

Abstract

Titel des Vortrags	Krisenkommunikation im Umgang mit der Anschuldigung eines Sexualdelikts. Eine Analyse der Kommunikationsstrategien von US-Politikern im Zuge der „#me-too-Debatte“
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Political scandals have always been a threat to officeholders. They illustrate the fragility of political careers. In an age of *unleashed scandals* (Pörksen and Detel 2012) their scientific discussion is increasingly relevant. Recently, the “#metoo-movement” has cast a light on cases of alleged sexual misconduct by leading politicians. From a communication studies perspective this - among other things - raises the question of how crisis communication operates in the face of such accusations. Our contribution will examine the response strategies of 36 accused politicians from the recent American context. What communication did they resort to and which strategies proved more effective than others in retaining their position?

As the state of research is comparably sparse and mostly dominated by single-case or small comparative studies, dating back to a time when digitalization was in the fledging stage, new and more comprehensive approaches are overdue. Existing studies are often based on Benoit's *Image-Repair-Theory* or related typologies of crisis response patterns. While these certainly provide solid tools for analyzing the *content* of responses, the *form* is often neglected. That is despite the fact that one bulk crisis communication literature is clearly represented by works that elaborate on rather mechanic best-practice rules for PR agents. As a consequence, our inquiry will first derive a catalogue of such rules in order to examine whether complying with them actually raises the chance of political survival. On the other hand, it will follow the tradition of previous studies and analyze to what extent certain argumentative defense patterns promise more success than others, facing accusations of sexual harassment. By doing so, our study will exceed the scope of past works in two ways: It will consider a distinctly larger number of cases from the digital age as well as broaden the view of crisis communication itself systematically and thereby deliver more insightful and representative results.