

“Go Green. Go White. #GoTeal?”

A Study Examining Image Repair Strategies Employed by Michigan State University

Following the Larry Nassar Sexual Abuse Scandal

Katie McMillan

Wayne State University

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to examine how Michigan State University (MSU) used Facebook as an image repair tool after the Larry Nassar sexual abuse scandal. This study examined Facebook posts within MSU's #GoTeal campaign, which was led by students and formally adopted by the university in February 2018 to provide support to survivors and help transform the campus culture. The #GoTeal campaign posts employed the image repair strategies of rallying, corrective action, compensation, and transcendence. In general, individuals commenting on MSU's posts expressed a negative image of the university, with the notable exception of overwhelmingly positive comments on posts featuring Justice, a black labrador retriever who was introduced in December 2018 as MSU's canine advocate to serve as a therapy dog for survivors. This study builds on existing research, which analyzed MSU's Facebook posts during Nassar's hearing and identified the image repair strategies of corrective action, rallying, bolstering, and mortification. Generally, there was a significant decrease in engagement on #GoTeal posts compared to posts from the apex of the scandal. However, individuals commenting on both sets of posts were resistant to MSU's image repair efforts and maintained a negative perspective of the university over time, regardless of various strategies, until the introduction of Justice.

Keywords: image repair, image restoration, Michigan State University, Larry Nassar, Facebook, #GoTeal, sexual abuse scandal.

“Go Green. Go White. #GoTeal?” A Proposed Study Examining Image Repair Strategies

Employed by Michigan State University Following the Larry Nassar Sexual Abuse Scandal

Background

Larry Nassar joined Michigan State University (MSU) as an associate professor and team physician in 1997; he served in various roles for USA Gymnastics from 1986 through 2014.

Nassar was relieved of his duties at MSU on September 20, 2016, in part because of reports from the *Indianapolis Star* about USA Gymnastics and its handling of sexual abuse complaints, many of which involved Nassar (Dator, 2019). On November 20, 2017, after nearly a year of growing charges and lawsuits, Nassar pled guilty to seven counts of first-degree criminal sexual conduct involving girls who were 15 years old or younger (Dator, 2019). Nassar's 8-day sentencing hearing from January 16 through January 24, 2018 drew national media coverage, and included victim impact statements from 156 women (Dator, 2019). On January 24, 2018, Nassar was sentenced to 40-175 years in prison on seven counts of criminal sexual assault (Dator, 2019).

Much has happened since Nassar's sentencing. On May 16, 2018, MSU agreed to a \$500 million settlement to be paid to survivors who had filed a class action lawsuit against the university for failing to protect them (Dator, 2019). Former university president Lou Anna K. Simon remained on the faculty until November 2018, when she was placed on unpaid leave after being charged with two felony and two misdemeanor counts for lying to police during their investigation (Dator, 2019). Additionally, a state-ordered investigation into MSU's culpability in the scandal found that the university had been “stonewalling investigators” (Li, 2018, p. 1). Despite multiple complaints and warning signs about Nassar that spanned a period of 30 years, there is evidence that MSU was slow to act on reports that he was abusing young women under the guise of medical treatment (Kozlowski, 2018a). Facing increased public criticism and

scrutiny as the Nassar hearing progressed, MSU engaged in image repair tactics on multiple platforms, including Facebook. During Nassar's 8-day hearing, MSU posted nine items directly related to the case and three unrelated items; image repair strategies included bolstering, corrective action, rallying, and mortification (Frederick, Pegoraro, & Reichart Smith, 2019). On February 1, 2018, MSU adopted the #GoTeal campaign, initiated by students in MSU's College of Communication Arts and Sciences to provide support to survivors and help transform campus culture (Dudlets, 2018). From February 1, 2018 to October 7, 2019, MSU posted seven #GoTeal-related items on Facebook. This study will advance the research presented by Frederick, Pegoraro, & Reichart Smith (2019) by examining the #GoTeal posts and utilizing image repair theory to identify patterns and observations about MSU's repair efforts over time.

Image Repair Theory

Image repair theory, also known as image restoration theory, was introduced by political communication scholar William Benoit to suggest specific strategies that can be used by individuals, companies, or organizations to restore an image following reputational damage (Benoit, 2014). The theory is based on the fundamental ideas that communication is a goal-directed activity, and that maintaining a favorable reputation is a key goal (Benoit, 2014). Through various studies, Benoit (2014, 2000, 1997) developed an image repair typology consisting of five categories (some with subcategories), including denial, evasion of responsibility, reducing offensiveness, taking corrective action, and mortification. Denial strategies encompass: (a) simple denial, in which the accused directly denies that the act outright; and (b) shifting the blame, in which the accused attempts to direct blame elsewhere (Benoit, 2014). Evading responsibility strategies encompass (c) provocation/scapegoating, in which the accused cites the offensive act was a response to another wrongful or offensive act; (d)

defeasibility, in which the accused pleads a lack of knowledge or control; (e) excuse/accident, in which the accused blames the offensive act on an accident or factors beyond their control; and (f) justification, in which the accused claims good intentions (Benoit, 2014). Reducing offensiveness strategies include (g) bolstering, in which the accused attempts to mitigate reputational damage by citing previous good behaviors or existing goodwill; (h) minimization, in which the accused attempts to convince the public that the offensive act is less serious or important than it appears; (i) differentiation, in which the accused distinguishes the offensive act from a larger offensive act to lessen negative perceptions by comparison; (j) transcendence, in which the accused positions the offensive act in a larger context to place it in a different and less offensive light; (k) attacking the accuser, in which the accused questions the credibility of the accusers; and (l) compensation, in which the accused offers compensations to the victims of their offensive act (Benoit, 2014). Benoit's (2014) final response strategies are more direct, and include corrective action, in which the accused claims they will correct an offensive act by restoring the situation to its prior state and preventing reoccurrence of the offensive act; and mortification, in which the accused admits responsibility and asks for forgiveness. In their investigation of British Petroleum's response to the Deepwater Horizon explosion and subsequent oil spill, Smithson and Venette (2013) posited the additional image repair strategy of stonewalling, in which the accused redirects attention to insignificant details and is generally uncooperative. In a study of the image repair strategies employed by the University of Louisville following their basketball team's involvement in a federal bribery investigation, Frederick and Pegoraro (2018) posited the additional strategy of rallying, in which the accused attempts to unify constituents to move on from a scandal.

Image repair theory most closely aligns with the sociopsychological tradition (Craig, 1999). The theory focuses on the cause-effect relationship that exists between an individual's perception of another individual or organization based on the strategies employed in response to a reputational threat. In acknowledging that response strategies can be used in a variety of combinations and orders, Benoit recognizes that individuals are active participants in the communication process and that there is no single, one-size-fits-all response (Benoit, 2014, 1997). Philosophically, image repair aligns similarly to other theories in the sociopsychological tradition. From an epistemological standpoint, image repair holds the objectivist perspective that knowledge can be discovered through careful observation (Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2017). Benoit's focus on the relationship and exchanges between individuals and/or organizations also supports the epistemological standpoint that reality is a socially constructed product of a group or culture (Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2017). From an ontological standpoint, image repair theory holds both the actional and deterministic perspective in observing that individuals play an active role in their realities and perceptions, but that they do not always have a choice in external factors – such as how and when an organization or individual reacts to a reputational threat (Littlejohn, Foss, & Oetzel, 2017). Image repair theory can be axiologically value-neutral or value-conscious, depending on the scholar at hand. While Benoit (2014, 1997) set out to organize effective image repair strategies in an objective manner, others may interpret the theory through a more ethical lens, viewing image repair strategies as an extension of an individual's or organization's personal values.

Literature Review

Much of the research around image repair theory falls into two broad categories: case studies related to the effectiveness of image repair strategies used by either organizations or

individuals (often public figures such as politicians, athletes, or celebrities). While there are differences in the repair efforts for individuals and organizations — namely that organizations may have greater resources available to address reputational damage — the basic strategies remain the same (Benoit, 1997).

In recent studies, scholars have found that social media platforms can be used in image repair strategies to redirect audiences and to control narratives, particularly in the realm of collegiate and professional sport scandals (Frederick & Pegoraro, 2018; Hambrick, Frederick, & Sanderson, 2013). Sports fans have been shown to behave as surrogate crisis communicators via social media on behalf of their favorite teams and athletes, often employing image repair strategies in alignment with or in addition to those utilized by the team or athlete (Brown & Billings, 2013). Others have suggested that when examining social media image repair tactics, it is important to consider the individuals who create and engage with content on such platforms, as their interactions have the potential to impact an organization in times of crisis, making crisis communication an increasingly complex process (Coombs & Holladay, 2013).

While most sports crises rarely rise to the level of severe reputational damage or the disruption of business (Koerber & Zabara, 2017), the reputational crisis of an athlete, coach, or other team personnel can have a spillover effect on their respective teams, leagues, sponsors, and other affiliates (Coombs, 2018). Some crises, though, rise to Maier and Crist's (2017) definition of a wicked crisis, which they define in their analysis of communication pertaining to the American Roman Catholic Church sexual abuse scandal as “events so intractable and threatening that they leave even the best leaders speechless and the most prepared organizations grasping for answers” (p. 164). This portion of the literature review will examine studies related to image repair strategies during two such “wicked crises” in collegiate athletics, including the Jerry

Sandusky sexual abuse scandal at Penn State University (Brown, Brown, & Billings, 2015), and the Larry Nassar sexual abuse scandal at MSU (Frederick, Pegoraro, & Reichart Smith, 2019).

When news of systemic, repeated sexual abuse of student athletes at Penn State by assistant football coach Jerry Sandusky broke, the university failed to immediately and permanently remove Sandusky from his position, causing public outrage. Fans sought different outlets to express their thoughts, and many did so via Twitter. In a study examining the social media posts of Penn State fans during the scandal, fans were found to have turned on the university and placed their loyalty instead with head football coach Joe Paterno, engaging in ingratiation, reminder, and scapegoat strategies (Brown, Brown, & Billings, 2015). Brown, Brown, and Billings (2015) utilized the Twitter search engine Twazzup to collect and analyze tweets from Penn State fans from November 5, 2011 (when the story broke) through January 21, 2012 (the day before Paterno died). The scholars identified a total sample of 150 Penn State fans and 2,000 tweets that were directly in response to a post from the university or that were posted independently with a university-related hashtag. Tweets were coded by image repair strategy, with scapegoating against the university being the most frequently used tactic (Brown, Brown, & Billings, 2015). Penn State's institutional response shifted dramatically when it became apparent that fans were siding with Paterno and against the university (Brown, Brown, & Billings, 2015). Brown, Brown, and Billings (2015) concluded that online fan-based crisis response is not always in the best interest of an organization.

MSU also found itself increasingly in a negative spotlight as Nassar's very public hearing continued, and the university utilized social media as part of its image repair strategy. From January 16, 2018 through January 27, 2018 (a timeframe which encompassed the entirety of the hearing and the three days that followed), MSU created 12 Facebook posts, with all but three

directly related to Nassar. In a study examining those social media posts, individuals were found to be continuously critical of the university (Frederick, Pegoraro, & Reichart Smith, 2019). In their collection and thematic analysis of these posts, Frederick, Pegoraro, and Reichart Smith (2019) found that MSU utilized bolstering, corrective action, rallying, and mortification image repair tactics. Frederick, Pegoraro and Reichart Smith (2019) utilized the data collection tool Netvizz to scrape posts and comments, collecting engagements per individual posts, including comments, shares, and reactions (likes, loves, etc.), and from there used the qualitative software Leximancer to analyze users' comments. In total, the 12 Facebook posts received 2,597 comments and 1,095 replies to comments (Frederick, Pegoraro, & Reichart Smith, 2019). Generally, the analysis showed fans were resistant to MSU's image repair strategies, and instead focused their comments on the university's mishandling of the situation, mistreatment of the victims, and its failure to take responsibility (Frederick et al., 2019).

In both cases, long-term abuse of student athletes occurred because the respective university failed in its critical responsibility to protect them. Unfortunately, the sexual abuse perpetrated by authority figures at Penn State and MSU is not an isolated occurrence. Colleges and universities across the country have grappled with similar heinous acts, including Ohio State University (Maese, 2019) and the University of Michigan (Marowski, 2020). It cannot be known how many other cases have occurred, or will occur. All of these high-profile cases involved continuous media coverage and public outcry, resulting in varied image repair strategies. While crisis communication best practices dictate that reputational concerns should always be prioritized after the safety and wellbeing of the people involved (Coombs, 2007), each university engaged in image repair strategies in the aftermath of these crises with varied responses. Ultimately, social media proved to be a generally unpredictable environment.

Current Study Research Method

As a public relations professional working in higher education, the systemic abuse that occurred at the hands of Nassar is one of the single most heartbreaking and terrifying scenarios imaginable. By profession, I defend the value of higher education and the power of a college experience to change a student's life trajectory. Personally, I have benefited greatly from my own college experience and education, and although there are certainly cracks in the façade of higher education, I truly believe in the narrative I promote. I watched the Nassar case unfold first through the perspective of an empathic human being, and then from the perspective of a curious public relations professional. While hypothetical crisis scenarios—including malfeasance, active shooters, natural disasters, public health emergencies, catastrophic facilities issues, and more—can be enacted in training activities, such activities cannot accurately predict how the public will react to an organization's crisis response and image repair strategies. While I hope that I never have to navigate such a crisis beyond a hypothetical training activity, I believe there is extreme value in learning from the experiences of peers and colleagues. To that end, this study was guided by the following research questions:

Research Question 1: What image repair strategies did MSU employ in the #GoTeal posts on their official Facebook page?

Research Question 2: What were the levels of engagement (comments, likes, loves, etc.) with different types of image-repair posts?

Research Question 2a: How did individuals respond to MSU's image repair strategies via Facebook?

Research Question 2b: What was the overall nature of the comments made in response to MSU's #GoTeal posts?

Research Question 3: What differences exist in response to the image repair strategies during the Nassar hearing, analyzed by Frederick, Pegoraro, and Reichart Smith (2019), and those utilized as part of the #GoTeal campaign?

To address these research questions, this study involved the manual collection and thematic analysis of MSU's Facebook posts associated with the #GoTeal campaign. From February 1, 2018 through October 17, 2019, MSU created seven #GoTeal posts. As of April 1, 2020, there have been no additional #GoTeal posts. To address Research Question 1, MSU's Facebook posts from February 1, 2018 through April 1, 2020 were reviewed, and posts associated with the #GoTeal campaign were collected. From there, a content analysis was performed on the #GoTeal posts to identify primary image repair strategies (Table 1).

To address Research Question 2, levels of individuals' engagement with each post were calculated via manual review. For the seven posts, a total of 671 shares, 201 Facebook user comments, 222 replies to user comments, and 4,187 reactions were documented; in sum, there were a total of 5,281 individual acts of engagement (Table 2). In order to address Research Questions 2a and 2b, each of the 201 comments was categorized in one of three ways. Comments categorized as positive in nature expressed support of MSU, including both directly favorable remarks and those made in defense of the institution. Comments categorized as negative in nature expressed a negative perception of MSU, either in the context of the Nassar scandal or in general. Comments categorized as neutral were either entirely unrelated to the posts' content, or were comments made by individuals who tagged another individual without any kind of additional remark. In the process of categorizing comments, observations about overriding and repeating themes were noted to draw conclusions about the overall nature of individuals' responses. The 4,187 reactions were documented, but not categorized by tone due to concerns

about potentially misinterpreting an individuals' sentiment; it is difficult to discern whether a 'like' — or any other reaction — is positive, negative, or neutral in tone, and furthermore, if the reaction was directed at MSU or other entities mentioned in a post (Nassar, the survivors, Justice, etc.).

To address Research Question 3, findings from Research Questions 1, 2, 2a, and 2b were considered (Table 1, Table 2) in general comparison with those from by Frederick, Pegoraro, and Reichart Smith (2019).

Results

With regard to Research Question 1, MSU employed a variety of image repair strategies, including corrective action (four times: March 8, May 25, December 20, October 17), rallying (one time: February 1), compensation (one time: May 16), and transcendence (one time: April 24; see Table 1). To launch the #GoTeal campaign, MSU employed the image repair strategy of rallying on February 1, 2018 in a post encouraging individuals to show their "Spartan support" by updating their Facebook profile picture to include the campaign's teal profile frame. Following the formal launch of the campaign, MSU primarily employed the image repair strategy of corrective action. Of the seven #GoTeal posts, four employed the corrective action strategy, which is apparent in MSU's acknowledgement of the sexual abuse scandal and description of the measures being taken to prevent future abuse, including references to its #GoTeal campaign on March 8, 2018 and May 25, 2018, and in references related to the MSU Sexual Assault program and Justice, the program's canine advocate and therapy dog, on December 20, 2018 and October 17, 2019 (Image 1). Shortly after the anniversary of the #GoTeal campaign launch, MSU employed the image repair strategy of transcendence on April 24, 2019, when the institution described how "a student-led campaign hashtag has turned into a

movement that is part of MSU's fabric," implying that the campaign had surpassed its initial goals related to the Nassar scandal to become a critical part of their broader campus culture. On one occasion, timed in coordination with the conclusion of a class action lawsuit on May 16, 2018, MSU employed the image repair strategy of compensation, in which they shared information about the \$500 million settlement in favor of the survivors.

With regard to Research Question 2, levels of engagement per post varied by image repair strategy (Table 2). The three posts with the most total engagement all employed the corrective action strategy; the two posts featuring Justice earned 1,475 and 1,262 total acts of engagement, respectively, and the post featuring the #GoTeal campaign's origins earned 948 total acts of engagement. It is of note that the two best performing posts, featuring Justice, were among the last three #GoTeal posts to date, and far surpassed the total engagement of the other campaign posts, in some cases doubling or even tripling acts of engagement (Table 2). The post employing the compensation strategy, in which the class-action settlement in favor of the survivors was announced, received 591 total acts of engagement. The final post employing the corrective action strategy, in which MSU described the role that all members of the community can play in the prevention of sexual assault, received 421 total acts of engagement. The post employing the transcendence strategy, in which MSU described how the #GoTeal campaign had become a "part of MSU's fabric," received 388 total acts of engagement. The post employing the rallying strategy, which was the first post of the #GoTeal campaign encouraging individuals to show their support for sexual assault survivors by updating their profile picture, received 187 total acts of engagement — the least of any within the campaign.

With regard to Research Question 2a, each post had a greater number of reactions, which require only the click of a button, than comments (Table 2). The comments were gathered and

categorized by tone; of 201 total comments, 60 were positive, 98 were negative, and 43 were neutral or unrelated. Of the seven posts, four had comments that were predominately negative in tone, and three had comments that were predominantly positive in tone. It is of note that the four posts with predominantly negative comments were chronologically first and employed the rallying, corrective action and compensation strategies; the three posts with predominantly positive comments were chronologically last, and employed corrective action and transcendence strategies via content featuring Justice. The post employing the compensation strategy received the most comments — a total of 61 (70% of which were negative) — and the post employing the transcendence strategy received the least comments — one (positive). The post introducing Justice, which employed the corrective action strategy, received 56 comments (64% of which were positive). The remaining four posts, which include those employing rallying and corrective action strategies, had a modest number of total comments, ranging from 16 to 25 per post. The post employing the rallying strategy received 16 comments (81% of which were negative). The posts employing the corrective action strategies received 18 (55% of which were positive), 24 (74% of which were negative), and 25 (76% of which were negative) comments, respectively.

To address Research Question 2b, observations about overriding and repeating themes within the posts' comments were noted to draw generalizations about the overall nature of individuals' responses. The majority of the 98 negative comments expressed frustration with MSU's handling of the Nassar sexual abuse scandal, specifically the administration's perceived mistreatment of the survivors and refusal to take action or responsibility. Additional themes within the negative comments included a concern about the financial repercussions of the scandal for future MSU students, and criticisms that the university's #GoTeal campaign was "too little, too late," and placed unfair blame on Nassar's victims by encouraging members of the

campus community to speak up against abuse. The majority of the 60 positive comments expressed admiration for MSU's decision to introduce Justice — and her “cuteness” — and praise for the impact of therapy dogs. Additional themes within the positive comments included statements of alumni pride and athletic prowess, and sentiments defending MSU through accusations of greed and negligence against the survivors, their families, and their lawyers.

With regard to Research Question 3, the seven posts associated with MSU's #GoTeal campaign, which spanned a period of nearly two years, received far less total engagement than the 12 posts analyzed by Frederick, Pegoraro, and Reichart Smith (2019), which spanned 10 days. Cumulative acts of engagement for the #GoTeal campaign posts totaled 5,281, while cumulative acts of engagement on the posts encompassing Nassar's hearing and its immediate aftermath totaled 22,688 (Frederick, Pegoraro, & Reichart Smith, 2019). While there were vast differences in engagement with posts from the apex of the Nassar scandal and those spread out as public attention — and outcry — dwindled, there were a few notable similarities. Both sets of posts most frequently employed the image repair strategy of corrective action. Frederick, Pegoraro, and Reichart Smith (2019) found that the two posts with the most engagement — those employing a mortification strategy by apologizing and a corrective action strategy by announcing the resignation of President Lou Anna K. Simon — received overwhelmingly negative comments. In contrast, the analysis of the #GoTeal posts found that the two posts with the most engagement — those employing a corrective action tactic by featuring canine advocate Justice — received overwhelmingly positive comments. Similar overriding themes existed within the comments of both sets of posts, including negative sentiments expressing frustration with the university's perceived mishandling of the situation and concern over financial repercussions, and positive sentiments expressing alumni pride, athletic prowess, and in some cases, defense of the

institution by attempting to shift blame onto the survivors, their families, and their lawyers (Frederick, Pegoraro, & Reichart Smith, 2019).

In this study, the manual methodology is a primary limitation. While every attempt was made to accurately and objectively gather and analyze the posts and their related data, there is always room for human error. Another potential limitation exists in that it is impossible to know what impact the passing of time had on public sentiment, making it difficult to know whether decreased engagement and increasingly positive responses were the result of MSU's effective image repair strategies or the passage of time and memory — or a combination of factors. As with any social media analysis, this research was limited to those choosing to engage on a particular platform, and while data can provide insights and generalizations about that fraction of the population, it is not necessarily representative of the larger whole.

Generally, the results aligned with what I expected to find, with one sole exception: the overwhelmingly positive response to Justice. Having read prior research about MSU's earlier posts, I expected individuals to continue rejecting the university's image repair strategies. I underestimated the persuasive power of a labrador; of the 74 comments about Justice, only one echoed my (entirely subjective) sentiment that the introduction of a therapy dog for survivors was a good idea, but that it in no way should be used to detract attention away from the larger, systemic failures which created the need for a therapy dog in the first place. I was disheartened, but not necessarily surprised, to observe that even after Nassar's guilty verdict and the class-action settlement, some individuals continued to express disbelief and distrust of Nassar's victims.

Conclusion

Much has happened at MSU — and in higher education, in general — in the aftermath of the Nassar sexual abuse scandal. MSU has invested more than \$3 million in initiatives, including new personnel, reporting procedures and a mandatory chaperone policy for certain medical exams, that are rooted in efforts to protect patients, respond to sexual misconduct, and prevent abuse (Kozlowski, 2018b). While #GoTeal seems to have lost formal momentum and the campaign's future is unknown, the university maintains its Center for Survivors, and Justice has become a celebrity of sorts on campus with an active social media presence. Future research might consider the influence of a mascot (canine or otherwise) embedded within an image repair strategy, and whether this personified element has the power to polish a tarnished reputation.

While the long-term impact of the scandal is still unknown, this study presents research about the role of image repair strategies in a crisis that fits Maier and Crist's (2017) definition of a wicked crisis. Future research should be considered to offer insight as to what, if any, channels and image repair strategies might be most effective in the aftermath of such crises. In this case, social media ultimately proved to be a largely unpredictable, if not fickle, environment. That unpredictable environment has become a backdrop for quickly evolving and emerging reputational risks. The growth of social media has given individuals the power to directly interact with organizations — in good times and bad times. This interaction has provided an avenue for individuals to interject themselves into an organization's image repair strategies. While it is to be determined what affect that interaction can or should have on an organization's crisis response, such engagement provides a new avenue for examining the effectiveness of image repair strategies and the long-term application of image repair theory.

Table 1*Michigan State University (MSU) Facebook Posts Coded for Image Repair Strategies*

Post No.	Post Type	Post Content	Image Repair Strategy	Date Published
1	Photo	With the help of students Anna Warbel and Sierra Richards, we've created a Facebook profile frame that signifies Spartan support of sexual assault survivors and our determination to be part of the solution, especially within our own community. If you click to edit your Facebook Profile Pic, you will see the frame listed as "Spartans Supporting Survivors."	Rallying	February 1, 2018
2	Link	Created by MSU College of Communication Arts & Sciences students, the #GoTeal campaign supports survivors and seeks to transform campus culture.	Corrective action	March 8, 2018
3	Link	MSU and Nassar survivors agree in principle to \$500 million global settlement.	Compensation	May 16, 2018
4	Video	We all have a role to play in the prevention of sexual assault.	Corrective action	May 25, 2018
5	Video	Justice is the canine advocate for the MSU Sexual Assault Program, which works to create a safer community for all.	Corrective action	December 20, 2018
6	Link	What began as a student-led campaign hashtag has turned into a movement that is part of MSU's fabric.	Transcendence	April 24, 2019
7	Link	Inspired in part by MSU Center for Survivors canine advocate Justice, MSU will develop a program to pair survivors with shelter dogs.	Corrective action	October 17, 2019

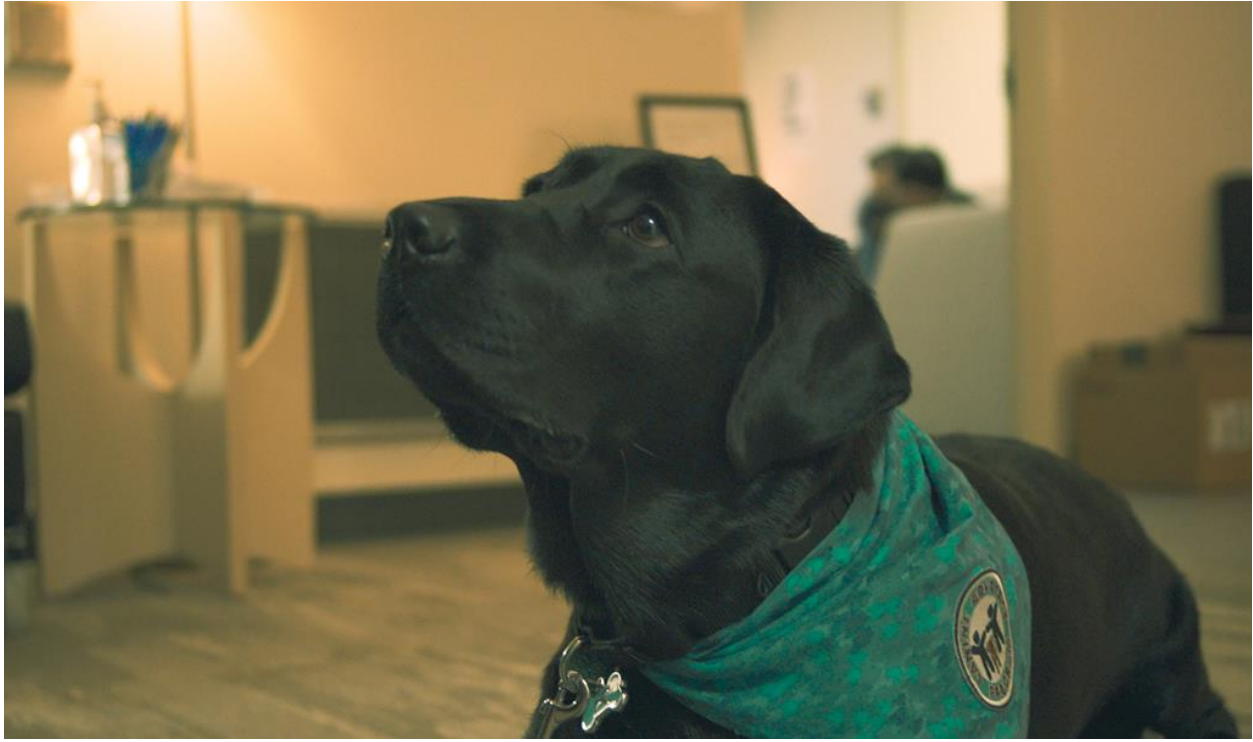
Table 2

Engagement Metrics for Michigan State University Facebook Posts

Post No.	Post Type	Image Repair Strategy	Shares	Comments	Replies to Comments	Reactions	Total Engagement per post	Comments Data Retrieved			Reactions Data Retrieved					
								Positive	Negative	Neutral	Like	Love	Wow	Ha Ha	Sad	Angry
1	Photo	Rallying	23	16	9	139	187	1	13	2	132	2	-	3	1	1
2	Link	Corrective action	74	25	60	798	957	4	19	2	720	70	1	1	5	1
3	Link	Compensation	75	61	121	334	591	5	43	13	234	3	59	2	10	26
4	Video	Corrective action	66	24	10	321	421	3	18	3	289	29	1	-	2	-
5	Video	Corrective action	227	56	17	1,175	1,475	36	4	16	905	261	4	2	1	2
6	Link	Transcendence	42	1	-	345	388	1	-	-	316	29	-	-	-	-
7	Link	Corrective action	164	18	5	1,075	1,262	10	1	7	847	228	-	-	-	-
			671	201	222	4,187	5,281	60	98	43	3,443	622	65	8	19	30

Image 1

Justice, MSU's Center for Survivors' Canine Advocate



(Lenhard & Brooks, 2019)

References

- Benoit, W. L. (2014). *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: Image repair theory and research*. Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>
- Benoit, W.L. (2000). Another visit to the theory of image restoration strategies. *Communication Quarterly*, 48(1), 40-44. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01463370009385578>
- Benoit, W.L. (1997). Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 23(2), 177-186. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111\(97\)90023-0](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0363-8111(97)90023-0)
- Brown, N. A., Brown, K. A., & Billings, A. C. (2015). "May no act of ours bring shame": Fan-enacted crisis communication surrounding the Penn State sex abuse scandal. *Communication & Sport*, 3(3), 288-311. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479513514387>
- Brown, N.A., & Billings, A.C. (2013). Sports fans as crisis communicators on social media websites. *Public Relations Review*, 39(1) 74-81. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2012.09.012>
- Coombs, W. T. (2018). Athlete reputational crises: One point for linking. In Billings, A. C., Coombs, W.T., & Brown, K.A. (Eds.), *Reputational challenges in sport: Theory and application* (pp. 13-24). Retrieved from <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com>
- Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The situational communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 10(3), 163-176. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.crr.1550049>
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2013). How publics react to crisis communication efforts: Comparing crisis response reactions across sub-arenas. *Journal of Communication Management*, 18, 40-57. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-03-2013-0015>
- Craig, R. T. (1999). Communication theory as a field. *Communication Theory*, 9(2), 119-161.

Dator, J. (2019, July 31). A comprehensive timeline of the Larry Nassar case. *SBNation*.

Retrieved from <https://www.sbnation.com/2018/1/19/16900674/larry-nassar-abuse-timeline-usa-gymnastics-michigan-state>

Dudlets, K. (2018, February 1). MSU students spark a movement. *MSU Today*. Retrieved from

<https://msutoday.msu.edu/feature/2018/msu-students-spark-a-movement/>

Frederick, E. L., & Pegoraro, A. (2018). Scandal in college basketball: A case study of image repair via Facebook. *International Journal of Sport Communication*, 11(4), 414-429.

<https://doi.org/10.1123/ijsc.2018-0076>

Frederick, E. L., Pegoraro, A., & Reichart Smith, L. (2019). An examination of Michigan State University's image repair via Facebook and the public response following the Larry Nassar scandal. *Communication & Sport*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479519852285>

Hambrick, M. E., Frederick, E. L., & Sanderson, J. (2013). From yellow to blue: Exploring Lance Armstrong's image repair strategies across traditional and social media.

Communication & Sport, 3(2), 196-218. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167479513506982>

Koerber, D. & Zabara, N. (2017). Preventing damage: The psychology of crisis communication buffers in organized sports. *Public Relations Review*, 43(1), 193-200.

<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2016.12.002>

Kozlowski, K. (2018a, January 19). What MSU knew: 14 were warned of Nassar abuse. *The*

Detroit News. Retrieved from <https://www.detroitnews.com/story/tech/2018/01/18/msu-president-told-nassar-complaint-2014/1042071001/>

Kozlowski, K. (2018b, October 8). MSU makes scores of changes after Nassar scandal. *The*

Detroit News. Retrieved from

<https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/local/michigan/2018/10/08/msu-makes-scores-changes-after-nassar-scandal/1520542002/>

Lenhard, E., & Brooks, C. (2019, October 7). Justice Heals selected for national leadership program. *MSU Today*. Retrieved from <https://msutoday.msu.edu/news/2019/justice-heals-selected-for-national-leadership-program/>

Li, D. K. (2018, December 21). Michigan State University has stonewalled Larry Nassar investigation, prosecutors say. *NBC News*. Retrieved from <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/michigan-state-university-has-stonewalled-larry-nassar-investigation-prosecutors-say-n950951>

Littlejohn, S. W., Foss, K. A., & Oetzel, J. G. (2017). *Theories of human communication* (11th ed.). Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, Inc.

Maese, R. (2019, May 17). Ohio State team doctor sexually abused 177 students over decades, report finds. *The Washington Post*. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/sports/2019/05/17/ohio-state-team-doctor-sexually-abused-students-over-decades-report-finds/>

Maier, C., & Crist, J. R. (2017). From “wicked crisis” to responsive witness: Jean-Luc Marion and the American Roman Catholic sexual-abuse scandal. *Southern Communication Journal*, 82, 164-174. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1041794X.2017.1315453>

Marowski, S. (2020, March 4). First lawsuit filed against University of Michigan over late doctor sexual abuse allegations. *MLive*. Retrieved from <https://www.mlive.com/news/ann-arbor/2020/03/first-lawsuit-filed-against-university-of-michigan-over-late-doctor-sexual-abuse-allegations.html>

Smithson, J., & Venette, S. (2013). Stonewalling as an image-defense strategy: A critical examination of BP's response to the Deepwater Horizon explosion. *Communication Studies*, 64, 395-410. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2013.770409>