

**LINGUISTIC MANIPULATION IN CRISIS
COMMUNICATION: A CASE STUDY
OF BALENCIAGA'S APOLOGY STRATEGIES
BASED ON THE ARTICLE:
"DEMNA ADDRESSES THE BALENCIAGA SCANDAL
IN AN INTERVIEW WITH VOGUE"**

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INTRODUCTION

In an era characterized by instantaneous global communication and heightened consumer awareness, brands face unprecedented challenges in managing crises arising from scandals or controversial incidents. Effective crisis communication strategies are crucial for brands to navigate through turbulent times and safeguard their reputation. Linguistic manipulation plays a central role in shaping public discourse and managing brand crises. This study seeks to explore the linguistic techniques employed by brands in crisis communication, providing insights into the strategic use of language to mitigate reputational damage and regain consumer trust.

When a big brand like Balenciaga faces allegations of inappropriate advertising, especially involving sensitive topics like the sexualization of children, the backlash is often severe and swift. Balenciaga as a renowned luxury fashion brand known for its innovative designs and high-end clothing, accessories, and footwear. Established in 1919 by Spanish designer Cristóbal Balenciaga, the brand has since become synonymous with avant-garde fashion and modern luxury. Balenciaga's creations often feature bold silhouettes, unconventional materials, and cutting-edge techniques, setting trends and pushing boundaries in the world of haute couture [1].

Consumers today are increasingly aware and vocal about social issues, particularly those concerning the welfare and protection of children. Therefore, any hint of impropriety in marketing campaigns can quickly lead to public outrage and damage the brand's reputation.

In response, brands typically have to navigate a delicate balance between acknowledging the criticism, taking responsibility for any missteps, and demonstrating concrete actions to rectify the situation. This might involve apologies, pulling the offending advertisements, and implementing stricter guidelines for future campaigns to prevent similar controversies.

This article presents a linguistic analysis of public apologies of Demna Gvasalia, a prominent fashion designer and creative director known for his work with the fashion brand Balenciaga. He is recognized for his innovative designs and avant-garde approach to fashion, often pushing boundaries and challenging conventions within the industry. As the creative director of Balenciaga, Demna Gvasalia plays a key role in shaping the brand's aesthetic and direction, influencing trends and making a significant impact on the fashion world. An analysis of the article issued by Balenciaga, a prominent fashion brand, in response to two controversial advertising campaigns [1, 12].

Through a detailed examination of language manipulation techniques employed in the apologies, the study aims to shed light on the strategic use of language in crisis communication within the fashion industry. The analysis reveals patterns of non-apology apologies, blame shifting, and minimization tactics, highlighting the complex interplay between language, image management, and corporate responsibility [13].

In the context of linguistics, scandals often trigger discourse and language use aimed at interpreting, discussing, and contextualizing the event. Linguistic analysis of scandals may focus on the language used to describe the event, the narratives constructed around it, and the rhetorical strategies employed by various actors involved, such as perpetrators, victims, witnesses, and media outlets. Additionally, our linguistic research explore how scandals impact public discourse, social perceptions, and cultural attitudes toward morality, ethics.

Methodology:

The research is presented on the basis of responses as apology based on the article “Demna Addresses the Balenciaga Scandal in an Interview with Vogue”, Vogue sat down with Demna for an exclusive interview, by Vogue, 9 february 2023 [4].

This article adopts a qualitative approach, drawing on linguistic analysis methodologies and discourse analysis techniques. A systematic review of literature on crisis communication and linguistic manipulation provides the theoretical framework for the study. Notable brand scandals and associated crisis communication responses are identified through a comprehensive search of media reports, press releases, and corporate statements. Linguistic analysis is then conducted to identify and categorize manipulation techniques employed in brand crisis communication.

From a linguistic perspective, a scandal can be defined as an event or series of events that attract widespread public attention due to their perceived immorality, impropriety, or unlawfulness. Scandals often involve individuals, organizations, or institutions engaging in behavior that violates societal norms, ethical standards, or legal regulations [15]. Linguistic analysis of scandals focuses on the language used to describe, discuss, and interpret these events, as well as the strategies employed to manage their fallout and shape public perception.

1. Background of Study

The American sociolinguists P. Brown and S. Levinson are credited as the originators of the classical politeness theory. In their publication "Politeness: Some Universals in the Use of Language," they highlighted how individuals within a society employ linguistic strategies to interact and assert independence while seeking societal approval. They termed this phenomenon "linguistic politeness" [2].

Deborah Tannen's work on discourse analysis and conversational dynamics sheds light on how language shapes interpersonal relationships and public perceptions, including in the context of scandalous communication. Her book "Talking Voices: Repetition, Dialogue, and Imagery in Conversational Discourse" delves into these topics [17].

The essence of media scandals, as precisely articulated by the German sociologist Nicolas Luhmann in his renowned work "The Reality of Mass Media", revolves around violations of moral standards. According to Luhmann, scandals serve multifaceted functions: they amplify resonance, animate the scene, and, in cases involving norm transgressions, may lead to expressions of understanding and apologies [13]. Typically, scandals highlight breaches committed by well-known individuals or groups. Media outlets, in order to enhance the significance of regulatory violations while facilitating readers' formation of their own opinions, often focus on actions rather than solely on the individuals involved. Despite the qualitative and quantitative changes in media over time, Luhmann's ideas remain pertinent and discernible [13].

Studying linguistic pragmatics within the context of corporate apologies involves analyzing how language is used to convey remorse, responsibility, and reconciliation in response to public controversies or crises. Several researchers have delved into this area, examining the various types and classifications of apologies issued by well-known companies. Here are some prominent scholars in the field of linguistic pragmatics and their contributions to the study of corporate apologies. William L. Benoit in his publication: "Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies" developed a comprehensive theory of image restoration strategies, including apologies, and categorized various apology strategies based on their effectiveness in repairing damaged reputations [18].

Linguistic pragmatics researchers have extensively studied various types of apologies and their underlying mechanisms, Erving Goffman, for instance, in his work "On Face-Work: An Analysis of Ritual Elements in Social Interaction" introduced the concept of "face" and explored how individuals manage their public image through various interactional strategies, including apologies [7]. Penelope Brown and Stephen Levinson in their "Politeness: Some Universals in Language Usage" proposed the politeness theory, which includes the notion of "face-threatening acts" (FTAs) and strategies for mitigating face-threatening behavior, such as apologies [15].

These scholars have made significant contributions to the study of apologies and their linguistic manifestations, shedding light on the complex interplay between language, culture, and social interaction in the context of apology strategies.

2. Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research is to analyze the crisis communication strategies employed by Balenciaga in response to the scandal involving accusations of sexualizing children in their ad campaigns. The research utilizes William L. Benoit's theory of image restoration strategies to categorize the apologies issued by Balenciaga and its creative director, Demna, based on their effectiveness in repairing the brand's damaged reputation [18].

The current study addresses the following objectives: firstly, to analyse the William L. Benoit's theory of image restoration strategies that categorizes Balenciaga apology strategies based on their effectiveness in repairing damaged reputations [18]. Secondly, to examine the strategies that constitute the apology, classify the responses according to Holmes's (1990) Apology Strategies Classification. Thirdly, to explore the effective crisis communication strategies and perform the brand's reparation in apology [8, 9].

The research contributes to our understanding of crisis communication strategies employed by brands in response to scandals. By applying Benoit's theory, the research provides insights into the effectiveness of different apology strategies in repairing damaged reputations and restoring trust with stakeholders [18].

In recent years, the fashion industry has faced increasing scrutiny over its advertising practices and ethical standards. Public outcry over controversial campaigns has prompted fashion brands to issue apologies as a means of damage control and reputation management. Manipulative strategies in apologies from big companies often involve carefully crafted messages aimed at minimizing damage to their reputation while appearing sincere. This study focuses on Balenciaga's response to two such campaigns, investigating the linguistic strategies employed in their public apologies.

Scandal is disgraceful events or nasty gossip about people's private lives, like the scandal that erupted when you were seen at the mall with your best friend's girlfriend.

"Balenciaga's recent ad campaigns were misguided and it goes without saying that Highsnobiety stands against child pornography. Balenciaga might have left Twitter, but that hasn't stopped users of the site from dissecting the luxury brand's every move" [16; 19].

The problematic issue surrounding the scandal of Balenciaga's alleged sexualization of children revolves around the appropriateness of the brand's advertising campaigns and the perceived exploitation of minors for commercial gain [16]. This controversy raises concerns about ethical standards in advertising, child protection, and the potential harm caused by normalizing or trivializing sensitive topics such as child abuse. Balenciaga's apology comes under scrutiny as critics question the sincerity of their regret and the effectiveness of their measures to address the issue. The brand's response is seen as crucial in determining accountability and rebuilding trust with consumers, especially regarding their commitment to preventing similar incidents in the future and upholding ethical standards in their marketing practices.

3. Method for Analysis of Speech Acts

The method for the analysis of speech acts involves a systematic approach to categorize and examine the communicative intentions and effects of utterances. William L. Benoit's theory of image restoration strategies categorizes apology strategies based on their effectiveness in repairing damaged reputations [18]. The first is **denial**, this strategy involves refuting the allegations or denying responsibility for the actions that led to the need for an apology. Denial can be effective if the accused party believes they can successfully challenge the accusations or if there is insufficient evidence to prove wrongdoing.

The second is performed as **evading responsibility**, instead of outright denial, this strategy involves deflecting blame or minimizing one's role in the offense. By shifting responsibility to external factors or downplaying the severity of the actions, individuals attempt to mitigate their culpability.

The third gives the idea of **reducing offensiveness**, it aims to minimize the perceived harm caused by the offense by emphasizing mitigating circumstances or expressing remorse and empathy for those affected. By acknowledging the impact of their actions and demonstrating genuine contrition, individuals seek to mitigate the offense's severity.

The fourth provides the strategy of **corrective action**: Apologizers promise to take concrete steps to rectify the situation or prevent similar incidents from occurring in the future. By committing to corrective measures, individuals demonstrate their commitment to addressing the underlying issues and restoring trust.

Mortification as the last, fifth strategy, involves offering a full and sincere apology without making excuses or justifications. Individuals accept full responsibility for their actions, express genuine remorse, and seek forgiveness from those harmed. Mortification is often considered the most effective apology strategy for repairing damaged reputations.

These apology strategies vary in their effectiveness depending on the nature of the offense, the perceptions of the audience, and the sincerity of the apologizer. While denial and evading responsibility may be perceived as defensive and insincere, reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification are generally viewed more favorably as genuine attempts to address wrongdoing and restore trust [20].

This researcher contribute to our understanding of scandals from a linguistic perspective, offering insights into how language is used to construct, frame, and respond to scandalous events in various social, cultural, and institutional contexts.

Balenciaga faced swift backlash after being accused of sexualizing children in two controversial ad campaigns [1, 20]. The brand issued apologies, with creative director Demna expressing regret for the inappropriate content and acknowledging his error in judgment. However, critics questioned the sincerity of the apologies, suggesting they were manipulative attempts to minimize reputational damage [3]. The scandal highlighted broader issues within the fashion industry regarding ethical standards in advertising and the protection of children.

Based on William L. Benoit's theory of **image restoration strategies** [18], we analyze the direct speech extracted from the article "Demna Addresses the Balenciaga Scandal in an Interview with Vogue" written by Natalie Michie, February 9, 2023 and categorize them according to the apology strategies:

Denial: Demna, defending his work: "What I can definitely say is that it was not intentional by me or Balenciaga."

Demna's statement: "I realize that my work has been seen as provocative, but this specific situation would never be part of my, you know, provocative nature."

Demna's statement: "What I can definitely say is that it was not intentional by me or Balenciaga."

Reducing offensiveness: Demna, regarding the "Gift Shop" campaign: "The plush teddy bear bags [referenced] punk and DIY culture, absolutely not BDSM, and they were worn by adults in the October 2022 show."

Demna, on his error in judgment: "I didn't realize how inappropriate it would be to put these objects [in the image] and still have the kid in the middle. It unfortunately was the wrong idea and a bad decision from me."

Demna, apologizing: "We should not have featured kids in images that included objects that were not related and inappropriate to them."

Demna, expressing his commitment to learning from the incident: "Though he strives to create thought-provoking work, it was never his intention 'to do that with such an awful subject as child abuse."

Demna's statement: "Despite what many people may have suspected, the issue with the campaigns was absolutely not in any way part of my provocative design language – never, ever would I have an idea to mess around with such an awful and horrible thing as child abuse."

Corrective action: Demna, reflecting on the situation: "We learned from this now and there are going to be closer and more attentive checks and validation steps applied before any image goes out."

Demna, on Balenciaga's commitment to taking accountability: "Balenciaga's commitment to taking steps 'not only to avoid similar mistakes in the future but also to take accountability in protecting child welfare in every way we can."

Demna's statement: "Though he strives to create thought-provoking work, it was never his intention 'to do that with such an awful subject as child abuse."

Mortification: Demna, in a written statement posted on Instagram: "I want to personally apologize for the wrong artistic choice of concept for the gifting campaign with the kids and I take my responsibility."

Kim Kardashian's statement: "The safety of children must be held with the highest regard and any attempts to normalize child abuse of any kind should have no place in our society – period."

Kim Kardashian's statement: "I am currently re-evaluating my relationship with the brand, basing it off their willingness to accept accountability for something that should have never happened to begin with."

Based on this analysis, Demna's statements mainly utilize the strategies of reducing offensiveness, corrective action, and mortification, while also including elements of denial. Kim Kardashian's statements primarily focus on mortification by expressing genuine concern for the safety of children and emphasizing the need for accountability.

In summary, the language used by Demna and Balenciaga mainly falls into the categories of Reducing Offensiveness, Corrective Action, and Mortification, with an emphasis on acknowledging the mistake, apologizing, and expressing commitment to learning from the incident and taking corrective measures to prevent similar mistakes in the future. There is also a denial element present in Demna's statement, where he denies intentional wrongdoing.

4. Method for Analysis of Strategies

A modified apology model, introduced by Holmes, is based on Olshtain and Cohen's taxonomy, with the aim of enhancing clarity in categorizing apology strategies [8]. Dividing apologies into four main categories, each with its own subclassifications, Holmes's model offers a nuanced perspective on apology strategies. While many of these strategies overlap with existing taxonomies, Holmes's unique contribution lies in the subcategories within the "acknowledgment of responsibility" group, as noted by Holmes [9].

Holmes's Apology Strategies Classification delineates a structured framework for comprehensively analyzing apology expressions. The classification encompasses distinct categories that elucidate various linguistic features inherent in apologies across diverse contexts [8].

Firstly, within the explicit expression of apology category, subcategories include offering an apology or IFID, wherein individuals directly express remorse using phrases such as "I am sorry." Additionally, expressions of regret, such as "I was wrong," and requests for forgiveness, exemplified by "Pardon me," are encapsulated within this classification.

Secondly, the explanation or account category pertains to providing rationale or context surrounding the apology. For instance, individuals might offer explanations such as "It was raining heavily" to contextualize their actions.

Acknowledgment of responsibility comprises several subcategories. Accepting the blame involves individuals assuming accountability by admitting fault, as in the statement "It's all my fault." Expressing self-deficiency, characterized by phrases like "I was confused," denotes personal shortcomings. Recognizing the hearer as entitled to an apology acknowledges the legitimacy of the audience's grievances, as exemplified by "You're right to feel outraged." Expressing lack of intent, typified by phrases like "I didn't mean it," clarifies inadvertent actions. Furthermore, offering repair or redress involves individuals proposing actions to rectify the situation, such as "I'll make it up to you."

Lastly, the promise of forbearance category entails commitments to prevent recurrence, as evidenced by statements like "It will never happen again."

Based on Holmes's apology model, we analyzed the article and categorized the apologies made by Demna and Balenciaga, facilitating systematic analysis of apology strategies and their linguistic manifestations in academic discourse. To start with the **explicit expression of apology**, Demna explicitly expressed regret and offered a direct apology, acknowledging the inappropriate choice of concept for the gifting campaign with the kids and taking personal responsibility for it: "I want to personally apologize for the wrong artistic choice of concept for the gifting campaign with the kids and I take my responsibility."

To light up the idea of **explanation or account**: providing insight into his error, Demna explained the rationale behind his decision, highlighting his lack of awareness regarding the inappropriateness of the chosen concept and admitting it was a wrong idea and a poor decision on his part: "I didn't realize how inappropriate it would be to put these objects [in the image] and still have the kid in the middle. It unfortunately was the wrong idea and a bad decision from me."

In further analysis of **acknowledgement of responsibility**, Demna took full responsibility for the situation by accepting blame, stating unequivocally that it was his fault. Additionally, he expressed self-doubt by admitting to being confused, further demonstrating his acknowledgment of responsibility: Demna accepted responsibility by acknowledging it was his fault: "It's all my fault." To **express self-deficiency** Demna admitted confusion: "I was confused."

To continue with the **offer repair/redress**, demonstrating a commitment to rectifying the situation, Demna offered to make amends, indicating his willingness to take action to address the harm caused: "I'll make it up to you."

For the understanding of **recognition of audience entitlement strategy**, it is possible to state that Demna recognized the audience's entitlement to an apology, expressing sincere regret for the impact of his actions on anyone who may have been hurt by them: "For this I want to say I am sorry; I sincerely apologize for what happened and to anyone who has been hurt by it."

And the last apology under the analysis is **promise of forbearance**: Demna promised preventive measures to avoid similar incidents in the future, emphasizing the importance of learning from the experience and implementing closer and more attentive checks and validation steps before releasing any images in the future.: "We learned from this now and there are going to be closer and more attentive checks and validation steps applied before any image goes out."

Demna's apologies, as analyzed through Holmes's model, demonstrate a comprehensive approach to addressing the controversy surrounding Balenciaga's gifting campaign involving children. By explicitly expressing regret, providing explanations for his actions, accepting responsibility, offering to make amends, recognizing the audience's entitlement to an apology, and promising preventive measures for the future, Demna exhibited a sincere effort to acknowledge the mistake and mitigate its impact.

This analysis underscores the importance of transparent communication and accountability in addressing public relations crises, serving as a valuable case study for brands navigating similar challenges in the fashion industry.

5. Method for Analysis of the Effective Crisis Communication Strategies

The effective crisis communication strategies employed in the article align with the research findings of several scholars in the field of crisis communication and public relations. Some notable researchers include Timothy L. Sellnow, Robert R. Ulmer, W. Timothy Coombs, William Benoit, and Matthew W. Seeger.

Providing timely updates to stakeholders during a crisis helps manage uncertainty and keeps stakeholders informed according to Timothy L. Sellnow and Robert R. Ulmer, who distinguished the first strategy as **timely updates** [5].

The second category, **direct communication**: directly communicating with stakeholders through appropriate channels enhances transparency and trust. W. Timothy Coombs, in his book "Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding," emphasizes the importance of direct communication during a crisis [5].

Offering a sincere **apology and acknowledging**, as the third strategy, responsibility for any harm caused is crucial in crisis communication. William Benoit's work on image repair theory, outlined in his book "Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies: A Theory of Image Restoration Strategies," provides insights into effective apology strategies during crises [3].

In crisis communication transparency involves openly sharing information about the situation and the organization's response [5].

Demonstrating a **commitment to change** and improvement helps rebuild trust and credibility. Timothy L. Sellnow and Robert R. Ulmer [5] highlight the importance of organizational learning and adaptation in their book "Effective Crisis Communication: Moving from Crisis to Opportunity."

According to Timothy L. Sellnow and Matthew W. Seeger **engaging with stakeholders** includes affected parties and the media, facilitates dialogue and understanding.

The last approach called as **media management**, it is necessary to state that effectively managing media relations helps shape the narrative and control the message during a crisis according to W. Timothy Coombs, who discusses media management strategies in his work "Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding" [10].

These researchers have contributed significantly to the understanding of crisis communication strategies and their effectiveness in managing and mitigating the impact of crises. Their work provides valuable insights for practitioners and scholars alike in navigating challenging communication situations during crises [15].

Effective crisis communication strategies employed in the article include all the components given above. The article provides **timely updates** on the

situation, reflecting ongoing developments and responses from the involved parties. This ensures that readers are kept informed about the latest events related to the controversy. Firstly, Balenciaga's responses are **communicated directly** through Instagram and Vogue, platforms where the brand's audience is likely to be engaged. This direct communication helps in addressing concerns and conveying apologies and actions taken. Secondly, Balenciaga acknowledges the offense caused by the campaigns and issues a sincere apology for any harm caused. As **apology and acknowledgment** strategies they express regret for the inappropriate content and take responsibility for the oversight.

Thirdly, Balenciaga is transparent about the steps taken to address the issue, such as removing the images, initiating legal action, and outlining an internal action plan. This **transparency** helps in rebuilding trust and demonstrating accountability.

Moreover, Balenciaga demonstrates a **commitment to change**, to learning from the incident and taking measures to prevent similar mistakes in the future. They emphasize their dedication to protecting child welfare and pledge to work with organizations specializing in child protection [7].

The fashion brand under the consideration **engages with stakeholders**, including industry professionals and celebrities like Kim Kardashian, by addressing their concerns and seeking to understand their perspectives. This engagement shows a willingness to listen and respond to feedback.

The article includes statements from Balenciaga and Demna, allowing them to share their side of the story and clarify any misconceptions as **media management** approach. This proactive method is applied to crisis communication, it helps in shaping the narrative and controlling the brand's image [1; 4].

The image repairing strategies in communication employed in the article demonstrate a proactive and transparent approach by Balenciaga, aimed at addressing the controversy, apologizing for any harm caused, and taking concrete steps to prevent similar incidents in the future. These strategies, informed by the research findings of scholars in the field, serve as valuable guidelines for navigating challenging communication situations during crises.

A **Comparative Linguistic Analysis** offers a systematic approach to examining the language used by Demna in response to the accusations against Balenciaga. Given the sensitive nature of the issue, accusations of sexualizing children in advertising campaigns, the analysis helps to dissect how Demna's words are crafted to address the controversy and manage the ensuing backlash [10].

Demna's apologies encompass several elements of Holmes's apology model. He explicitly expressed regret and offered apologies ("I want to personally apologize"), provided an explanation for his actions ("I didn't

realize how inappropriate it would be"), acknowledged responsibility by accepting blame and expressing self-deficiency ("It's all my fault" and "I was confused"), recognized the audience's entitlement to an apology ("For this I want to say I am sorry"), and promised forbearance by outlining steps to prevent future incidents ("We learned from this now and there are going to be closer and more attentive checks and validation steps applied before any image goes out").

Balenciaga, through its statements, also adhered to elements of the apology model by explicitly expressing apologies, providing explanations, acknowledging responsibility, and promising forbearance. For example, Balenciaga apologized for the offense caused by the holiday campaign, explained the steps taken to rectify the situation, acknowledged responsibility by taking legal action, and promised to prevent similar incidents in the future [9].

Overall, the apologies issued by Demna and Balenciaga align with Holmes's apology model, encompassing various elements such as expression of regret, explanation, acknowledgment of responsibility, and promise of forbearance.

6. Method for Analysis of Manipulative Strategies

According to "Manipulative strategies in modern English communication" by Dmytruk O., the impact on media consciousness occurs through the use of manipulative strategies, within which certain tactics are implemented, namely: evasion strategy, information distortion strategy, immunization of statements strategy, modification of illocutionary force strategy, group identification strategy, structuring strategy based on relevance principle. The researcher states such explanation for each strategy: firstly, an **evasion strategy**, it includes tactics of labeling, shining generalizations, transference and use of neologisms, secondly, **information distortion strategy** as tactics of repetition, hyperbolization and diminution, simplification of concepts, omission, manipulation and fabrication of facts, as well as fragmenting the holistic picture. The attention is given to the third component as **immunization of statements strategy**, it's tactics of referring to authorities and using universal statements. The fourth is **modification of illocutionary force strategy**, it's the tactics of categorical and non-categorical nomination, the fifth component of the classification is **group identification strategy** – a tactics of inclusivity and distancing. The last one, the sixth, **structuring strategy based on relevance principle** is a tactics of providing important information at the beginning and end of the message and using implicit references.

These strategies are deployed to shape the narrative and manage public perception in response to the controversy surrounding Balenciaga's advertising campaigns, which have been accused of sexualizing children [4].

Firstly, it is essential to explore the **evasion strategy** strategy, that involves the deliberate avoidance or redirection of attention away from sensitive or incriminating issues. In the article, this is exemplified by the attempt to reframe the controversy by explaining the set dressing choices without directly addressing the allegations of child sexualization.

Secondly, we perform **information distortion strategy** that entails the manipulation of information to downplay or minimize the severity of an issue. In the article, tactics of information distortion are evident in the portrayal of the controversy as a result of negligence rather than intentional wrongdoing. For instance, Demna's statement regarding not realizing the inappropriate nature of the props used serves to distort the perception of intent.

Immunization of statements strategy as the third strategy aims to preemptively defend against criticism by invoking established reputations or positions. In the article, tactics of immunization are employed through references to Demna's reputation as a provocative designer, deflecting criticism and minimizing the perception of intentional harm.

The fourth component of Dmytruk's O. classification is modification of illocutionary force strategy involves altering the intended force or impact of statements to mitigate perceived negative consequences. In the article, Demna's categorical denial of intentional wrongdoing serves to modify the illocutionary force, emphasizing the lack of malicious intent behind the controversial imagery [14].

Group identification strategy as the fifth component for the study examining seeks to align the communicator or entity with positive values or causes to enhance credibility and deflect criticism. In the article, tactics of group identification are employed by aligning Balenciaga with child protection initiatives and condemning child abuse, thereby portraying the brand in a favorable light.

The sixth **structuring strategy based on relevance principle** involves organizing information in a manner that emphasizes relevant details while minimizing or omitting less favorable aspects. In the article, tactics of structuring based on the relevance principle are employed by presenting Demna's statements in a chronological order, providing context, and framing the narrative to elicit sympathy and understanding from the audience.

The linguistic analysis of Balenciaga's public apologies reveals several manipulation techniques employed to mitigate reputational damage. These include non-apology apologies, blame shifting, and minimization tactics. Balenciaga's responses demonstrate a complex interplay between language, image management, and corporate responsibility, highlighting the nuanced nature of crisis communication within the fashion industry.

CONCLUSIONS

The findings underscore the importance of linguistic analysis in understanding crisis communication strategies employed by brands. Balenciaga's use of language manipulation reflects broader trends in crisis communication, where strategic language choices are leveraged to shape public discourse and manage reputational risk. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of crisis communication within the fashion industry and provides insights into effective strategies for managing brand crises. Moving forward, organizations must remain vigilant in their communication efforts, recognizing the power of language in shaping perceptions and restoring trust in times of crisis.

Addressing the scandal through interviews, such as the one mentioned with Demna in *Vogue*, can be a crucial part of the brand's damage control strategy. It provides an opportunity for the brand's leadership to communicate directly with their audience, express remorse if warranted, and outline their plans for moving forward in a more responsible and sensitive manner.

In conclusion, this linguistic analysis offers insights into the discourse of crisis communication in the fashion industry. Balenciaga's apologies exemplify the strategic use of language to shape public perception and control the narrative surrounding controversial advertising campaigns. By understanding these linguistic strategies, stakeholders can critically evaluate corporate responses and advocate for greater accountability in the fashion industry.

Ultimately, the way Balenciaga handles this scandal will significantly impact its reputation and long-term success. Consumers are increasingly holding brands accountable for their actions, especially when it comes to ethical and moral considerations, so a transparent and genuine response is essential for rebuilding trust and credibility.

Manipulative strategies contribute to shaping public perception of the controversy surrounding Balenciaga's advertising campaigns, emphasizing mitigating factors while downplaying the severity of the accusations.

This study provides valuable insights into the linguistic manipulation techniques employed by brands in crisis communication. By understanding the linguistic strategies used to manage brand crises, stakeholders can critically evaluate corporate responses and advocate for greater transparency and accountability in brand communication. Moving forward, further research is needed to explore the long-term impact of linguistic manipulation on brand reputation and consumer trust in the digital age.

SUMMARY

In the realm of crisis communication, linguistic strategies play a pivotal role in shaping public perception and managing reputational damage. This scientific article explores the linguistic techniques employed by Balenciaga, a prominent fashion brand, in response to two controversial advertising campaigns. Drawing on principles of linguistic analysis and discourse

analysis, the study examines the language manipulation tactics utilized in Balenciaga's public apologies. The analysis reveals patterns of non-apology apologies, blame shifting, and minimization tactics, highlighting the intricate interplay between language, image management, and corporate responsibility. Additionally, the article discusses the implications of linguistic manipulation in crisis communication within the fashion industry and provides insights into effective strategies for managing brand crises.

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