster the speed of public opinion fermentation. This requires corporate public relations to respond in the shortest possible time, which also increases the difficulty of public relations.

2.2.2 The complexity of the communication subject dispels the central discourse power

The traditional communication mode is the one-way information transmission from the government and the official to the ordinary people, which is absolutely oppressive. But with the advent of the Internet era, the widespread use of new media has made "decentralization" possible. "Decentralization" makes the masses not only the recipients of information, but also the disseminators of information. ^[3] Everyone has the right to speak. At the same time, "decentralization" has also made the official voice less authoritative, and the leading power of enterprises to information is declining. Anyone can become the leader of public opinion. If the officially released news is used by intentional people to fabricate and modify it and then published on the Internet for the second time, it will make other uninformed people unable to grasp the truth of the event, and even lead the direction of public opinion to uncontrollable direction, and the challenges faced by the enterprise's official public relations will become more arduous.

2.2.3 Communication mode is interactive

The communication mode in the Internet era makes up for the shortcomings of the traditional communication mode, that is, the information receiver can interact with the information publisher in a timely manner. After receiving the information, the audience will publish a subjective evaluation of the information content and then publish it. At this time, the receiver of the information becomes the publisher of the information, and the content of the information has also changed greatly, because it includes the subjective influence of the audience itself and the influence of the surrounding public opinion environment. ^[4] In this case, the publisher of the information, the official team of the enterprise, can quickly know the real ideas of the public and the direction of public opinion, so as to formulate a more appropriate public relations plan.

2.2.4 The authenticity of information dissemination has declined

Due to the low threshold of information release in the Internet era, anyone can process and release information, so it cannot be guaranteed that all information on the Internet is true and reliable. Many marketing numbers on the Internet or water army will describe the real situation of the event in an embellished way and spread it for the second time in order to attract attention, which leads to the bad effect of the official truth dissemination, but the false information carried by the marketing number is widely spread. At the same time, China's relevant laws and regulations on the dissemination of false

information on the Internet are not perfect, which increases the possibility of malicious dissemination of false information. The spread of false information makes the work of corporate public relations more difficult.

3. Comparison of corporate public relations

3.1 Negative PR

Uni-President first responded after the incident, but his response was also the worst among several enterprises involved. In the first statement on the official website, Uni-President admitted its mistakes, said that it had stopped cooperating with the pickle supplier "Jinrui Food" in the past five years, apologized to consumers and consciously accepted the supervision of the media and all sectors of society. But soon, Uni-President issued a new statement to the effect that Laotan pickled cabbage and beef noodles were very good, and kept silent about Jinrui food, indicating that it had no relationship with the enterprises involved. One day after the release of the second statement, Uni-President deleted the first statement and issued the third statement, which was also the key to the failure of Uni-President's public relations. In the third statement, Uni-President's attitude was completely different from that of the previous statements, and the statements were also inconsistent. The contents mentioned in the first statement were completely denied, claiming that pickled vegetables were all made and used at home. From the second and third statements, the attitude of Uni-President changed from "accepting criticism with an open mind" to "I'm right, I'm right." Such contradictory statements and high attitude will push Uni-President to the center of public opinion fermentation, making consumers and other media doubt the professionalism and authenticity of Uni-President's statement, which is also the key to the loss of consumer trust. Then Uni-President released two more microblogs. The first one was that Tukeng pickles had nothing to do with Uni-President, and Jinrui was willing to bear legal liability for all acts. It can be seen that Uni-President had made a deal with Jinrui in private in order to get away from it, and let Jinrui take all the responsibilities to wash itself. Four hours later, the unified second microblog invited 1000 people to visit the pickled vegetable factory and made public in the form of live broadcast. However, many netizens didn't buy the public relations statement of Uni-President, and picked out the secret: the brand new level of the jar in the Weibo photos is suspicious, and they think that Uni-President is posing for a show.

The public relations of Uni-President this time reflected the following problems: first; Repeating his statement repeatedly shows that the enterprise has no crisis awareness at ordinary times and has no scientific and rigorous plan to deal with emergencies. Second; The self-contradictory behavior causes consumers to doubt the professionalism and preciseness of the enterprise and thus lose consumers' trust. At the same time, third; In several public relations statements, Uni-President did not correct its attitude. From the sincere confession at the beginning to the high position after that, the public relations events that had not been settled directly pushed to another peak of public opinion. Enterprises should explain and apologize from the perspective of consumers, so as to appease the public mood.

3.2 Positive PR

This "earth pit pickle" event involves many enterprises, not only Uni-President, but also well-known food enterprises such as KFC, White Elephant, Wugu Yufen, Taier and Master Kang. However, White Elephant, Taier and other enterprises, which are also in synergy with Uni-President, can get out of this crisis perfectly. Although the "earthen pickles" hit the instant noodle related enterprises hard, because of its close relationship with pickles, Taier took the initiative to issue the "Taier pickles safety report" on WeChat official account, in which the pickle manufacturer, license certificate, quality inspection report and photos of the pickling workshop were disclosed, indicating that their pickles had nothing to do with the enterprise involved in the accident, and they were all qualified pickles tested by a third-party testing agency, This can be used to prove innocence to dispel consumer concerns. Because Taier did not cooperate with the enterprises involved, he was not involved. Netizens still focused on several instant noodle enterprises, but Taier chose to release a statement to appease consumers. The statement released by Taier also adopted a strategy of "selling cuteness and starting from darkness". It dealt with the crisis public relations through sincere attitude, straightforward quality inspection report, simple and clear pictures of official account tweets, and joking tone. After reading the statement, netizens expressed their trust and support for Taier in the comment area. Taier's proactive approach is not simply to "rub off", but to use the public relations crisis to market itself, establish a trustworthy brand image, and gain a large wave of favorable feelings from netizens.

The response of another instant noodle enterprise that has cooperated with "Tokeng Pickles" can also be called more responsible, that is, Master Kang. On the night of the exposure of the "Tukeng Pickled Cabbage" incident, Master Kang issued a statement on the matter. In the statement, he first admitted that he had cooperation with the flag planting vegetable industry, and announced that he would cancel the cooperation and cooperate with the regulatory authorities to investigate. At the end of the statement, Master Kang apologized to the consumer and actively rectified. After the follow-up investigation, Master Kang released a statement at a very fast speed, clearly announcing the factories in which the "pit pickled cabbage bag" flows and choosing to recycle the relevant products off the shelf. As an enterprise directly related to and cooperating with the enterprises involved, and as a leading brand in the instant noodle industry, Master Kang can't easily get away from it, but can only take a more prudent and comprehensive approach to stop the image loss. Although Master Kang simply issued two statements after the incident, in these two statements, first of all, he admitted the mistake, took responsibility, and made a sincere apology with a low profile, and then there were investigation and handling measures. It was not just a simple apology statement to fool the past, so Master Kang still gained some understanding from consumers in the crisis public relations, and saved some consumers' reputation.

3.3 The importance of "qualitative" events

Why was Unity the worst scolded by everyone in this crisis? But can Master Kang, who explicitly admitted that he had cooperation with the "flag planting industry", to some extent reduce the heat of public opinion and negative impact? First of all, Uni-President made a big mistake in this crisis public relations, that is, it did not define the nature of this public relations event before handling it. The so-called qualitative is how the enterprise decides the event in the public opinion after the crisis, so as to reduce the damage of the crisis to the brand. Although qualitative analysis cannot completely eliminate the crisis, it can grasp the direction of public opinion and control the development of the situation.

Uni-President has issued statements repeatedly. In several statements, the statements are inconsistent. First of all, we admit that we have cooperation, and then show that we have nothing to do with the enterprises involved. On the other hand, Master Kang directly acknowledged the cooperation with the enterprises involved and announced the rectification. The unified public relations handling of this crisis did not reach a private agreement with the flag planting industry and Jinrui Food in advance, and did not coordinate well in advance, which led to his subsequent repeated statements, even overturning the previous statements, leading to arousing negative public sentiment. Next, after issuing the statement, Uni-President chose to negotiate privately with the enterprises involved and put all the responsibility on Jinrui Food. However, the public opinion was obviously out of control and overturned the previous statement. This move only aroused the public's anger and made the public doubt whether Uni-President paid compensation to Jinrui Food privately and let Jinrui Food take the blame. At this time, the unity has lost the authority and authenticity of its right to speak, and can only be led by public opinion. Master Kang, on the other hand, directly assumed the responsibility from the beginning and grasped the right to speak and take the initiative. The direction of the whole public event is entirely up to him to guide the media report and public opinion in a benign way. What the media and the public need to do is wait for the follow-up report and follow-up rectification notice of Master Kang.

Compared with Unity, Master Kang did a good job. First, he coordinated with the enterprises involved before issuing the statement. The two sides had the same caliber and eliminated the "dirty water" situation of the other side. Second, Master Kang scrambled for the right to speak of the event, seized the high point of public opinion, and lowered the voice of the media and the public. Third, the corporate responsibility has been clarified. Master Kang directly identified the incident, apologized to the public, and made clear the corporate responsibility. He introduced the media and the public into a good mood and reasonable event handling, avoiding the possibility of public opinion fermenting again.

4. Strategies for crisis public relations of food enterprises in the Internet era

4.1 Establish crisis awareness and response mechanism

Food enterprises should maintain a prudent and modest attitude and the awareness of being prepared for danger in times of peace, and strengthen the crisis awareness and crisis public relations processing ability. When the enterprise and its public relations team have the crisis awareness, they should also establish a complete crisis warning mechanism. The public relations team of the enterprise can imagine and simulate all the crisis public relations that the enterprise may face, Only in this way can we handle

the real crisis calmly when it comes to public relations and minimize the loss of the enterprise. The public relations team should also keep a sharp eye, find small problems in the daily production of the enterprise in time, pay attention to them in advance, take targeted measures, and prevent the emergence of crisis events.

4.2 Standardize production to prevent crisis

Food safety is the bottom line of enterprise production. Food safety affects the health of people in the whole society. Therefore, food enterprises should not only formulate strict production standards, but also implement them in the specific production process. All employees of food enterprises, from the top to the most basic, should always maintain a cautious working attitude and standardize production operations in order to reduce the probability of crisis events. It is not only the enterprise itself that needs to standardize production, but also its raw material suppliers, processing plants and other related enterprises should strictly implement production standards to minimize the possibility of food safety crisis from the root.

4.3 Actively handle public relations events and follow the 5S principle

Once a crisis occurs, enterprises should follow the 5S principle and handle it calmly. First of all, the first point of the 5S principle is the principle of responsibility. When a crisis occurs, it should not be evaded or concealed. Instead, it should take the initiative to take responsibility, investigate the crisis situation comprehensively, and disclose relevant information in a timely manner. In the future, we should continue to follow up and disclose the specific situation to reassure the public. The second point is the principle of sincere communication. Enterprises should keep a low profile, apologize to the public in a sincere manner, and explain the situation to the public, so as to avoid the occurrence of fluke mentality, which leads to self-defeating. The third point is the principle of speed first. With the rapid development and popularization of the Internet, the public's access to information is getting faster and faster. Therefore, after a crisis, enterprises should report to the public at the first time to avoid further expansion of negative impact, leading to public opinion out of control. The fourth point is the system operation principle. The enterprise and its public relations team should keep calm when dealing with crisis events, and should make an overall strategy when dealing with crisis public relations, so as to avoid that the enterprise's efforts in dealing with crisis public relations will be wasted due to the inconsistency of the front and back statements or the excessive statements made by other personnel of the enterprise. The last point is the principle of authoritative confirmation. ^[5] When there is a problem with food safety, the enterprise can choose the relevant national regulatory authority with credibility to test and publish the relevant quality inspection report. In the follow-up rectification, the third party supervision department can also check and make it public to dispel consumer concerns.

4.4 Give full play to the role of online new media and attach importance to the development of public opinion

Due to the characteristics of fast information dissemination, wide audience coverage and strong participation and interaction of new online media, new online media plays an important role in public opinion guidance. Therefore, both food enterprises and other enterprises should give full play to the guiding role of online new media in public opinion. After the crisis, they should actively contact the media from all walks of life to convey accurate information to the public through them, so as to avoid the false and wrong information reported by them to mislead the public, causing anger, panic and other negative emotions of the public to lead to public opinion out of control. Therefore, enterprises should maintain a good relationship with online new media, and use their power to timely disclose the real situation and subsequent processing to the public, guide public opinion and minimize the impact of crisis events.

4.5 Rebuild the corporate image after crisis public relations

After dealing with the crisis, enterprises cannot relax their vigilance when the heat of public opinion and public attention are declining. First of all, we should actively deal with the follow-up, make a commitment, actively rectify and standardize the production and operation, assume our due responsibilities, and regularly disclose the real situation to the public to win the trust of consumers again. Then, enterprises should analyze the causes of this crisis and draw lessons from it, so as to develop a more perfect crisis warning mechanism, which can better respond calmly when the next crisis comes.

Finally, enterprises can also pay more attention to social hot issues and do more public welfare activities to improve the negative impact of previous crisis events on enterprises, improve their reputation and restore their image.

5. Conclusion

Whether the crisis public relations of enterprises are handled well or not can directly affect the survival and development of enterprises. For enterprises, the occurrence of crisis events is always unavoidable, and in the Internet era, the situation of enterprises dealing with crisis events has become more complex and difficult, but at the same time, enterprises can use the advantages of new network media to reduce the impact of their crisis events. Using the Internet to deal with crisis public relations has become a new public relations method that every enterprise must learn. Only in this way can it help enterprises get rid of crisis events as soon as possible.

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