

Investigating the Underlying Processes of Consumers' Product Evaluations and Repurchase Intentions in Product-Harm Crises Across Different Countries^{1,2}



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Abstract

This study examines cross-country differences in consumer evaluation processes during ambiguous product-harm crises, focusing on response strategies and corporate reputation. Two experiments with 2x2 between-subjects factorial designs were conducted. Study 1 explored the emotional path using data from Türkiye, while Study 2 investigated the functional path with U.S. data. Results show that, in collectivistic and high uncertainty avoidance cultures (Türkiye), blame attributions and negative emotions mediate the effect of response strategies on

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repurchase intention. In individualistic and low uncertainty avoidance cultures (USA), functional evaluations mediate the process. Additionally, corporate reputation moderates both conditions, with variations depending on consumers' levels of uncertainty avoidance and individualism/collectivism.

Keywords: Product-harm crisis, corporate reputation, blame attributions, product evaluations, culture

Kusurlu Ürün Krizleri Karşısında Tüketicilerin Ürün Değerlendirmeleri ve Tekrar Satın Alma Niyetlerinin Altında Yatan Süreçlerin Farklı Ülkelerde Araştırılması

Öz

Çalışma, kaynağın belirsiz olduğu kusurlu ürün krizlerinde tüketici değerlendirme süreçlerindeki ülke kaynaklı farklılıkları kriz yanıt stratejileri ve kurumsal itibar üzerinden incelemektedir. Bu amaçla 2x2 denekler arası faktöriyel tasarıma sahip iki deney gerçekleştirilmiştir. Deney 1, Türkiye verisi toplanılarak duygusal süreci; Deney 2, ABD verisi ile fonksiyonel süreci araştırmıştır. Bulgulara göre, kolektivist ve belirsizlikten kaçınma düzeyi yüksek kültürlerde (Türkiye), suç atıfları ve olumsuz duygular, kriz yanıt stratejilerinin tekrar satın alma niyetine olan etkisine seri aracılık etmektedir. Bireyci ve belirsizlikten kaçınma düzeyi düşük kültürlerde (ABD) ise bu sürece fonksiyonel değerlendirmeler aracılık etmektedir. Ayrıca, kurumsal itibarın düzenleyici rolü tüketicilerin kolektivizm/bireycilik ve belirsizlikten kaçınma düzeylerine bağlı olarak deneyler arasında farklılık göstermektedir.

Anahtar kelimeler: Kusurlu ürün krizi, kurumsal itibar, suç atfı, ürün değerlendirmesi, kültür

Introduction

Firms operating in different countries often find themselves at the center of international crises (Dhanesh and Sriramesh, 2018). To manage

such crises, firms adopt different response strategies and leverage their corporate reputation, which determines how the crisis is perceived by their consumers (Grunwald and Hempelmann, 2010). These perceptions play a central role in influencing individuals' product evaluations and future purchase intentions (De Matos and Rossi, 2007; Klein and Dawar, 2004).

However, what works in one country may not be effective in other countries where the firm operates (Coombs and Laufer, 2018). Cross-cultural marketing research has shown that cultural values strongly influence consumers' perceptions, evaluations, and behaviors (Cleeren et al., 2017). In this context, firms' response strategies and corporate reputations may be perceived and interpreted differently by individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. Consequently, individuals' evaluations and behaviors in relation to crises may vary according to their cultural affiliations. Despite the existing research on consumer evaluations in country-specific crises (Ma, 2023; Siomkos and Kurzbard, 1994; Siomkos and Malliaris, 1992), there appears to be limited research on the role of culture in consumer evaluations across countries (Bowen et al., 2018; Gao, 2022; Laufer et al., 2018; Muralidharan et al., 2021).

The study by Yang et al. (2022) examines individuals' evaluations of products to determine cultural differences. Their meta-analysis which synthesizes 30 years of empirical research, shows systematic differences in consumer responses to product-harm crises due to the uncertainty avoidance levels of different cultures. Some other studies, such as those by Bowen et al. (2018), Gao (2022), Laufer et al. (2018), and Muralidharan et al. (2021), have examined how reactions to firm's crisis responses differ across cultural settings or cultural value orientations. However, despite the diversity of approaches used in this body of research (including different contexts, products, sample characteristics, and constructs), the question of how consumer evaluation processes vary from one country to another remains widely unresolved (Bowen et al., 2018; Coombs and Laufer, 2018). Recent literature reviews on product-harm crises (Astvansh et al., 2024; Cleeren et al., 2017; Khamitov et

al., 2020) and crisis management (Coombs and Laufer, 2018) have also emphasized the need for a deeper understanding of product-harm crises across countries.

The present research addresses this gap by identifying how consumer product evaluations differ across cultures. Drawing on the literature on product-harm crisis, we found that firm response strategies and corporate reputation are two important determinants of consumer perceptions after a crisis (Siomkos and Kurzbard, 1994; Xiong and Deng, 2023). Thus, this study aims to examine how the interaction between firm response strategies and corporate reputation influences repurchase intentions through consumers' product evaluations across different cultures.

We first focus on the influence of culture on product evaluations. Current literature reveals that product evaluations are influenced by consumers' emotional or functional processing of information (Kempf, 1999), with culture being a dominant factor, especially for international firms (Dawar and Pillutla, 2000; Shavitt and Barnes, 2019). In product-harm crises, Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions of collectivism/individualism and uncertainty avoidance are crucial (Baghi and Gabrielli, 2019; Laufer et al., 2018; Samaraweera et al., 2014). Thus, depending on individualism/collectivism and uncertainty avoidance, various cultures may evaluate products differently (Ng, 2024). We also investigate the influence of culture on corporate reputation. Individuals' perceptions and evaluations of firms' corporate reputation differ based on cultural factors (Deephouse et al., 2016). Indeed, while a high corporate reputation may be considered an important reference in some societies (Keh and Xie, 2009), the efforts of firms with low corporate reputation can be seen as a significant source of admiration in other societies (Ali et al., 2015; Bartikowski et al., 2011).

Therefore, two studies were conducted to investigate the differences in consumer product evaluation processes and corporate reputation perceptions. We hypothesize that, for a collectivistic country with high uncertainty avoidance (Türkiye), consumers will perceive high levels of corporate reputation more positively and process the information through

an emotional path when forming repurchase intentions. Conversely, for an individualistic country with low uncertainty avoidance (USA), consumers will perceive low levels of corporate reputation more positively and process the information through a functional path. We also hypothesize that the repurchase intentions will differ according to the cultural boundary conditions and response strategies.

This research makes several significant contributions to the product-harm crisis literature. First, our framework offers a novel theoretical perspective on the explanatory role of firm response strategies in influencing the repurchase intentions based on cross-cultural data. Previous studies have highlighted individualism/collectivism and uncertainty avoidance as factors that affect how consumers respond to a crisis or firm response strategy (Baghi and Gabrielli, 2019; Laufer et al., 2018; Samaraweera et al., 2014). However, none of these studies have explored the impact of culture on the mechanisms that influence consumer reactions (Cleeren et al., 2017). This study focuses on the underlying mechanism and provides evidence that firm response strategies influence repurchase intentions through different paths according to culture, with different mediators involved in the process for different cultures. This may shed light on why some consumers blame and feel negative toward a firm while others react more rationally (Crouch et al., 2021). Secondly, our findings demonstrate that, identical firm responses may have different impacts on consumers' attitudes and reactions, depending on consumers' prior expectations about the brand or the firm (Dawar and Pilluta, 2000). Our study extends these findings by showing that expectations in different cultures can have contradictory effects which can be explained by expectancy violations theory (Burgoon, 1995). By examining the contradictory impact of corporate reputation, our research advances the understanding of the influence of response strategies in different cultures, also clarifying why firms choose different response strategies in different countries. Finally, this study also addresses the need for research on product-harm crises in various national contexts (Astvansh et al., 2024; Cleeren et al., 2017; Coombs and Laufer, 2018; Khamitov et al., 2020). Therefore, the results of this study will help

practitioners in improving the accuracy of their predictions about the outcomes of the response strategies used in an international product-harm crisis.

Theoretical Background

Product-Harm Crisis, Corporate Reputation, and Product Evaluations

Product-harm crisis refer to “incidents where products are found to be defective or even dangerous” (Dawar and Pillutla, 2000). These crises can have various negative effects, including concerns for consumer safety (Astvansh et al., 2024), decreased demand (Rupp, 2004), lowered stock prices (Chen et al., 2009), damage to brand image (Hora et al., 2011) and consumer brand equity (Dawar and Pilutla, 2000), blame attributions (Lei et al., 2012), negative product evaluations (Mowen et al., 1981), and reduced repurchase intention (Siomkos and Kurzbard, 1994). Despite firms' efforts to prevent potential risks, the complexity of products, media attention to such issues, developments in product safety regulations (Dawar and Pillutla, 2000; Klein and Dawar, 2004), and competition among firms (Souiden and Pons, 2009) have contributed to the continued increase in product-harm crises over time (Casey et al., 2024). In response to such crises, firms may adopt proactive strategies, such as voluntary recall and super effort, or passive strategies, including involuntary recall and denial (Chen et al., 2009). Each strategy has its own advantages and disadvantages (Paik et al., 2024). Therefore, it is important to consider factors such as the severity of the crisis, media coverage, and types of crises (Coombs, 2006; Hora et al., 2011) for adopting the most appropriate response strategy.

At this point, corporate reputation holds a separate significance in the process of determining crisis response strategies for firms. Since corporate reputation encompasses the set of information and feelings generated by various stakeholders regarding a firm's appearance and activities, individuals' perceptions and attitudes toward the firm's corporate reputation also impact their reactions to crises (Chen and

Dubinsky, 2003; Dawar and Parker, 1994). Signaling theory explains this fact as corporate reputation being a significant external indicator that influences individuals' behaviors (Spence, 1973). Therefore, when facing crises, individuals consider not only the crisis response strategy a firm will adopt but also the level of its corporate reputation, making their decisions based on joint evaluations of these factors (Souiden and Pons, 2009; Xie and Keh, 2016).

To understand the effects of crisis response strategies and corporate reputation on behavioral intentions, it is necessary to consider the underlying factors in the relevant process. As it is known, product-harm crises are mostly ambiguous and undesired instances related to a certain product (Pearson and Clair, 1998). Therefore, in the case of a product-harm crisis, individuals mainly make causal attributions (Weiner, 1986) and product evaluations (Klein and Dawar, 2004) when developing their behavioral intentions. While causal attributions help individuals determine the responsibility for the incident, product evaluations reflect their judgment about the product. This mechanism is consistent with the theory of planned behavior, which aids in comprehending how individuals create intentions to engage in a particular behavior. In this regard, individuals' perceptions of crises are an important component in shaping attitudes, and consequently, the behavioral intention (Ajzen and Fishbein, 1980).

Hypothesis Development

Direct Effect of Crisis Response Strategies

According to attribution theory, when an unexpected and ambiguous event occurs, such as a product-harm crisis, individuals make causal attributions (Weiner, 1986). However, only a few individuals carry those attributions further and assign blame (Folkes and Kotsos, 1986; Lei et al., 2012; McGill, 1990). In other words, while attributing responsibility is a typical behavior for all individuals, blaming others is more of a choice. This phenomenon can be explained by Hofstede's (2001) cultural dimensions theory. In societies with high uncertainty

avoidance, individuals prioritize emotional cues (Latif et al., 2019), and blame attribution behavior is quick and common; conversely, it is slow or nonexistent in societies with low uncertainty avoidance (Laufer, 2012; Lei et al., 2012). This is because individuals in high uncertainty avoidance societies tend to eliminate the pressure and uncertainty caused by the crisis by attributing blame (Laufer, 2012).

The theory of planned behavior suggests that product evaluations have a significant impact on shaping behavioral intentions (De Matos and Rossi, 2007; Klein and Dawar, 2004). Furthermore, culture plays a crucial role how individuals process information during product evaluations (Dawar and Pillutla, 2000; Shavitt and Barnes, 2019). Individuals evaluate products based on cognitive or affective information (Kempf, 1999). Cognitive information processing involves “cold”, “deliberate” and “analytical thinking”, while emotional information processing is based on “hot”, “fast” and “emotional feelings” (Epstein, 1994; Zhao et al., 2011). Therefore, while cognitive information is dominated by rational and a functional product evaluation process (Adina et al., 2015; Sojka and Giese, 1997), emotional knowledge refers to an evaluation process dominated by emotions (Conner et al., 2017; Kidwell et al., 2008). According to Hofstede (2001), societies tend to process information differently based on their cultural dimensions. Previous studies suggest that in societies with high uncertainty avoidance and a collectivistic structure, consumers are more likely to adopt a product evaluation process in which emotional evaluations are dominant (Epstein, 1994; Conner et al., 2017). Attribution theory supports this perspective and claims that consumers exhibit specific emotional responses based on their attributions (Weiner, 1986), and the crisis literature reveals that these emotional reactions are mostly negative (Choi and Lin, 2009). In contrast, in societies with low uncertainty avoidance with an individualistic structure, it is expected that a functional evaluation will dominate the product evaluation process (Gupta et al., 2018; Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014). This evaluation includes aspects like quality, performance, and originality of the product (Ahmed and d’Astous, 2007).

Finally, previous studies revealed that crisis response strategies not only influence consumer perceptions and attitudes but also affect behavioral intentions (Zhu et al., 2024). According to attribution theory, negative developments can have a damaging effect on behavioral intention (Weiner, 1986), whereas efforts to resolve the issue can create a positive outcome (Siomkos and Kurzbard, 1994). A firm's denial of responsibility for a crisis causes a high level of risk and danger in the minds of consumers. Conversely implementing a voluntary recall strategy, in which the firm demonstrates concern for the process and the protection of consumers, can effectively reduce consumers' perceived risk and restore trust in the firm (Siomkos and Kurzbard, 1994; Siomkos and Malliaris, 1992). Hence, we propose that:

H₁: Under conditions of collectivism and high uncertainty avoidance, consumer' blame attributions will be lower when the firm adopts a voluntary recall (vs. denial) strategy.

H₂: Under conditions of collectivism and high uncertainty avoidance, consumer' negative emotions will be lower when the firm adopts a voluntary recall (vs. denial) strategy.

H₃: Under conditions of individualism and low uncertainty avoidance, consumer' functional evaluations will be higher when the firm adopts a voluntary recall (vs. denial) strategy.

H₄: Under conditions of collectivism and high uncertainty avoidance, consumer' repurchase intention will be higher when the firm adopts a voluntary recall (vs. denial) strategy.

H₅: Under conditions of individualism and low uncertainty avoidance, consumer' repurchase intention will be higher when the firm adopts a voluntary recall (vs. denial) strategy.

Moderating Role of Corporate Reputation

Previous studies have examined the effect of corporate reputation on consumer perceptions and attitudes (Chen and Dubinsky, 2003; Dawar and Parker, 1994). However, the level of corporate reputation

(high vs. low) may lead to different expectations and behaviors based on individuals' cultural backgrounds. According to the cultural dimensions theory, societies with high uncertainty avoidance and collectivism are likely to favor firms with a strong corporate reputation that lowers perceived risk and is positively evaluated by the entire society (Deephouse et al., 2016). These positive attitudes towards high corporate reputation in collectivist and high uncertainty avoidance societies also have implications during crisis periods. Considering the fact that these societies place a high value on a reputable corporation (Erdem et al., 2006), it functions as a reliable and consistent indicator, aiding individuals in mitigating the assignment of blame during a crisis whose causes are ambiguous. Therefore, when a product-harm crisis arises, individuals are less likely to assign responsibility to a firm with a high corporate reputation as opposed to one with a low corporate reputation (Grunwald and Hempelmann, 2010). Moreover, in such societies, a high corporate reputation can reduce consumers' negative emotions (Choi and Lin, 2009) and increase their purchase intention (Laufer and Coombs, 2006; Mowen et al., 1981).

Conversely, cultures characterized by low uncertainty avoidance and individualism exhibit a restricted response to the influence of a high corporate reputation (Ali et al., 2015; Bartikowski et al., 2011). This can be explained by individualistic societies' propensity to value individuality and maintain a more distant relationship with firms (Deephouse et al., 2016; Hofstede, 2001). Therefore, it is expected that the rational relationship between individuals and the firm in these societies will result in a different process regarding the role of corporate reputation in crisis situations. According to the expectation violation theory, it is proposed that a low corporate reputation can evoke a more positive response with a better recovery (Burgoon, 1995). The theory suggests that a high corporate reputation can raise consumer expectations (Su et al., 2019), and thus undesired events such as product-harm crises might lead to consumer frustration (Aichner et al., 2021; Rhee and Haunschild, 2006). In such situations, highly reputable firms may be perceived by consumers as taking necessary steps, rather than demonstrating

proactive initiatives (Grunwald and Hempelmann, 2010). Furthermore, the proactive strategies of firms with a low corporate reputation, where customers have little or no expectations of the firm to address a product-harm crisis (Goins et al., 2011), can elicit empathy and positively impact customers, encouraging them to work with the firm (Brady et al., 2008; Gwebu et al., 2018). Accordingly, we propose that:

H₆: Under conditions of collectivism and high uncertainty avoidance, a high corporate reputation is more effective than a low corporate reputation in lowering blame attributions when the firm adopts a voluntary recall (vs. denial) strategy.

H₇: Under conditions of collectivism and high uncertainty avoidance, a high corporate reputation is more effective than a low corporate reputation in lowering negative emotions when the firm adopts a voluntary recall (vs. denial) strategy.

H₈: Under conditions of collectivism and high uncertainty avoidance, a high corporate reputation is more effective than a low corporate reputation in increasing repurchase intention when the firm adopts a voluntary recall (vs. denial) strategy.

H₉: Under conditions of individualism and low uncertainty avoidance, a low corporate reputation is more effective than a high corporate reputation in increasing functional evaluations when the firm adopts a voluntary recall (vs. denial) strategy.

H₁₀: Under conditions of individualism and low uncertainty avoidance, a low corporate reputation is more effective than a high corporate reputation in increasing repurchase intention when the firm adopts a voluntary recall (vs. denial) strategy.

Moderating Role of Corporate Reputation in the Indirect Effects of Response Strategies

Various factors may mediate the effect of product-harm crisis on repurchase intention (Cleeren et al., 2017; Khamitov et al., 2020).

Previous findings suggest that in countries where the emotional path is more prevalent, both blame attributions and negative emotions (Folkes, 1984; 1988) influence consumers' repurchase intention. This highlights the significance of attribution theory, which posits a serial mediation effect in which consumers progress through negative emotions and blame attributions in reaction to a product-harm crisis (Weiner, 1986). Conversely, in countries where individuals assess events using a rational framework, it is anticipated that behavioral intentions will be influenced in a functional manner (Gupta et al., 2018; Kastanakis and Voyer 2014). Furthermore, the varying moderation effect of corporate reputation has been previously discussed. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

H₁₁: Under conditions of collectivism and high uncertainty avoidance, blame attributions and negative emotions serially mediate the effect of crisis response strategies on repurchase intention. This effect is greater under a high corporate reputation level.

H₁₂: Under conditions of individualism and low uncertainty avoidance, functional evaluations mediate the effect of crisis response strategies on repurchase intention. This effect is greater under a low corporate reputation level.

Overview of Studies

Country Selection Process

To demonstrate how cultural differences can affect product evaluations and corporate reputation perception, we conducted two separate studies, each taking place in a different country (Figure 1). Our choice of countries was guided by two factors: participant accessibility and the intention to distinguish between collectivist and high-uncertainty-avoidance settings, versus individualistic and low-uncertainty-avoidance settings.

Türkiye (TÜR), as defined by Hofstede's (2001) theory of cultural dimensions, exhibits a collectivist social structure and a high level of

uncertainty avoidance (Gip et al., 2022; Ndubisi et al., 2012; Unal and Chen, 2022; Voswinckel et al., 2019). Additionally, research on product-harm crises in alternative geographies, including Türkiye, is relatively scarce compared to European countries (Astvansh et al., 2024; Cleeren et al., 2017; Khamitov et al., 2020). Furthermore, due to the magnitude of its economy and population, data from Türkiye is deemed vital (OECD, 2023). Therefore, Study 1 was conducted in Türkiye.

Conversely, according to Hofstede’s (2001) theory, the United States (USA) exhibits an individualistic social culture with a low level of uncertainty avoidance (Gip et al., 2022; Koo and Shavitt, 2011; Unal and Chen, 2022). Thus, for Study 2, the USA was chosen.

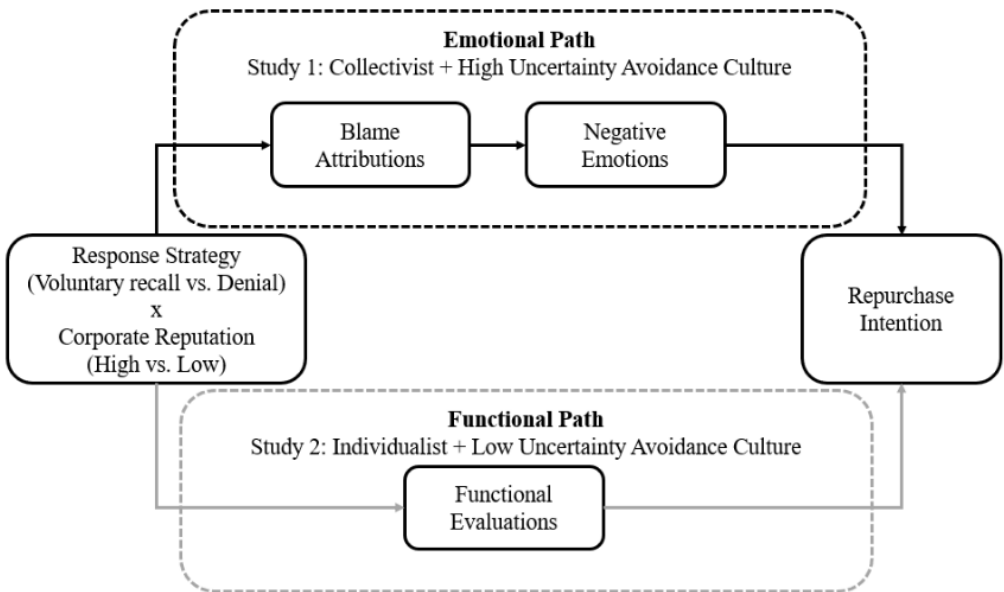


Figure 1. Proposed Conceptual Model

Desing and Participants

In both studies, we used a 2 (response strategy: voluntary (*as proactive str.*) vs. denial (*as passive str.*)) × 2 (corporate reputation:

high vs. low) between-subjects experimental design. For Study 1, data were collected via a web-based survey from Türkiye. Participants were reached via social media by using the convenience sampling technique. The convenience sampling method, which enables access to individuals with diverse characteristics for a clearer understanding of societal culture, is frequently employed in experimental research designs (Leary, 2011). Study 2 was conducted with data collected the USA, through a web-based survey on Prolific. Sample size calculations were performed using G*Power (Faul et al., 2009), with a minimum of 80 participants recruited for each cell. Study 1 was carried out with 323 respondents (55 % male), and Study 2 was carried out with 315 respondents (51 % female). The participants were randomly assigned to each condition, and the respondents' ages and occupations were well distributed in both studies.

Pretests and Stimulus Development

In the studies, the automobile was chosen as the product category. To better understand the differences in attitudes and behaviors toward product-harm crises, it is important to choose a product that is frequently the subject of recalls (Chen et al., 2009) that most people have a high level of involvement (Laczniak et al., 2001) and familiarity with (Germann et al., 2014).

A fictitious brand and model name were utilized in the studies to reduce subject bias (Assiouras et al., 2013), eliminate the potential influence of pre-existing brand attitudes, and obviate any interactions that might result from prior brand associations (Lee et al., 2014). A pseudo brand test ($n = 30$) was conducted in both countries, and "Murton" was selected as the brand name and "Patronus" as the name, as these names were not associated with any existing brand or product.

Procedures and Measures

During the experiments, the participants were initially provided with a brief information page regarding the fictional brand's corporate

reputation level, which could be either high or low. This was followed by a newspaper page that described a case of product-harm crisis and the firm's subsequent response, which could either be a voluntary recall or a denial (see the Appendix for details). Afterwards, the participants were asked questions about blame attributions, negative emotions, functional evaluations, repurchase intention, uncertainty avoidance, corporate reputation, perceived corporate response, and demographics. Existing scales were used, and all scales were measured on a 7-point Likert-type scale. For Study 1, all scales were modified and adapted into Turkish with the help of bilingual experts and then retranslated into English to ensure consistency (Munday, 2013). The scenarios for both corporate reputation (Assiouras et al., 2013; Grunwald and Hempelmann, 2010) and response strategies (Siomkos, 1989) were adopted from previous studies to contribute to the internal validity of the research. Blame attributions (TUR $\alpha = .914$; USA $\alpha = .972$) were measured with 3 items (Klein and Dawar, 2004; Lei et al., 2012; Whelan and Dawar, 2016). Negative emotions (TUR $\alpha = .899$; USA $\alpha = .971$) were measured with 7 items (Choi and Lin, 2009). Functional evaluations (TUR $\alpha = .922$; USA $\alpha = .963$) were measured with 4 items (Dodds et al., 1991; Ma et al., 2014). Repurchase intention (TUR $\alpha = .919$; USA $\alpha = .960$) was measured with 3 items (Kuenzel and Halliday, 2008). As control variable, uncertainty avoidance (TUR $\alpha = .920$; USA $\alpha = .980$), was measured with 7 items (Jung and Kellaris, 2004). For manipulation checks, corporate reputation was measured with 5 items (Petrick, 2002), and perceived corporate response was measured with a single item adopted from Siomkos (1989): "*which of the following do you find closer to the strategy of the Murton?*".

Data Analysis

Data analysis in both studies was conducted in two stages: the pilot study and the main study. In the pilot study, we tested distribution condition, validity, reliability, correlations, manipulation checks, differences among groups, and the assumptions of the control variables. Based on the results of the pilot study conducted in Türkiye (n= 80);

the data was distributed normally, the structures provided validity with fairly enough explained variances ($>.60$) (Hair et al., 2013) and high reliability ($>.80$) (Taber, 2018). All correlations were found to be below $.80$, indicating that there was no multicollinearity issue (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2012). Manipulations for the crisis response strategy ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 5.80$, s.s. = 1.24; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 2.82$, s.s. = 1.39; $t(78) = 10.07$, $p < .001$) and the corporate reputation ($M_{\text{High C. Reputation}} = 4.53$, s.s. = 1.31; $M_{\text{Low C. Reputation}} = 3.08$, s.s. = 1.35; $t(78) = 4.86$, $p < .001$) worked. Finally, the results of MANOVA analysis revealed that there were differences among groups, as expected [Wilks' $\lambda = .718$, $F(9, 180) = 2.92$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .105$]. Similarly, based on the results of the pilot study conducted with participants from the USA ($n = 80$); data was distributed normally, structures were valid ($>.60$) (Hair et al., 2013), highly reliable with values of greater than $.80$ (Taber, 2018), and there was no multicollinearity issue (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2012). The manipulations for the response strategy ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 6.10$, s.s. = .90; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 2.50$, s.s. = 1.39; $t(66.65) = 13.71$, $p < .001$) and the corporate reputation ($M_{\text{High C. Reputation}} = 5.05$, s.s. = 1.36; $M_{\text{Low C. Reputation}} = 2.85$, s.s. = 1.39; $t(78) = 7.11$, $p < .001$) worked as expected. Additionally, there were differences among groups [Wilks' $\lambda = .565$, $F(6, 150) = 8.25$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .248$]. The hypothesis analysis process of the main studies is explained separately under Study 1 and Study 2.

Emotional Path as the Underlying Mechanism - Collectivistic and High Uncertainty Avoidance Condition

In Study 1 (TÜR), a moderated serial mediation model was tested. We used t-tests and analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) for the manipulation checks, to test the direct effect hypotheses (H_1 , H_2 , H_4), and moderating effect hypotheses (H_6 , H_7 , H_8). For the moderated mediation analysis (H_{11}), the PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012) was used. We used 10,000 bootstrap estimation resamples and 95 % confidence intervals (CIs) for model 85.

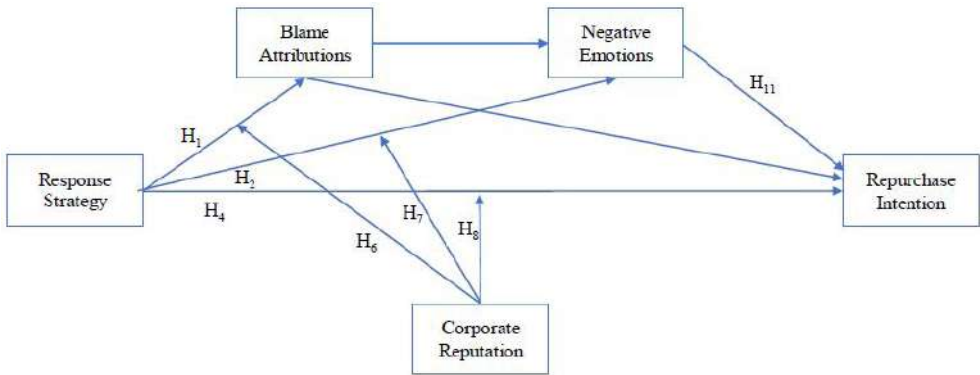


Figure 2. The Moderated Serial Mediation Conceptual Model

Manipulations Checks

The manipulation checks of both firm strategy ($M^{\text{Voluntary}} = 4.66$, s.d. = 1.87; $M^{\text{Denial}} = 3.76$, s.d. = 2.10; $t(312.94) = -4.05$, $p < .001$) and corporate reputation ($M_{\text{High C. Reputation}} = 4.22$, s.d. = 1.40; $M_{\text{Low C. Reputation}} = 3.40$, s.d. = 1.53; $t(320,06) = -5.04$, $p < .001$) obtain significant results.

Testing the Direct Effects of Response Strategies

Blame attributions: Crisis response strategies (voluntary recall and denial) have a significant negative main effect on blame attributions, as expected ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 4.66$; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 5.64$; $F(1,318) = 43.53$; $p < .001$). According to this result, when a voluntary recall strategy is followed, consumers' blame attributions are lower compared to the usage of a denial strategy. Therefore, H_1 is supported.

Negative emotions: Crisis response strategies (voluntary recall and denial) have a significant negative main effect on negative emotions ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 4.82$; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 5.48$; $F(1,318) = 27.71$; $p < .001$), where negative emotions are lower when a voluntary recall is conducted compared to a denial strategy. Thus, H_2 is supported.

Repurchase intention: Crisis response strategies have a significant positive main effect on repurchase intention ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 3.13$; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 2.42$; $F(1,318) = 23.41$; $p < .001$). That is, if the firm follows a voluntary

recall strategy, the repurchase intention of consumers is higher. Thus, H_4 is supported.

Testing the Moderating Effect of Corporate Reputation

Blame attributions: Crisis response strategies and corporate reputation have a significant interaction effect on blame attributions ($F(1,318) = 7.80$; $p < .01$). Specifically, a voluntary recall is better at lowering the blame attributions of consumers compared to a denial strategy for firms with both a high ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 4.25$; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 5.66$; $F(1,318) = 43.41$; $p < .001$) and a low ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 5.05$; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 5.62$; $F(1,318) = 7.11$; $p < .01$) corporate reputation, as expected. This effect is higher for firms with a high corporate reputation. Thus, H_6 is supported.

Negative emotions: Surprisingly, we find no moderating effect of corporate reputation on the effect of response strategies on negative emotions ($F(1,318) = .07$; $p = .79$). Therefore, H_7 is not supported.

Repurchase intention: The interaction effect of crisis response strategies and corporate reputation on repurchasing intention is significant ($F(1,318) = 9.03$; $p < .01$). However, while this interaction effect is valid for firms with a low corporate reputation ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 3.20$; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 2.05$; $F(1,318) = 31.02$; $p < .001$), surprisingly, it is nonsignificant for firms with a high corporate reputation ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 3.06$; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 2.79$; $F(1,318) = 1.58$; $p = .20$). Thus, H_8 is not supported.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Study 1

	Voluntary Recall (Proactive Str.)			Denial (Passive Str.)		
	Total N=165	High Reputation N=81	Low Reputation N=84	Total N=158	High Reputation N=78	Low Reputation N=80
Dependent V.						
<i>Blame Att.</i>	4.66***	4.25***	5.05**	5.64	5.66	5.62
<i>Neg. Emotions</i>	4.82***	4.66***	4.98***	5.48	5.35	5.60
<i>R. Intention</i>	3.13***	3.06	3.20***	2.42	2.79	2.05

Note: ***: $p < .001$; **: $p < .01$; *: $p < .05$

Testing the Moderated Serial Mediation Effects

Blame attributions and negative emotions: Blame attributions and negative emotions serially mediate the indirect effect of crisis response strategies on repurchase intention (CI: from .0171 to .1587). The serial mediation effect indicates that both a high ($B = .1237$; CI: from .0523 to .2190) and a low ($B = .0495$; CI: from .0157 to .0935) corporate reputation are significant, with a high corporate reputation having a higher effect. Thus, H_{11} and the proposed research model of the moderated serial mediation effect are supported.

The analysis revealed that the emotional path worked as expected in the Turkish data. Conversely, an alternative model mediated by functional evaluation (functional path) was also tested for Türkiye, but as predicted, this model was found to be insignificant (CI: from -.4846 to .2933). Thus, “the alternative model was rejected”, and the findings of Study 1 were further strengthened.

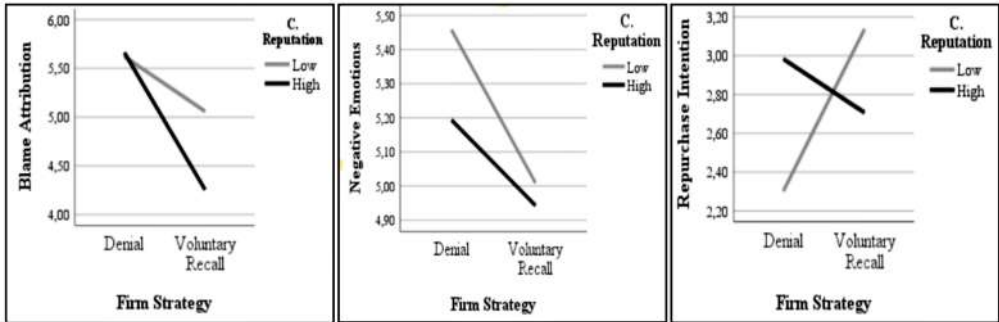


Figure 3. The Interactions of Firm Strategies and Corporate Reputation

Discussion

The results of Study 1, conducted in Türkiye, showed that in a condition of collectivism and high uncertainty avoidance, response strategies had a significant impact on blame attributions, negative emotions, and repurchase intention. These effects were found to be stronger in the proactive strategy condition compared to the passive

strategy condition. These results are in line with some previous findings and show that a proactive strategy is more appropriate for reducing blame attributions (Hora et al., 2011) and negative emotions (Haas-Kotzegger and Schlegelmilch, 2013) and for improving repurchase intention (Siomkos and Kurzbard, 1994). Additionally, we found a moderating effect of corporate reputation on the effect of response strategies on blame attributions, where a high corporate reputation level had a higher effect. This result indicates that a high corporate reputation acts as a consistent, reliable, and diagnostic clue in reducing consumer blame attributions, as hypothesized (Xie and Keh, 2016). Surprisingly, no moderating effect of corporate reputation was found on the relationship between response strategies and negative emotions. The observed outcome, which goes against theoretical predictions, is thought to be caused by customers' strong reaction patterns resulting from disregarding indicators such as corporate reputation, especially when experiencing unpleasant emotions (Gordon and Arian, 2001). Furthermore, it was discovered that corporate reputation moderated the impact of response strategies on repurchase intention. Unexpectedly, this effect is higher for low corporate reputation levels. A high corporate reputation could lead to increased consumer expectations, which may render the firm's efforts insufficient (Sengupta et al., 2015). Finally, blame attributions and negative emotions serially mediate the effect of crisis response strategies on repurchase intention, where corporate reputation moderates the process.

Study 2: Functional Path as the Underlying Mechanism – Individualistic and Low Uncertainty Avoidance Condition

In Study 2 (USA), a moderated mediation model was tested. We conducted t-tests and ANCOVA for the manipulation checks and to test the direct effect hypotheses (H_3 , H_5) and moderating effect hypotheses (H_9 , H_{10}). The PROCESS macro (Hayes, 2012) was used for the moderated mediation analysis (H_{12}). We used 10,000 bootstrap estimation resamples and 95 % CIs for model 8.

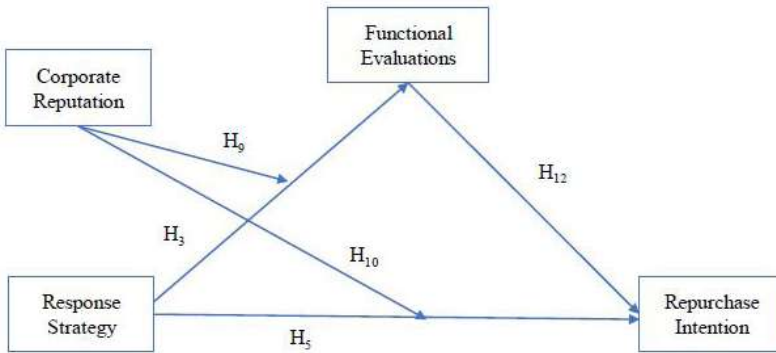


Figure 4. The Moderated Mediation Conceptual Model

Manipulations Checks

The manipulation checks for firm strategies ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 6.03$, s.d. = .92; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 2.52$, s.d. = 1.40; $t(274.65) = -26.25$, $p < .001$) and corporate reputation ($M_{\text{High C. Reputation}} = 4.94$, s.d. = 1.37; $M_{\text{Low C. Reputation}} = 2.97$, s.d. = 1.37; $t(313) = -12.63$, $p < .001$) are significant. Thus, the results of the manipulation checks are consistent with the pretest and pilot study results.

Testing the Direct Effects of Response Strategies

Functional evaluations: Crisis response strategies (voluntary recall and denial) have a positive main effect on consumers' functional product evaluations ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 4.29$; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 3.26$; $F(1,310) = 38.82$; $p < .001$). Consumers' functional evaluations are higher when a voluntary recall strategy is employed compared to a denial strategy. Therefore, H_3 is supported.

Repurchase intention: Crisis response strategies (voluntary recall and denial) have a positive main effect on repurchase intention ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 4.21$; $M_{\text{Denial}} = 2.87$; $F(1,310) = 66.06$; $p < .001$), where repurchase intention is higher under a voluntary recall strategy compared to a denial strategy. Thus, H_5 is supported.

Testing the Moderating Effect of Corporate Reputation

Functional evaluations: Crisis response strategies and corporate reputation have a significant interaction effect on the functional product evaluations of consumers ($F(1,310) = 4.69; p < .05$). In contrast to a denial strategy, a voluntary recall has a more pronounced positive impact on functional evaluations for firms with both a high ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 5.21; M_{\text{Denial}} = 4.54; F(1,310) = 8.19; p < .01$) and low corporate reputation ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 3.36; M_{\text{Denial}} = 1.98; F(1,310) = 35.65; p < .001$). This effect is higher for firms with a low corporate reputation, as expected. Thus, H_9 is supported.

Repurchase intention: The interaction effect of crisis response strategies and corporate reputation on repurchase intention is significant ($F(1,310) = 9.47; p < .01$). If firms with both high ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 4.68; M_{\text{Denial}} = 3.85; F(1,310) = 12.65; p < .001$) and low ($M_{\text{Voluntary}} = 3.74; M_{\text{Denial}} = 1.89; F(1,310) = 63.49; p < .001$) corporate reputation perform voluntary recalls, consumers will have a higher repurchase intention than if they follow a denial strategy. Additionally, this effect is higher for firms with a low corporate reputation. Therefore, H_{10} is supported.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of Study 2

	Voluntary Recall (Proactive Str.)			Denial (Passive Str.)		
	Total N=157	High Reputation N=78	Low Reputation N=79	Total N=158	High Reputation N=78	Low Reputation N=80
Dependent V.						
<i>Fun. Evaluation</i>	4.29***	5.21**	3.36***	3.26	4.54	1.98
<i>Rep. Intention</i>	4.21***	4.68***	3.74***	2.87	3.85	1.89

Note: ***: $p < .001$; **: $p < .01$; *: $p < .05$

Testing the Moderated Mediation Effects

Functional evaluations: Functional evaluations mediate the effect of crisis response strategies on repurchase intention, as expected (CI: from

-.7511 to -.0420). The mediating effect indicates that both a high ($B = .3704$; CI: from .0680 to .7011) and a low ($B = .7646$; CI: from .5412 to 1.0134) corporate reputation are significant, where a low corporate reputation has a higher effect. Thus, H_{12} and the proposed research model of the moderated mediation effect are supported.

Our analyses confirmed that the functional path yielded expected results in the USA data. Conversely, an alternative model mediated by blame attributions and negative emotions (emotional path) was also tested for the USA and as predicted, this model was found to be insignificant (CI: from -.0044 to .0044). As a result, “the emotional path was rejected”, and the validity of the findings from Study 2 was further enhanced.

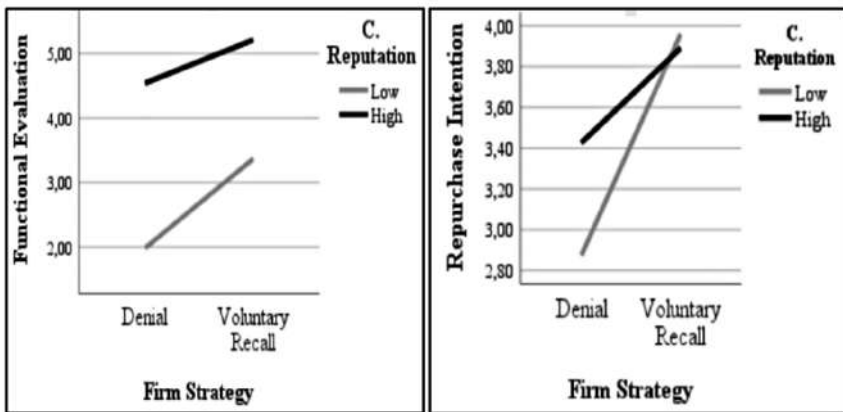


Figure 5. The Interactions of Firm Strategies and Corporate Reputation

Discussion

The results of Study 2, which tested a condition of individualism and low uncertainty avoidance using data obtained from the USA, indicate that response strategies have a significant direct effect on both functional evaluations and repurchase intention and that these effects are higher under the proactive (vs. passive) strategy condition. Thus, product-harm

crises affect consumers' evaluations of the relevant brand and product (Mowen et al., 1981), and proactive crisis response strategies by firms lead to more positive outcomes in terms of consumer perceptions, evaluations, and behaviors compared to passive strategies (Souiden and Pons, 2009). Similarly, the proactive approaches of firms make a more positive impression on consumers (Siomkos and Kurzbard, 1994) and result in higher purchase intention, as expected. In addition, we found that corporate reputation moderates the effect of response strategies on both functional evaluations and repurchase intention, with these effects being higher under conditions of low corporate reputation, as expected. These results support the idea that the proactive efforts of firms with a low corporate reputation may result in a more positive response (Brady et al., 2008; Gwebu et al., 2018), particularly in countries with low uncertainty avoidance and individualistic structure. Furthermore, we found a significant moderating role of corporate reputation in the effect of response strategies on repurchase intention through functional evaluations.

Conclusion

This study investigated the variations in consumer assessment processes across different cultures concerning response strategies and corporate reputation of a firm in ambiguous product-harm crisis scenarios. Two studies were conducted to test hypotheses regarding the effects of various response strategies and levels of corporate reputation across different countries. Our research reveals that consumers' perceptions of corporate reputation and information processing during product evaluations differ based on their cultural characteristics.

These results make several theoretical contributions to the product-harm crisis literature. First, guided by cross-cultural research, our framework offers a novel theoretical perspective on the explanatory role of firm response strategies in influencing the repurchase intentions. By demonstrating that consumers from different cultures follow distinct product evaluation paths when confronted with a product-harm crisis, our research adds to the "emotional and cognitive mediators" related

to consumers' repurchase intentions. Although these paths are very compatible with the literature, our findings are still scholarly meaningful in that they were observed in a different context based on different country samples. For instance, Bowen et al. (2018) demonstrated that certain paths are more effective for specific cultures by revealing variations in attitude and behavior development processes among individuals from different cultural backgrounds following a crisis. Similarly, Yang et al. (2022) revealed significant differences between cultures in the product evaluation process after a crisis, indicating that factors affecting the product evaluation process of individuals from different cultures may not be the same. However, the specific processes that operate in different cultures were still unclear. The current study has utilized previous empirical findings and cross-cultural theories to develop culture-specific paths by focusing on how individuals process information in product evaluation through the social cultural dimensions of collectivism/individualism and uncertainty avoidance. Therefore, the current study has addressed the question of which factors determine the product evaluations of individuals from different cultures. Indeed, consumers product assessment processes differ across cultures by demonstrating that while emotional mediators (blame attributions and negative emotions) have an effect on repurchase intentions in a collectivistic and high uncertainty avoidance culture (the TÜR sample), it does not in individualistic and low uncertainty avoidance culture (the USA sample). Conversely, functional mediator (functional product evaluations) effects repurchase intentions in an individualistic and low uncertainty avoidance culture, it does not in collectivistic and high uncertainty avoidance culture.

Second, by examining the contradictory impact of corporate reputation, our research advances the current understanding of the influence of response strategies in different cultures. Although a high level of corporate reputation is primarily considered an important indicator that provides protection to a firm in unexpected situations such as crises (Wei et al., 2017), it is also known that a high corporate reputation, which increases individuals' expectations from the firm (Su et al., 2019), can increase the risk for the firm by potentially

disappointing individuals in crisis situations (Aichner et al., 2021; Rhee and Haunschild, 2006). Similarly, firms with low corporate reputation face greater difficulty in overcoming crises compared to firms with high corporate reputation (Siomkos and Kurzbard, 1994), but in some cases, the efforts of low corporate reputation firms in response to crises are more highly appreciated than those of high corporate reputation firms (Brady et al., 2008; Gwebu et al., 2018). In the literature, a few studies examined contradictory effects of corporate reputation (Aichner et al., 2021; Ali et al., 2015; Rhee and Haunschild, 2006). However, there is no consensus on what causes these contradictory results. Our findings indicate that culture acts as a lens through which corporate reputation is perceived and can violate consumer expectations (Burgoon, 1995). Expectancy-violation theory (Jussim, 1986; Jussim et al., 1987) explains that when information about a target contradicts stereotype-based expectations, the target is judged more harshly in the direction of the expectation that was violated (Jackson et al., 1993). In other words, “favorable information about a member of a negatively stereotyped group will result in more favorable evaluations than when the same information applies to a member of a positively stereotyped group; unfavorable information about a member of a positively stereotyped group will result in more unfavorable evaluations than when the same information applies to a member of a negatively stereotyped group” (Jackson et al., 1993: p. 70).

Based on our findings (Study 1, TUR), having a high corporate reputation provides firms with certain advantages during crises in countries with collectivist and high uncertainty avoidance traits (Erdem et al., 2006). This is consistent with cross-cultural theory and previous empirical findings, which demonstrate that societies with collectivist and high uncertainty avoidance traits consider a high corporate reputation as a reliable and consistent diagnostic cue (Xie and Keh, 2016). Our study revealed that a high corporate reputation is more effective in reducing blame attribution and negative emotions. In terms of repurchase intention, we found that individuals from collectivist and high uncertainty countries behave in accordance with the predictions of expectation violation theory, and favorable information (proactive strategy) about a

member of a positively stereotyped group (high corporate reputation) results in more unfavorable behaviors (Jackson et al., 1993). In this sense, it is possible to say that individuals adopted an unbiased approach in developing their behavioral intentions based directly on the firm's response strategy and corporate reputation. Nevertheless, our findings indicate that in countries with collectivist and high uncertainty avoidance, a high corporate reputation is still more effective in shaping behavioral intentions through an emotional path. This may be due to the emotional nature of the evaluation process in this country (Epstein, 1994; Conner et al., 2017), where positive attitudes towards high corporate reputation are further transferred by emotional evaluations.

On the other hand, in the individualistic and low uncertainty country condition (Study 2, USA), when the firm has a low corporate reputation, consumer reactions fit with expectation violation theory (Jackson et al., 1993). Providing positive information (proactive strategy) about a member of a negatively stereotyped group (low corporate reputation) led to more positive evaluations than if the same information was applied to a member of a positively stereotyped group (high corporate reputation). This situation can be explained by individuals in individualistic and low uncertainty countries following a functional path and using a diagnostic and unbiased approach, which allows them to make rational decisions (Gupta et al., 2018; Kastanakis and Voyer, 2014).

Finally, and in a more holistic manner, this study helps understand the potential differences between countries or cultures in a product-harm crisis and contributes to the existing literature gap. Wang and Laufer (2020) propose that applying western-based crisis management frameworks to crisis contexts in eastern cultures may not be suitable, as cultural differences operate in this mechanism. Thus, cultural differences become more important as crises become internationalized.

The practical implications are threefold. First, we can postulate that appropriate crisis response strategy during a product-harm crisis, such as proactive efforts, will definitely have a positive influence on product evaluations and consumers' behavioral intentions.

Secondly, based on our research, product evaluations have strong cultural connections. People living in countries with a collectivist structure and high levels of uncertainty avoidance tend to make emotional evaluations of products. Therefore, firms should aim to establish an emotional connection with these individuals during and after a crisis. This emotional connection may involve an appropriate spokesperson who instills trust in individuals, message content with emotional triggers that highlight the relationship between the firm and individuals, and compensation offers to reduce negative experiences by providing discounts or special offers (Beldad and Rosenstiel, 2024; Liu et al., 2016). Additionally, adopting an experiential perspective that focuses on emotions would be appropriate for promotion efforts aimed at increasing repeat purchases by existing consumers (Mowen, 1988).

On the other hand, in societies with an individualistic structure and low levels of uncertainty avoidance, individuals follow a functional path in the product evaluation process. Therefore, firms operating in individualistic and low uncertainty avoidance countries would include aspects such as quality, performance, and originality of the product (Ahmed and d'Astous, 2007) in their crisis communication messages. If applicable, compensation offers may aim to eliminate product performance losses and even improve product performance. For example, offering a replacement of the defective product with a new or higher model would be an appropriate form of compensation (Liu et al., 2016). To ensure repeat sales, firms may also carry out promotional efforts that emphasize the product's functionality.

Thirdly, according to our findings, corporate reputation perceptions of individuals have strong cultural connections as well. It is observed that high corporate reputation is more effective in countries with a collectivist structure and high levels of uncertainty avoidance. Therefore, for firms operating in collectivist and high uncertainty avoidance countries, adopting tactics that highlight their high corporate reputation can provide a significant advantage. Conversely, firms with low corporate reputation can strive to create a positive impression on individuals by

being more diligent in their crisis response strategy and compensation efforts (Coombs, 2007).

In societies with an individualistic structure and low levels of uncertainty avoidance, firms with low corporate reputation can achieve effective results. In such geographies, proactive approaches that low corporate reputation firms will adopt in crisis response strategy and compensation will be appropriate for achieving successful results. On the other hand, it is recommended that high corporate reputation firms should follow crisis response strategies and compensations that exceed expectations (Taylor, 2000).

This study has several limitations. The use of a hypothetical brand/model name may be insufficient for accurately understanding consumers' perceptions and attitudes (Siomkos et al., 2010). Also, the choice of the product "automobile" could be considered as another limitation because recalls in the automobile industry differ significantly from those in other industries and product categories due to factors such as industry density and consumer traceability (Astvansh et al., 2024). Finally, the inability to provide a direct comparison between the studies is another limitation. In this context, future studies should consider real-life crises and brands to develop various strategies and managerial actions. Additionally, focusing on different product categories could help broaden our understanding of the crisis management process. Furthermore, conducting new studies positioning culture as a moderator to enable direct comparisons would provide alternative perspectives. Moreover, further studies focusing on individuals' diverse compensation expectations and alternative behavioral intentions (such as word-of-mouth, boycott etc.) could expand our understanding of the impact of culture during an international product-harm crisis. Lastly, it is recommended that new research be conducted to understand the contradictory impacts of corporate reputation in different cultures.

Araştırma ve Yayın Etiği Beyanı

The study was conducted with the approval of the Anadolu University Ethics Board, as per the decision dated 31.05.2019 with protocol number 33192.

Yazarların Makaleye Katkı Oranları

Author 1's contribution to the article is 60% and Author 2's contribution to the article is 40%.

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The authors declare that they have no conflict of interest.

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Geniřletilmiř Özet

Kusurlu Ürün Krizleri Karřısında Tüketicilerin Ürün Deęerlendirmeleri ve Tekrar Satın Alma Niyetlerinin Altında Yatan Süreçlerin Farklı Ülkelerde Arařtırılması

Günümüzde firmalar, farklı řekillerde başarısız olarak yatırımcılarını ve müşterilerini hayal kırıklığına uğratabilmektedir. Bu başarısızlıkların en yaygın örneklerinden biri ise kusurlu ürün krizleridir. Kusurlu ürün krizi kavramını, “ürünlerin kusurlu veya tehlikeli olduęunun tespit edildięi durumlar” olarak tanımlamak mümkündür (Dawar ve Pillutla, 2000). Bu tür krizler tüketici güvenlięi konusunda endiřeler yaratabilmekte (Astvansh vd., 2024), ürüne/markaya yönelik talebi azaltabilmekte (Rupp, 2004), hisse senedi fiyatlarını düşürebilmekte (Chen vd., 2009), marka imajına zarar verebilmekte (Hora vd., 2011), tüketicilerin marka baęlılıęını zayıflatabilmekte (Dawar ve Pillutla, 2000), suç atıflarını artırabilmekte (Lei vd., 2012), olumsuz ürün deęerlendirmelerine yol açabilmekte (Mowen vd., 1981) ve yeniden satın alma niyetini azaltabilmektedir (Siomkos ve Kurzbard, 1994).

Firmaların kusurlu ürün krizlerinden kaynaklanan potansiyel riskleri en aza indirme çabalarına raęmen ürünlerin karmařıklığı, bu tür olayların medyada geniř şekilde yer bulması, ürün güvenlięine yönelik düzenlemeler (Dawar ve Pillutla, 2000; Klein ve Dawar, 2004) ve yoğun piyasa rekabeti (Souiden ve Pons, 2009) gibi faktörler zaman içinde bu krizlerin artmasına neden olmaktadır (Casey vd., 2024). Firmalar bu krizlere gönüllü geri çağırma gibi proaktif veya reddetme gibi pasif stratejiler benimseyerek yanıt verebilmektedir (Chen vd., 2009). Hiç řüphesiz firmaların kriz yanıt stratejisi seçimini etkileyen çeřitli faktörler bulunmaktadır. Ancak bu faktörler içerisinde önemli bir yere sahip olduęu düşünölen kültürün (Dawar ve Pillutla, 2000; Shavitt ve Barnes, 2019) geçmiř arařtırmalarda yeterince keřfedilmedięi görölmektedir (Astvansh vd., 2024; Cleeren vd., 2017; Khamitov vd., 2020). Özellikle pazarların küreselleřmesi, firmaların kusurlu ürün krizlerine yönelik tepkilerinde kültürün önemini artırmıřtır. Zira kültürel faktörler, tüketicilerin bilgiyi duygusal mı yoksa işlevsel bir řekilde mi işleyeceęini (Ng, 2024), firmaya suç atfedip atfetmeyeceęini (Laufer, 2012; Lei vd., 2012), davranıřsal niyetinin nasıl şekilleneceęini (Siomkos ve Kurzbard, 1994) ve kurumsal itibar gibi dıřsal göstergeleri nasıl yorumlayacaęını etkileyebilmektedir (Ali vd., 2015; Bartikowski vd., 2011).

Bu bağlamda, mevcut araştırma kapsamında iki farklı çalışma gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışma 1, kolektivist ve yüksek belirsizlikten kaçınma seviyesine sahip bir ülke olarak Türkiye'den, Çalışma 2 ise bireyci ve düşük belirsizlikten kaçınma seviyesine sahip bir ülke olarak ABD'den elde edilen verilerle gerçekleştirilmiştir (Hofstede, 2001). Her iki çalışmada da sırasıyla ön test, pilot çalışma ve ana çalışma yürütülmüştür. Türkiye'de 323 katılımcıyla gerçekleştirilen çalışma, gönüllü geri çağırmanın reddetme stratejisine göre suç atıflarını (H1) ve olumsuz duyguları (H2) azaltmada, yeniden satın alma niyetini ise artırmada (H4) daha etkili olduğunu ortaya koymuştur. Ayrıca, yüksek kurumsal itibarın kriz yanıt stratejilerinin suç atıfları üzerindeki etkisinde (H6) düzenleyici bir rol oynadığı, ancak kriz yanıt stratejilerinin olumsuz duygular (H7) ve yeniden satın alma niyeti (H8) üzerindeki etkisinde böyle bir etkiye sahip olmadığı görülmüştür. Dahası suç atıfları ve olumsuz duyguların yanıt stratejilerinin yeniden satın alma niyetleri üzerindeki etkisini seri aracılık ettiğini ve bu dolaylı etkinin yüksek kurumsal itibar düzeyi altında daha etkili olduğu görülmüştür (H11). Bu sonuçlar, Türk tüketicilerin değerlendirme sürecinin suç atıfları ve olumsuz duygular aracılığıyla duygusal bir süreç izlediğini ve yüksek kurumsal itibar seviyesinin bu süreçte önemli bir rol oynadığını ortaya koymaktadır.

ABD'den toplanan ve 315 katılımcıyla gerçekleştirilen Çalışma 2'de gönüllü geri çağırmanın, fonksiyonel değerlendirmeleri (H3) ve yeniden satın alma niyetini (H5) artırmada reddetme stratejisinden daha etkili olduğu bulunmuştur. Ayrıca, düşük kurumsal itibara sahip firmalar için fonksiyonel değerlendirmeler (H9) ve satın alma niyetinin (H10) gönüllü geri çağırma tercihinde daha yüksek olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Dahası bulgular fonksiyonel değerlendirmenin, yanıt stratejilerinin yeniden satın alma niyeti üzerindeki etkisini aracılık ettiğini ve kurumsal itibarın bu dolaylı etkiyi düzenlediğini ortaya koymaktadır (H12).

Araştırma bulgularına göre, toplulukçu ve yüksek belirsizlikten kaçınma düzeyine sahip Türkiye'de tüketici değerlendirme süreci suç atıfları ve olumsuz duygular üzerinden yol alan duygusal bir süreç izlemekte ve yüksek kurumsal itibar bu süreçte önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Öte yandan bireyci ve düşük belirsizlikten kaçınma düzeyine sahip ABD'de ise fonksiyonel değerlendirmelerin etkili olduğu ve düşük kurumsal itibarın kritik bir rol oynadığı gözlemlenmiştir. Ayrıca yapılan ek analizler, beklentilere uyumlu şekilde Türkiye'de fonksiyonel değerlendirmelerin, ABD'de ise duygusal sürecin etkili olmadığını doğrulamıştır. Bu sonuç Çalışma 1 ve Çalışma 2'nin bulgularının geçerliliğini artırmaktadır.

Sonuç olarak, araştırma kusurlu ürün krizi literatürüne önemli teorik katkılar sağlamaktadır. İlk olarak, bu araştırma farklı kültürlerden bireylerin krizleri

değerlendirirken bilgiyi farklı şekillerde (duygusal veya rasyonel) işleyebildiklerini ve firmaların kurumsal itibar seviyelerine bağlı olarak farklı beklentiler ve tepkiler sergilediklerini ortaya koymaktadır. Bu nedenle araştırmamız, tüketicilerin değerlendirme sürecine ilişkin olarak “duygusal” ve “bilişsel” süreçleri literatüre sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, çalışma kurumsal itibarın çelişkili etkilerini ortaya koymaktadır (Aichner vd., 2021; Ali vd., 2015; Rhee ve Haunschild, 2006). Kolektivist ve belirsizlikten kaçınma düzeyi yüksek toplumlarda yüksek kurumsal itibarı güvenilir ve tutarlı bir dışsal ipucu olarak değerlendirirken (Xie ve Keh, 2016); bireyci ve düşük belirsizlikten kaçınma düzeyine sahip kültürlerde tüketicilerin olumsuz bir şekilde stereotipleştirilmiş bir grubun (düşük kurumsal itibar) bir üyesine ilişkin olumlu bilgilerin, beklenti-ihlal teorisine (Jussim, 1986; Jussim vd., 1987) paralel bir şekilde yüksek kurumsal itibara sahip bir gruba kıyasla daha olumlu değerlendirmelere yol açtığını ortaya koymaktadır. Dolayısıyla bu çalışma kusurlu ürün krizleri karşısında ülkeler/kültürler arasındaki potansiyel farklılıkları anlamaya yardımcı olmakta; Batı menşeli kriz yönetim anlayışının Doğu kültürlerinde her zaman arzulanan sonuçlar elde edilmesinde yeterli olamayacağını ifade etmektedir. Çünkü kültürel farklılıkların kriz değerlendirme sürecinde farklı mekanizmalara yol açtığı görülmektedir (Wang ve Laufer, 2020). Pratik açıdan ise bulgularımız firmalara krizlere yanıt verirken ne tür iletişim stratejileri belirlemeleri gerektiği, etkili mesaj türü, mesajda vurgulanması gereken unsurlar, uygun telafi stratejileri ve farklı ülkelerdeki ürün değerlendirme süreçlerinde kurumsal itibar bilgilerinin nasıl kullanılacağına dair birtakım içgörüler sunmaktadır.

Appendix

Appendix 1: High Corporate Reputation Scenario

Murton is a car manufacturer brand and it operates in many countries including the Turkish market (*during collecting data from the USA, given as the USA market*). Also, the brand takes place in the top 50 of Fortune 500 which the world's most successful companies are listed. Murton is a brand that is evaluated positively by consumers in terms of quality standards. The brand has a good customer service policy and extended warranty options. The brand attaches great importance to customer demands and complaints. At the same time, it has a management approach based on ethical values in terms of employees and environmental policies.

Appendix 2: Low Corporate Reputation Scenario


Murton is a car manufacturer brand and it operates in many countries including the Turkish market (*during collecting data from the USA, given as the USA market*). Also, the brand takes place in 437th place in Fortune 500 which the world's most successful companies are listed. Murton is a brand that is evaluated positively by consumers in terms of quality standards. The brand has narrower customer services and warranty policies than its competitors in the industry. Although the brand gives importance to customer demands and complaints, it is seen that it lags behind its competitors at these points. Besides, the brand has been brought to the agenda in the past with its behaviors that do not comply with ethical values in terms of employees and environmental policies.

Appendix 3: Proactive Response Strategy

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IS THE CAR MANUFACTURER MURTON IN TROUBLE?

By James Coles

In the International Road Traffic Safety Management 2019 report, more than 20 traffic accidents have been reported for the Patronus models of Murton cars due to the problem of inability to brake effectively in the last one year. Following the announcement, Murton called on Patronus owners to bring their vehicles to be checked in service areas as a precautionary measure.

In the last report prepared by the International Road Traffic Safety Administration which analyzes and maintains statistics of car accidents worldwide, it was announced that more than 20 accidents involving personal injury or death have occurred in the last year related to Patronus models of the Murton brand of cars. In the report, which draws all the attention to the company, the common point of the accidents occurred in Murton Patronus was explained as the inability of the vehicles to brake effectively. According to the experts who shared their opinions on the subject, inability in efficient braking can occur due to many reasons. According to experts, a problematic part of the brake system, adverse weather conditions or vehicle maintenance which is not done on time or by experts, may cause these accidents.

Following the news, Murton spokesperson made a statement in the face of the news and allegations in the media and stated that the investigations have continued to determine the causes of the accidents, the spokesperson also made a call to Patronus model owners. The company spokesperson declared that "We expect our customers who have the relevant model to bring their vehicles to the service areas for the control of their brake systems in order to prevent new negativities that may occur" in the announcement.

Appendix 4: Passive Response Strategy

FEB. 24, 2020

DAILY NEWS

Agenda



IS THE CAR MANUFACTURER MURTON IN TROUBLE?

By James Coles

In the International Road Traffic Safety Management 2019 report, more than 20 traffic accidents have been reported for the Patronus models of Murton cars due to the problem of inability to brake effectively in the last one year. Following the announcement, Murton said that, although they don't think the problem has caused by them, they had started an investigation on the matter and they would not take any action on the Patronus model until the results of the investigation determined.

In the last report prepared by the International Road Traffic Safety Administration which analyzes and maintains statistics of car accidents worldwide, it was announced that more than 20 accidents involving personal injury or death have occurred in the last year related to Patronus models of the Murton brand of cars. In the report, which draws all the attention to the company, the common point of the accidents occurred in Murton Patronus was explained as the inability of the vehicles to brake effectively. According to the experts who shared their opinions on the subject, inability in efficient braking can occur due to many reasons. According to experts, a problematic part of the brake system, adverse weather conditions or vehicle maintenance which is not done on time or by experts, may cause these accidents.

Following the news, Murton spokesperson made a statement in the face of the news and allegations in the media and stated that the investigations continued to determine the causes of the accidents. Also, the company spokesperson declared in the announcement that "We don't think the problem is caused due to us. Therefore, we would not take any action at this stage".