

# Managing Brand Reputation in a Digital Era: Insights from the 'We Talk, Walk, Heal, and Grow Together' Campaign"

Shilin Ke\*

Business management, City, University of London, London, EC1Y 8TZ, England

\* Corresponding author: Shilin Ke (Email:shilinke5@gmail.com)

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**Abstract:** This essay critically examines the challenges of managing brand reputation in a volatile media landscape, using the "We Talk, Walk, Heal, and Grow Together" mental health campaign as a case study. The campaign aims to address issues of damaged brand reputation and build trust among young audiences, particularly in an era characterized by misinformation and skepticism. The essay explores the role of communication theories-such as ethos, pathos, logos, and persuasion models-in crafting effective media strategies. It emphasizes the importance of social media engagement, audience behavior analysis, and ethical communication, alongside the challenges posed by technological disruption, misinformation, and media commercialization. Through a theoretical and practical lens, this essay highlights the importance of strategic, audience-centered communication in managing brand reputation today.

**Keywords:** Brand Reputation Management, Media Theory, Social Media, Mental Health Campaign, Persuasion Models, Audience Behavior, Digital Strategy, Misinformation, Ethical Communication, Cognitive Dissonance.

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## 1. Brand Reputation Management

### 1.1. Introduction

The intersection between media theory and professional communication practice has evolved significantly over the years. Communication, which is often perceived as a natural or intuitive skill, has become increasingly important in guiding strategic media efforts grounded in theoretical frameworks. This evolution is especially evident in brand reputation management, where an understanding of communication theories can help navigate the challenges posed by the volatile media landscape of today. The essay will critically examine these challenges, particularly focusing on the "We Talk, Walk, Heal, and Grow Together" mental health campaign. This campaign was designed to address issues surrounding brand reputation, emphasizing trust-building among young audiences in an environment heavily influenced by misinformation, skepticism, and digital disruptions. By reflecting on relevant media theories covered in this course, the essay aims to outline how these frameworks shape the communication strategies employed in this campaign, underscoring the importance of ethical, audience-centered messaging.

### 1.2. Managing Brand Reputation in a Volatile Media Landscape

The media landscape today is characterized by high fragmentation and fast-moving shifts, particularly following the rise of social media platforms. Traditional media, once the dominant source of communication, now faces unprecedented challenges, including the rapid spread of misinformation and the growing skepticism of the public. These factors contribute to an environment where brand reputation can be swiftly compromised if not managed strategically. According to Scannell (2007)[1], the rapid pace of media development has led to a situation where public relations efforts, once seen as

effective tools for reputation management, now require a more nuanced and dynamic approach.

For the "We Talk, Walk, Heal, and Grow Together" mental health campaign, effective reputation management was paramount. The campaign's goal was not only to engage with young people on mental health issues but also to establish trust and credibility in an age where misinformation is rampant. In response to this, a key communication theory applied in the campaign's development was the integration of ethos, pathos, and logos, which are foundational elements of classical rhetorical theory. Ethos relates to the credibility of the campaign, pathos to emotional appeal, and logos to logical argumentation. By carefully balancing these elements, the campaign aimed to craft a message that was not only emotionally engaging but also grounded in credible data and research, ensuring that the audience felt both connected and confident in the information being presented.

Additionally, the importance of partnering with established organizations was critical in reinforcing the campaign's credibility. In a world where trust is increasingly fragile, collaborating with trusted mental health organizations provided external validation and bolstered the campaign's credibility. These partnerships, combined with an emotionally engaging narrative and evidence-backed messaging, were designed to counteract the widespread skepticism surrounding mental health issues.

### 1.3. Role of Social Media and Digital Strategy

Social media plays a crucial role in the communication strategy for the "We Talk, Walk, Heal, and Grow Together" campaign. Instagram, in particular, was chosen as the primary platform for the campaign, given its large young adult user base-over 60% of Instagram users fall within the age range of 18 to 34 (Atherton, 2020)[2]. The selection of this platform was a strategic decision to ensure that the campaign's messaging reached its intended demographic. Social media allows for real-time interaction with audiences, making it an

ideal tool for engaging young people on mental health topics in an authentic and participatory way.

One of the key strategies used on Instagram was encouraging user-generated content around personal mental health experiences. This strategy not only fostered a sense of community but also ensured that the campaign's message resonated on a personal level with its audience. By using hashtags like #MentalHealthMatters and #MindCheckChallenge, the campaign invited followers to share their stories and experiences, which in turn amplified the message and increased engagement.

However, as Lipschultz (2015)[3] notes, the algorithmic biases inherent in social media platforms present a challenge. Content that is sensational or polarizing is often prioritized over positive, supportive messages, which can hinder the campaign's effectiveness. To mitigate this, the campaign focused on creating positive, relatable content that could organically spread through the platform, thus improving its visibility despite the algorithmic bias. A strong visual identity and emotionally resonant messaging helped the campaign cut through the noise and engage with users in an authentic way.

#### 1.4. Persuasion Models and Audience Behavior

Understanding audience behavior is critical for developing effective communication strategies. One model that was particularly useful in designing the campaign was the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which posits that there are two primary routes to persuasion: the central route, which involves critical thinking, and the peripheral route, which relies on emotional appeal and surface cues (O'Boyle, 2022)[4].

By applying both routes of persuasion, the campaign aimed to engage different segments of its audience. Some individuals responded to detailed, factual mental health information and resources shared through the campaign, while others were more likely to engage with emotionally charged content, such as videos featuring influencers or personal stories. This layered approach ensured that the campaign resonated with a broader audience, meeting them where they were in terms of emotional and cognitive engagement.

In addition to ELM, the theory of cognitive dissonance was also considered in the campaign's development. Cognitive dissonance occurs when individuals encounter information that conflicts with their existing beliefs, leading to discomfort and resistance. In the context of mental health, this theory is particularly relevant, as mental health issues are often stigmatized or misunderstood. To avoid triggering defensiveness, the campaign focused on framing mental health support as a positive and empowering choice. By framing the conversation around mental health in a supportive and affirming way, the campaign minimized resistance and helped reduce the stigma that often surrounds mental health issues.

#### 1.5. The Impact of Technological Disruption

Technological disruption has significantly altered the media landscape, with the rise of AI, deepfakes, and misinformation posing new threats to the credibility of traditional media. As Whittaker (2019)[5] highlights, the line between truth and fabrication is increasingly blurred, making it difficult for audiences to discern reliable sources from unreliable ones. In this environment, transparency and credibility are more important than ever. Throughout the "We

Talk, Walk, Heal, and Grow Together" campaign, emphasis was placed on ensuring that all messaging was transparent, truthful, and supported by credible sources. By collaborating with reputable mental health organizations and using verified research, the campaign sought to reinforce trust and credibility.

Moreover, the commercialization of media has led many outlets to prioritize profit over accuracy, further complicating the landscape for reputation management (Hamilton, 2004)[6]. In response to this, the campaign maintained an ethical stance, prioritizing the well-being of its audience over engagement metrics. While engagement is important, the core focus of the campaign was on providing valuable, honest content that could truly benefit its audience.

## 2. Reflective Statement

Having taken this course with help of Gibb's Reflective Cycle (1988)[7], I can have a reflection on my personal development during this project using the six stages that promote deeper reflection and learning.

To begin with, for description – we developed the "We Talk, Walk, Heal, and Grow Together" with the tag line 'It's okay to not be okay' campaign to promote mental health awareness among youths. In this we had to focus on using persuasive communication to structure our messaging and strategy for social media platforms which were our primary communication channels.

Then we had feelings where we were both excited and overwhelmed by the need to have the theories learnt integrated into the practice. As we understood the intricacies of the different communication theories it became apparent on how best I can deploy the use of these platforms.

Then there was the evaluation phase where understanding our strength and the challenges that we could be facing was integral. This helped in ensuring consistent theoretical integration across different content pieces through an evaluation process that offer timely and regular feedback.

There was also the analysis phase where coherent communication strategy was critical in reinforcing the importance of theoretical frameworks. This helped me recognize that understanding audience psychology is crucial for message design and delivery.

As for final two phases, the module has significantly enhanced my ability to bridge different communication theories and practical communication work. By engaging in this project, I have also understood the importance of adaptability in media project management. Therefore, in my future projects, I plan to apply the theories I have learnt in more systematic way. This will entail proper a planning phase where I will try to foster more stronger collaborative structures within the teams will be working with to ensure consistency and efficiency as part of my action plan.

## 3. Conclusion

Managing brand reputation in today's media environment requires a deep understanding of both communication theories and the evolving media landscape. By integrating these theories into the development of the "We Talk, Walk, Heal, and Grow Together" campaign, the project demonstrated the importance of strategic, audience-centered communication in addressing the challenges of misinformation, skepticism, and technological disruption. Through this campaign, it became clear that effective brand

reputation management hinges on trust, transparency, and ethical communication practices.

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