

***Do different cultural values play a role in the relationship between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception in the Netherlands and the United States?***



***Master Thesis***

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# Abstract

## *Background*

While companies worldwide are trying to avoid situations which can be harmful for them, it is almost impossible for them to avoid these kind of incidents. While shareholders are demanding in being updated about the inner workings of their company, it is still the company's tactical approach that determines how shareholders will respond to certain situation. One important question for companies to answer is when an incident has happened is whether or not to report the incident itself or to wait for a third party to intervene. Several studies conducted in this area suggest that stealing thunder can reduce the damage that can be taken from different type of negative incidents (e.g. Arpan & Pompper, 2013). But what about positive incidents? Should they also be communicated by the company?

Considering the fact that these days most companies are not limited to simply one country, it is important to understand the differences between different cultures worldwide. Several studies argue that certain messages can vary depending on different cultures and countries (e.g. Kim & Reber, 2008). This research wants to contribute to this knowledge by focusing on how relationships between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception can be influenced by different culture aspects such as masculinity and power distance between two different countries (US and The Netherlands).

## *Method*

An experiment is established for this quantitative study based on 2x2x2 factorial design. This design concerned the independent variables different types of disclosure (Company vs. third party), different types of incident (Good vs. bad) and country of residence (NL vs. US). An online questionnaire with four possible scenarios was utilized. A total number of 229 participants participated in this study (The Netherlands being the most represented with 129 respondents equating to 56.3% of total respondents with the average age of 31,31, SD=13,65). The US was second with 91 respondents (39.7%). The average age is 23,91, SD=7,16).

## *Results*

Results show that both countries found the company more credible during a positive incident than a negative one. The results also show that the Dutch find the company more credible than Americans in both positive and negative situations.

### *Conclusion*

This study contributes to a better understanding of the relationship between stealing thunder and the types of incident on brand perception and how it is influenced by different culture aspects such as masculinity between two different countries (US and NL). It can be concluded that during an incident, it is important that the company discloses the incident themselves. This gives the company the opportunity to guide the news, making sure that the damage done to company reputation remains limited. It doesn't matter if the incident is positive or negative, as long as the company discloses the incident itself, because both credibility and attitude towards the brand will be higher. Culture has a significant influence on stealing thunder and the type of incident. It appears that Dutch in general are more positive towards the company, when the incident disclosed by the company is positive and are less negative towards the company, when the disclosed incident is negative than the American participants.

These results will serve as a basis for discussing the theoretical implications of this study and finally give some direction for future research.

***Keywords:*** *incident, disclosure, Femininity, Masculinity, Stealing thunder, The Netherlands, United States.*

## Preface

Upon finishing this paper, my life as a student will ultimately be completed. Looking back at 15 years of living in The Netherlands and starting all the way from the bottom, I have to admit that it has been an arduous and elongated journey. After obtaining my bachelors in Marketing, I yearned to gain more knowledge. In my opinion, a marketer can never be successful without proper knowledge in communication. Therefore, I have started my premasters two years ago at the University of Twente. I finally started to write my master thesis on September 2014. I could not have accomplished all of this on my own and therefore I would like to thank several people.

First of all, I would like to thank my first supervisor Ms. Sabrina Hegner, for her enthusiasm and helpfulness. Having a supervisor who was always willing to listen to my comments and give me the right advice was amazing. I would also like to thank my second supervisor Mr. Ardion Beldad for his time and his useful critique, enabling me to optimize my paper in ways I could not achieve by myself.

Finally I would like to thank my family for their unstoppable support through years, because without them I would have never been able to finish this paper.

Enjoy reading,

Amirreza Eslami,

Goor, March 2015

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# 1. Introduction

Even though companies around the world try to avoid incidents while performing their daily activities, it is almost impossible to avoid these kinds of situations. Although the shareholders are interested in being updated about different activities of the companies, it is still the tactical approach of the companies that determine how shareholders will perceive and respond to the certain situation. Arpan and Pompper (2003) define stealing thunder as an admission of a weakness (usually a mistake or failure) before that weakness is announced by another party. According to Arpan and Pompper (2003) "stealing thunder strategy can result in favorable jury verdicts, higher credibility ratings for the defendant, lower perceptions of crime severity, greater sympathy for the defendant, and weaker perceptions of the defendant's guilt."(p.294).

Previous studies show that too much effort to create awareness will not always end well for the company. Shareholders might perceive the company as 'Too good to be true'. Thus, when the company does too much effort to approach the media and provide them with information, the information can be considered as abundant and therefore the stealing thunder strategy can be less successful or even bring harm to the company (Holder-Webb, Cohen, Nath & Wood, 2009).

One important question regarding this matter should be how the company reveals the incident itself and when the company should let this matter be settled by a third party. Despite various attempts by different scholars in the past to give a clear answer to this question, there is still much uncertainty about this issue. Fennis and Stroebe (2014) believe that stealing thunder by the company itself can help the company have more influence on what is being reported in the media and therefore self-disclosure may help lessen the damage created during a crisis.

Another important fact about stealing thunder is how the type of incident (bad vs. good) might influence the type of disclosure (company vs. third party) as well as brand perception. Type of incidents refers to both negative and positive events. While incident sounds negative, there are also positive events that we can also call incidents. Positive incidents can be like winning an award or news about improving operation conditions of labor. Negative incidents could involve harmful rumors or product malfunctions (Fennis & Stroebe, 2014). Coombs & Holladay (2012) believe it is not true to assume that positive incidents will always have good influence on the brand perception. They also believe that self-disclosure on positive incidents may create skepticism among the shareholders. This is because when the company remains



silent (during a positive incident), the information can be perceived as scarce and it can be raised in value (Lynn, 1991).

This research will focus on when the company should steal thunder itself and how the type of incident might influence the brand perception that entails Attitude towards the brand and corporation credibility. Therefore the main research question in this study will be:

*-To what extent do stealing thunder and the type of incident influence the brand perception in the Netherlands and the United States?*

When looking at multinational companies, one realizes that their audience is not simply limited to one country. Many companies try to communicate with millions of people worldwide on a daily basis. Kim and Reber (2008) already concluded that meaning given to a certain message could vary in different cultures and countries. Therefore it is important to look at the differences between United States and Netherland (two countries were this research is hold) to understand the differences in cultures and also the influences these differences might have on the relationship between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception. While both countries could be considered as a single "Western Civilization" and have democratic ways of doing things, the two cultures or countries are also substantially different from each other (Maciamo, n.d.). Not being similar in different cultural dimensions like Masculinity (Hofstede, 1984) might lead to different interpretation of the message in both countries and therefore vital to this study (As Falbo, Hazen and Linimon, (1982) concluded that different genders will give different meaning to a certain message).

The major difference in culture between these two countries is *Masculinity versus Femininity* ( Hofstede, 1984). The Netherlands scores very low on this dimension and its society is known for its feminine-centered values. On the other hand the U.S. scores relatively high on Masculinity versus Femininity, its society is driven by competition, success, and achievements. These differences can be important to the meaning given to a certain message due to stealing thunder, as the society with higher rate of femininity generally rates the message and the sender of the message more positively than the societies with higher rate of masculinity (Falbo, Hazen & Linimon, 1982).

Therefore, this research will focus on how the relationship between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception can be influenced by culture. The main research question addressed is:

*- How is relationship between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception influenced by different cultural values of the Netherlands and the United States?*

This article is structured as follows. The theoretical framework will be presented in chapter two. Chapter three will focus on the research method that includes the design, process, participants and pre-test. Chapter four describes the results and how the data were analyzed while chapter five will be centered on the discussion. Chapter six contains a discussion of the limitations of this research and the suggestions for future research and the implications of the research results. This paper will end with final conclusion of this study.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

### ***2.1. Stealing Thunder***

The strategy of stealing thunder has its origins in the American legal system. Williams, Bourgeois and Croyle (1993) were the first to test the stealing thunder and its effects in courtroom. Their results proved that the use of stealing thunder would result in perception of credibility and trustworthiness of the party revealing the incident. Stealing thunder is all about revealing the news by the company itself before a crisis is to be discovered and ultimately revealed by a third party. Companies that are involved in this crisis situation are generally aware of the situation far before the general public unearths it. Thus, the decision by the company has to be whether or not to disclose the negative incident itself or let it disclosed by a third party (Fennis & Stroebe, 2013).

Arpan and Pompper (2003) tried to figure out how two different groups (journalists and students) would react to two different certain scenarios about a company. These two scenarios are: the company itself stealing thunder by contacting the journalists and the journalists learning about the incident from the third party. The results showed that when the company disclosed the incident itself it would result in higher credibility. It should be mentioned that stealing thunder would not always provide more benefits and effort to a company. Disclosing and self-reporting positive events might create a boomerang effect as the shareholder might become skeptical about company inner workings. (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). Shareholders might perceive the company as 'Too good to be true'.

Even though that there are some possibilities that stealing thunder might lead to a boomerang effect, the majority of studies indicated that stealing thunder by the company itself will still be better for the brand perception than allowing a third party to disclose the incident (This gives the corporation the opportunity to guide the news and make sure that the damage done to the brand perception remains limited). Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005), for instance, suggest that stealing thunder in a crisis situation will result in higher credibility ratings, while Arpan and Pompper (2003) believe that stealing thunder will not only make the company more credible, but will also create more interest for the company's activities among the shareholders.

## ***2.2. Self-disclosure and the type of incident***

Incident refers to something that has happened in the past and is worthy to mention. While incident sounds negative, there are also positive events that we may also call incidents. Positive incidents can be like winning an award or news about improving operation conditions of labor. Negative incidents could involve harmful rumors or product malfunctions (Fennis & Stroebe, 2014). As previously discussed, it is extremely crucial to keep shareholders updated about the company actions; however, one still wants to make sure one does not create a boomerang effect as the shareholder might become skeptical about company's activities. While Fennis and Stroebe (2014) believe that stealing thunder by the company can help the company have more influence on what is being reported in the media, self-disclosure may help it to diminish the damage created during a crisis. One point that should be taken into account is that revealing positive incidents by the company may not always have a positive impact on the brand perception, and such revelation might consequently generate skepticism amongst shareholders.

While there has been enough attention for this matter in the past, different scholars are still in disagreement about the influences of the type of incident on brand perception. Dahlen and Lange(2006) claims a negative incident by the company will result in increasing brand perception and will have positive influence for company in general. Park and Lee (2013) at the other hand suggest that disclosing a negative incident will only lead to decreasing credibility and losing brand loyalty. Based on previous research done by different scholars like Dahlen and Lange(2006) or Bourgeois and Croyle (1993), the author does not agree with Park and Leer (2013). As Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005) claim, self-disclosure during a negative incident will lead to more credibility for the company and will also prevent any possible damage to the company's image (by third party disclosure).

Based on the previous studies about positive and negative scenario's and its effect on brand perception the following hypotheses will be tested:

*Hypothesis 1:Self-disclosure of a negative incident has a more positive effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to disclosure by a third party.*

*Hypothesis 2: Self-disclosure of a positive incident has a more negative effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to disclosure by a third party.*

### **2.3. Brand credibility and brand attitude**

According to Newell and Goldsmith (2001), "brand credibility is the extent to which consumers feel that the firm has the knowledge or ability to fulfill its claims and whether the firm can be trusted to tell the truth (or not)" (p.235). Fennis and Stroebe (2013) claim a "Company self-disclosure of negative information lessens damaging effects on consumer judgment and decision making" (p.109). Previous studies show that perception of brand trustworthiness demonstrates the effects of self-disclosure on consumer findings. Type of disclosure did not affect consumer responses for the companies with high reputation; however, self-disclosure lessened the impact of negative information compared to the third party for companies with poor reputation (Fennis & Stroebe, 2013). Perceived credibility of a firm is also an important factor for brand perception. Companies with negative credibility perceptions by customers will have difficulties stimulating demand, whether it's creating brand preferences or creating effective ads (Newell and Goldsmith, 2001).

Brand perception can be a person's attitude towards a certain brand. Consumers can have different attitude towards a brand, such as good/bad, pleasant/unpleasant and favorable/unfavorable (Newell and Goldsmith, 2001). Brand attitude refers to the consensus attitude of potential consumers towards a product or brand (Financial-dictionary, 2012). Furthermore, disclosure by the company itself or by a third party may also have influence on the consumers feeling towards the brand. Too much effort could create a scene of uncertainty among the shareholders (Coombs & Holladay, 2012). McDonald, Sparks and Glendon (2010) focused on how different types of incidents cause different emotional and attitudinal behavior among the stakeholders. The results showed that "confession" is the most favored crisis account and reduced responsibility judgment. "No comment" was also successful in softening negative situations and promoting positive reactions. Furthermore, the company's control of the situation was chosen as the most powerful tool to predict shareholders reaction to a certain situation.

## ***2.4. Comparison between the Netherlands and the US***

An incident that has been disclosed by a company or a third party does not always get interpreted the same by shareholders. We can understand and interpret the message differently based on our socio-cultural environmental exposure and prior experience with different social and environmental factors (Azmat & Zutshi, 2012). That is why it is important to investigate how different culture values will ultimately determine the meaning of the message received by shareholders. Kim and Reber (2008) concluded that the meaning could vary depending on different cultures and countries. Looking at the differences between The Netherlands and United States can help us understand the relationship between culture and meaning given by shareholders regarding certain messages disclosed by the companies or third parties.

It should also be mentioned that even the type of incident might be differently perceived in different cultures. Culture influences (like how a certain situation is interpreted and what is an acceptable reaction to that incident according to their norms and values) may be more crucial in one culture than in another (Levine, Park & Kim, 2007).

According to (Hofstede, 1984) United States is known for the high score in masculinity, meaning that its society is driven by competition, success, and achievements. These characteristics are well matched with U.S. citizens, as they are prone to be individualists and achieve their success all by their own means. In short, Americans strive for the best they can ever be. The Dutch on the other hand score very low on this dimension, meaning the Dutch society is known for their feminine values in society. This is seen through caring, compassion they have for one another and the immense regard they have for quality of life. In such a society it is always important to keep the life in balance. The Dutch are also known for resolving their conflicts through compromises and negotiations.

It should be mentioned that while this study focuses on different cultural values between The Netherlands and United States, the main focus lays on Masculinity vs. Femininity. The reason behind this choice is that these differences can be important to the meaning given to a certain message when stealing thunder, as the society with the higher rate of femininity generally rates the message and the sender of the message more positively than societies with higher rate of masculinity (Falbo, Hazen & Linimon, 1982). The reason behind these differences is because both societies differ in their focus and understanding towards a certain message. Since the feminine interests reflect a broader set of shareholders than the masculine interests, there will be a greater pressure in feminine societies for the firms to provide disclosure of a

broader set of activities (Smith, Adhikari & Tondkar, 2005). Therefore, disclosing a positive incident will bring increased profit to the brand perception. It should also be mentioned that according to previous studies done by different authors such as Hofstede (1984) '*Culture's Consequences*' the main difference between these two countries lays between the Masculinity vs. Femininity dimensions.

Based on the culture differences between these two countries the following hypotheses will be tested:

*Hypothesis 3: For a positive incident The Netherland as a feminine country show a higher a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to US as a masculine country.*

*Hypothesis 4: For a negative incident The Netherland as a feminine country show a lower a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to US as a masculine country.*

*Hypothesis 5: Self-disclosing of a positive incident has more negative effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude in The Netherland than in US.*

*Hypothesis 6: Self-disclosing of a negative incident has more positive effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude in The Netherland than in US.*

### 3.Method

In this chapter, the method chosen to answer the main question will be explained. The participants read one of the four designed scenarios. These scenarios are about a non-existing company called "Leno Oil Company". Based on the articles related to each scenario, the participants will fill in the survey.

#### 3.1. Design

An experiment is established for this quantitative study based on 2x2x2 factorial design. This design concerned the independent variables different type of disclosure (Company vs. third party), different type of incident (Good vs. bad) and country of residence of the respondents (NL vs. US). It should be mentioned that in order to be able to take a part in this study respondents did not need to have the nationality of that country. However, participants do need to be citizens of the country in question. The research framework will be constructed as following (Figure.1):

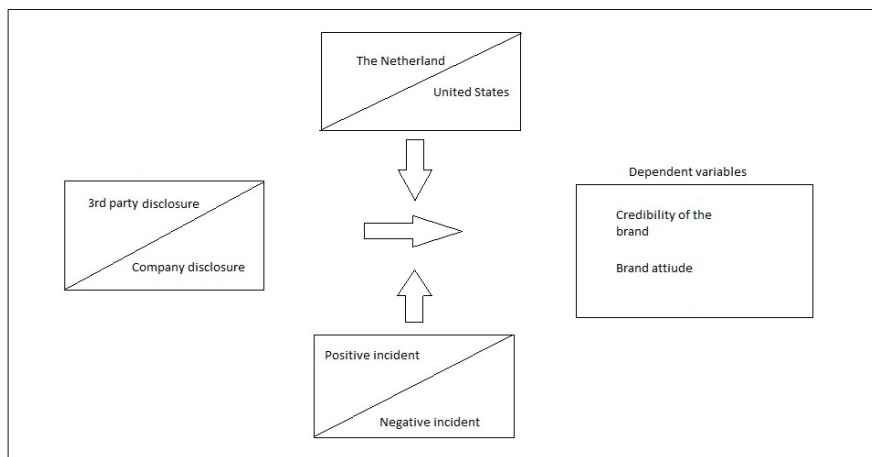


Figure.1. research framework

#### 3.2. Procedure

Each respondent was provided with a URL, which was made with an online questionnaire tool "qualtrics.com". Although there were four different scenarios available (There were no scenario's made based on country of residence), only one of those scenarios was made



available for the respondents. To make sure that the scenarios look as natural as regular Internet websites, the scenarios were presented in custom Internet pages. The online questionnaire could be filled out autonomously. All these scenarios were fictitious articles published on the "London Times" (The deliberate choice for the London Times was to ensure that the source of the message would be natural for both countries and would not have any influence in their interpretation of the message.), in which the incidents were referenced to a non-existing brand called "Leno Oil Company". The scenarios were different in type of disclosure (CEO of the company or a third party(UN)) and in type of incident (Positive incident [winning an award for contributing to a better environment] or negative award [winning an award for unsustainable companies]). At the closing stages, there were questions about different cultural aspects. These cultural aspects were divided into five parts: Masculinity, Power distance, Uncertainty Avoidance, Collectivism and Long-Term Orientation.

### ***3.3. Participants***

Snowball sampling was used to gather data for this research (snowball sampling is cheap and allows the researcher to reach populations that are difficult to sample). According to ("psychology.ucdavis.edu", 2014), snowball sampling is "achieved by asking a participant to suggest someone else who might be willing or appropriate for the study." Participants were then provided the link through social media such as Facebook, Twitter, etc. Each respondent was asked to fill in the survey and forward the survey to their social environment if possible. An example of the questionnaire can be found in appendix B.

Exactly 229 people participated in this study. The Netherlands being the most represented with 129 respondents equating to 56.3% of total respondents with the average age of 31,31 , SD=13,65. The US was second with 91 respondents (39.7%). The average age is 23,91, SD=7,16. Tables 1 and 2 give an overview of different sample characteristic of both countries.

Table.1. Distribution of age, gender, education and place of residence. The Netherlands

***Respondents/Sample characteristics for the Netherlands***

<b>Demographics</b>		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender	Male	55	42,6		
	Female	74	54,4		
Total		129	100		
Age				31.31	13.65
Education	Lower Vocational education	2	1,6		
	Vocational education	20	15,5		
	Bachelor degree	64	49,6		
	Master degree	43	33,3		
Total		129	100		

Table.2. Distribution of age, gender, education and place of residence. USA

***Respondents/Sample characteristics for the United States***

<b>Demographics</b>		<i>n</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Gender	Male	56	61,5		
	Female	35	38,5		
Total		91	100		
Age				23.91	7.16
Education	Lower Vocational education	5	5,5		
	Vocational education	12	13,2		
	Bachelor degree	61	67		
	Master degree	13	14,3		
Total		91	100		

### 3.4. Measures

Validated scales were formulated to measure participant's reactions. Earlier studies have created the validated scales, but some of these needed to be adjusted to correspond this research context. All variables were measured using a 7-point Likert scale. The complete version of the questionnaires can be found in Appendix B.

The scales for credibility and brand attitude were adopted from Newell and Goldsmith (2001). The scales for measuring power distance, uncertainty avoidance, collectivism, masculinity and long term orientation were adopted from Yoo, Donthu and Lenartowicz (2011). A complete list of scales can be found in Appendix C.

Measuring the construct credibility revealed that all the scales have achieved a reliability higher than 0,80, which is very ideal. Results can be found in table 3.

Table.3.reliability of measures.

1. Credibility	0.889
2. Brand attitude	0.979
3. Masculinity	0.809
4. Power distance	0.851
5. Uncertainty avoidance	0.868
6. Collectivism	0.924
7. Long-term orientation	0.806

### 3.5. Pre-test

In order to test the scenarios and to make sure that all scenarios had the desired effects we were looking for, a pre-test was conducted. The respondents were asked to read all four scenarios and to fill in some questions after each scenario. All scenarios were different in the type of disclosure (Company vs. Third party) and the type of incident (positive vs. negative). After all scenarios were recorded, there were questions (manipulation checks) asked of the participants to see whether or not they understood who disclosed the incident and what type of incident we were talking about.

To check the article credibility, a reliability analysis was conducted. All three items of article credibility achieve a very high consistency of  $\alpha = 0,968$ . For the manipulation check, a T-test was been conducted (a 7-point Likert scale has been used). Participants noticed when the incident described in the scenario was positive ( $M=6,07$ ,  $SD=1,1$ ), compared to the scenario in which the incident was negative ( $M= 1,74$ ,  $SD= 0,656$ ), with  $t = 18,307$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

### 3.6. Culture values

A T-test concerning the differences in cultures in both countries revealed the mean scores, standard deviations, t- and p-values displayed in table 4.

Table.4.Cultural values

Construct	<i>t</i>	<i>p-value</i>	Cultural values			
			NL		US	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Masculinity	3.58	.001	3.02	1.39	2.36	1.27
Power distance	-9.12	.001	2.35	0.89	3.68	1.27
Uncertainty avoidance	-5.31	.001	4.67	1.04	5.39	0.93
Collectivism	-6.35	.001	3.85	1.37	4.96	1.13
Long term orientation	-5.24	.001	5.39	0.71	5.96	0.89

-*Masculinity*: A higher mean score implies that the Dutch are less feminist compared to US.

-*Power distance*: The higher the mean value, the higher the power distance value. According to the results power distance is higher in US.

-*Uncertainty avoidance*: comparing the two mean values, one can conclude that uncertainty avoidance is much higher in US compared to Holland.

-*Collectivism*: looking at the collectivism one can conclude that the Dutch are much more individualist than US participants.

-*Long term orientation*: finally, one can conclude that US participants score higher looking at the long term orientation compared to Dutch.

### ***3.7. Manipulation check***

A T-test concerning the manipulation check showed that participants noticed who revealed company inner workings. Leno Oil company revealed the incident more frequently than ( $M= 5.26$ ,  $SD= 1.79$ ) scenarios in which the third party revealed the incident ( $M= 3.23$ ,  $SD= 2.14$ ) with  $t = 7.79$ ,  $p < .001$ . Participants also noticed when the incident described in the scenario was positive ( $M= 4.47$ ,  $SD= 2.09$ ) compared to the scenario in which the incident was negative for the company ( $M= 3.95$ ,  $SD= 2.32$ ), with  $t = 1.78$ ,  $p < .07$ .

## 4.Results

This chapter presents the analysis regarding the gathered data from the main study.

### 4.1. Main affects

Looking at the corporate credibility mean; one can conclude that both countries found the company more credible during a positive incident than a negative one. The results show that the Dutch find the company more credible than Americans in both positive and negative situations. It is also evident that the type of disclosure (self vs. third party) does not have much influence on the company credibility during different incidents according to the data.

To test for the existence of main effects, ANOVA was performed.

For disclosure there appeared to be no significant main effects for the attitude and the credibility. Results for this main effect can be found in table 5.

Table.5.Main effects for type of disclosure.

Construct	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	Disclosure			
			Company		Third Party	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Attitude	0.037	.847	3.61	1.69	3.56	1.85
Credibility	0.245	.621	3.81	1.37	3.72	1.38

\*\*\* Significant at 0.001; \*\* Significant at 0.01; \* Significant at 0.05

For type of incident there were main effects for both attitude and credibility. Results for this main effect can be found in table 6.

Table 6. Main affects for type of incident.

Construct	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	Incident			
			Positive		Negative	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Attitude	56.4	.000***	4.41	1.71	2.75	1.41
Credibility	26.193	.000***	4.21	1.42	3.30	1.15

\*\*\* Significant at 0.001; \*\* Significant at 0.01; \* Significant at 0.05

For the country of residence there were main effects for both attitude and credibility. Results for this main effect can be found in table 7.

Table 7. Main affects for country of residence.

Construct	<i>F</i>	<i>p-value</i>	Country			
			NL		US	
			<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Attitude	6.79	.010**	3.80	1.72	3.27	1.80
Credibility	33.99	.000***	4.17	1.32	3.20	1.25

\*\*\* Significant at 0.001; \*\* Significant at 0.01; \* Significant at 0.05

#### 4.2. Interaction effects

As previously mentioned, respondents from the Netherlands find the company more credible in both negative and positive incidents than the respondents from US. To make sure there was an interaction between the country of residence and the type of incident, a "Univariate analysis of variance" was conducted. Looking at the result, it is made known that  $F(1,212) = 5.65$ ,  $p = .018$ , indicating, that there is a significant interaction between the two factors. The nature of this interaction can be found in Figure 2.

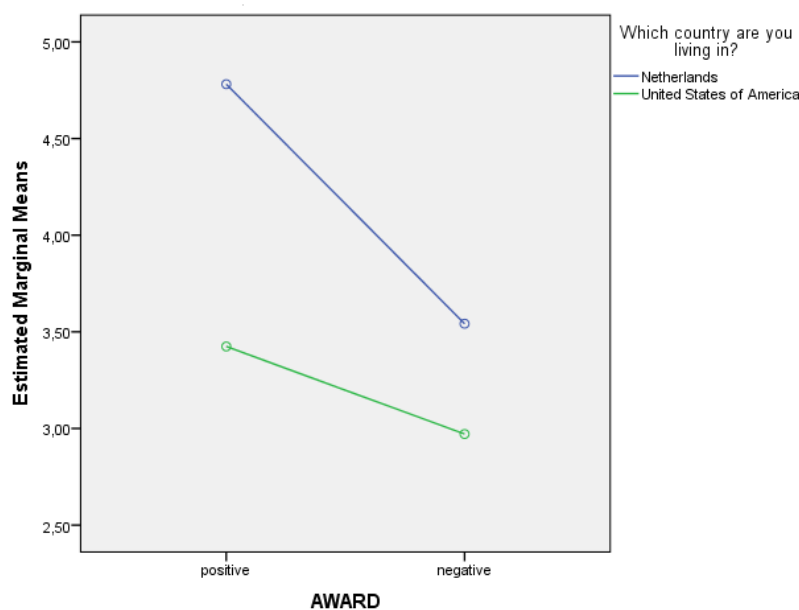


Figure.2. Interaction between country of residence and the type of award (credibility).

Looking at Figure 2 we can conclude that when the incident is positive (award=positive), the mean is much higher among the Dutch participants ( $M= 4.78$ ,  $SD= 1.16$ ) than among the US participants ( $M= 3.43$ ,  $SD= 1.40$ ). Looking at the negative incident (award=negative) one can conclude that the Dutch participants are much more sensitive for the type of incident ( $M=3.54$ ,  $SD=1.17$ ) than their US counterparts ( $M=2.69$ ,  $SD=1.05$ ).

*Looking at the corporation credibility the following conclusions can be made:*

-There are no interactions between the type of incident and the type of disclosure:

$F(1,212) = 0.137$ ,  $p = .712$ .

-There are also no interactions between the type of disclosure and the country of residence:

$F(1,212) = 0.085$ ,  $p = .770$ .

-There is an interaction between the type of incident and the country of residence:

$F(1,212) = 5.66$ ,  $p = .018$ .

To understand how the attitudes of participants develop when the type of incident is changing, another ANOVA was conducted. The results show that both countries are very positive towards the company when the award given to the company was positive (Both brand credibility and brand attitude are higher during a positive incident). It should be mentioned that the Dutch participants ( $M=4.79$ ,  $SD=1.53$ ) are even more positive towards the company than the US participants ( $M=3.85$ ,  $SD=1.81$ ). On the other hand, there are almost no differences between the two countries when the incident is negative. The means are almost similar, with Dutch participants ( $M=2.80$ ,  $SD=1.26$ ) and US participants ( $M=2.70$ ,  $SD= 1.61$ ). This means that in negative scenarios, both countries think similarly and threaten the company pretty much the same way (Both brand credibility and brand attitude are lower during a negative incident). In addition, there is a significant interaction between country of residence and the type of incident in this matter, as  $F(1,212) = 3.84$ ,  $p = .051$ . The nature of this interaction can be found in Figure 3.



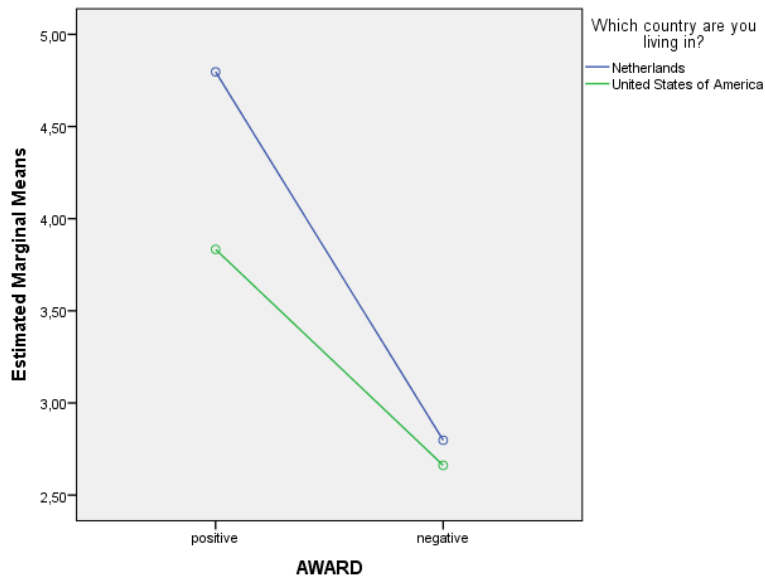


Figure.3. Interaction between country of residence and the type of award (attitude).

*Looking at the Attitude towards the company, the following conclusions can be made:*

-There are no interactions between the type of incident and the type of disclosure:

$$F(1,212) = 2.56, p = .111.$$

-There are also no interactions between the type of disclosure and the country of residence:

$$F(1,212) = 0.763, p = .383.$$

-There is an interaction between the type of incident and the country of residence:

$$F(1,212) = 3.84, p = .051.$$

Looking at the results the following can be concluded:

<i>Hypotheses:</i>	<i>Supported?</i>
<i>1:Self-disclosure of a negative incident has a more positive effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to disclosure by a third party.</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>2:Self-disclosure of a positive incident has a more negative effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to disclosure by a third party.</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>3:For a positive incident the Netherlands as a feminine country show a higher a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to the US as a masculine country.</i>	<i>Yes</i>
<i>Hypothesis 4:For a negative incident the Netherlands as a feminine country show a lower a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to the US as a masculine country.</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Hypothesis 5:Self-disclosing of a positive incident has a more negative effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude in the Netherlands than in the US.</i>	<i>No</i>
<i>Hypothesis 6: Self-disclosing of a negative incident has a more positive effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude in the Netherlands than in the US.</i>	<i>Yes</i>

*The next section will extensively clarify the reasons why some hypotheses were not supported.*

## 5. Discussions

In the introduction section the author has identified the research objective. Based on the available literature, it appeared that there is a limited knowledge about the relationship between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception. This ultimately led to the initiative of how this could be influenced by culture. Therefore this study focused on two different parts specifically:

1. How stealing thunder and the type of incident might have influence on brand perception
2. How culture can have influence on relationship between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception.

The research questions will be as following:

*-To what extent do stealing thunder and the type of incident influence the brand perception in the Netherlands and the United States?*

*- How is relationship between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception influenced by different cultural values of the Netherlands and the United States?*

In the following sections, the research questions and different hypotheses will be answered. The limitation and also the limitation in relation to new possibilities for future research will be discussed in the following passage as well. This paper will finish with conclusion.

Different analysis has been conducted to help us find answers to our main questions and different hypotheses.

Hypothesis one predicted that self-disclosure of a negative incident has a more positive effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to disclosure by a third party. The attained results are not in line with the findings of Dahlen and Lange (2006), Fennis and Stroebe (2014). Dahlen and Lange (2006) found out that disclosing a negative incident by the company itself would result in a higher brand perception. Meanwhile, Fennis and Stroebe (2014) state that self-disclosing a negative incident will positively influence the perceived integrity of the brand compared with third party disclosure of the same incident. These results are on the other hand in line with the findings of Park and Lee (2013) who suggested that disclosing a negative incident will only lead to decreasing credibility and losing brand loyalty.

Results show that the self-disclosing of a negative incident has a more negative effect on a) brand perception and b) brand attitude which results in rejecting this hypothesis. Receiving the public eye award describe how unsustainable the company is. Participants subsequently perceived Leno Oil Company as a weak and unreliable company. Consequently, when the Leno Oil Company revealed the negative incident itself, it made the company seem even more unreliable, resulting in lower brand credibility and brand attitude.

Hypothesis two predicted that self-disclosure of a positive incident has a more negative effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to disclosure by a third party. Looking at the results, one can conclude that hypothesis two was not supported. These results are not in line with the previous studies such as Holder-Webb, Cohen, Nath and Wood (2009) which claim that the company that discloses the incident may receive credit; however, reporting a positive incident is less successful, creating distrust and skepticism as the efforts may look untrustworthy and too good to be true. Results show that the self-disclosing of a positive incident has a more positive effect on a) brand perception and b) brand attitude which results in rejecting this hypothesis. Receiving the Energy Globe award - awarded to those companies that considerably contribute to bettering the environment- made participants perceive Leno Oil Company as highly reliable in the public eye. Thusly, when the Leno Oil Company disclosed the positive incident itself, it made the company even more reliable, resulting in higher brand credibility and brand attitude.

Hypothesis three predicted that, for a positive incident The Netherlands as a feminine country show a higher a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to US as a masculine country. Looking at the results, one can conclude that the hypothesis three can be considered as supported. The results are in the line with previous findings done by different scholars such as Park and Kim (2007) and Hofstede (1984). Park and Kim (2007) believe that the type of incidents might be differently perceived in different cultures, which is well visible in our findings. Results show that the Netherlands as a feminine country, which is in line with the findings of Hofstede (1984) show a higher a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to US as a masculine country. Societies with higher rates of femininity generally rate the message and the sender of the message more positively than societies with higher rates of masculinity (Falbo, Hazen & Linimon, 1982).

Subsequently, a positive incident will show a higher brand credibility and brand attitude in feminine society.

Hypothesis four predicted that, for a negative incident the Netherlands as a feminine country show a lower a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude compared to US as a masculine country. Looking at the results, one can conclude that the hypothesis four can be considered as not supported. While looking at the previous studies such as Park and Kim (2007) and Hofstede (1984) and also the previous hypothesis (3) one would have expected that brand credibility and brand attitude would be lower in the Netherlands than in the US during a negative incident (because of differences in femininity and masculinity in both countries), both a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude are higher in the Netherlands than in US which result in rejecting hypothesis four. According to our results, the Netherlands is a more masculine country than the US. As Hofstede (1998) states, masculine societies emphasize career and financial goals more so than feminine societies. This could be the reason why both a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude are higher in the Netherlands than in US during a negative incident.

Hypothesis five predicted that self-disclosing of a positive incident has a more negative effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude in the Netherlands than in US. Looking at the results, one can conclude that hypothesis five can be considered as not supported. The results show that Dutch are in general more positive than US participants towards the brand credibility and brand attitude, when the incident that has been disclosed by the company is considered as positive. This is against previous findings done by for instance Holder-Webb, Cohen, Nath and Wood (2009) which claim that self-disclosing a positive incident would be less successful and will result in negative effect on brand perception. An explanation for this outcome could lie in fact that according to Smith, Adhikari and Tondkar (2005) feminine societies expect to hear more detailed and revealing information from company disclosures. Therefore, divulging a positive incident will bring more profit to the brand perception in feminine societies, as people in these societies demand more from disclosures than in masculine societies.

Hypothesis six predicted that self-disclosing of a negative incident has a more positive effect on a) brand credibility and b) brand attitude in The Netherlands than in US. Looking at the results, one can conclude that the hypothesis six can be considered as supported. Results show that even though brand credibility and brand attitude are not that high, that in The Netherlands, when a company discloses a negative incident itself compared to in the US, it still has more a positive effect on both credibility and attitude compared to US. This is in line

with previous findings by Smith, Adhikari and Tondkar (2005) as they claim that feminine societies expect in-depth revelations from disclosures. The self-disclosure of a negative incident will in turn yield higher brand credibility and brand attitude compared to the masculine societies.

Looking at our first main question:

*-To what extent do stealing thunder and the type of incident influence the brand perception in the Netherlands and the United States?*

According to the results, when companies self-disclose the incident, both credibility and attitude towards the company will be higher. Scholars such as Dahlen and Lange (2006), Fennis Stroebe (2014), Holder-Webb, Cohen, Nath and Wood (2009) all believed this as well. Having said that, it also appears that attitude towards the company during positive incident is much higher than during the negative incidents. This is against the previous findings by scholars such as Holder-Webb and Cohen, Nath and Wood (2009) Holder-Webb, Cohen, Nath and Wood (2009) state that reporting a positive incident might create distrust and skepticism among the shareholders.

While author (based on previous studies) expected that self-disclosure of a negative incident will lead to a higher credibility, thus resulting in a better brand perception, the results show that both countries consider the company more credible when they self-disclose a positive incident. It can be concluded that during an incident, it is important that the company discloses the incident itself. This gives the company the opportunity to guide the news, making sure that the damage done to the reputation of the company remains limited. It doesn't matter if the incident is positive or negative, as long as the company discloses the incident itself, because both credibility and attitude towards the company will be higher. It should also be noted that even though previous studies found that self-disclosing a positive incident may cause distrust among the shareholders, this is not always the case. In this study, the brand attitude and brand credibility during positive incident are much higher than during the negative incidents.

The second main question was as following:

*- How is relationship between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception influenced by different cultural values of the Netherlands and the United States?*

Looking back at the figures 2 and 3, we can realize that while there are differences between results in both countries, both countries still evaluate this issue in the same way. As stated earlier, this goes against previous findings by scholars such as Kim and Reber (2008) and Azmat and Zutshi (2012). They believed that people in different countries would evaluate and interpret various scenarios differently. On the other hand, while brand perception is much higher in both countries during a positive incident and to self-disclosure, there are still some differences viable. It seems that Dutch are more positive and evaluate the brand credibility and brand attitude much higher than Americans. On the other hand, it seems that both countries evaluate brand perception the same during a negative incident as shown by the score (which is significantly lower). In conclusion, even though the results show that both countries evaluate the company the same way(during a positive or negative incident), culture still has a significant influence on stealing thunder and the type of incident. While both countries evaluate the company the same way, there are differences visible in their findings. It appears that the Dutch in general are more positive towards the company, when the incident disclosed by the company is positive and are less negative towards the company, when the disclosed incident is negative.

## **6. Recommendation**

### ***6.1. Theoretical implications***

This contribution of this study to the scientific community and how the researchers would benefit from it are impactful and revealing. This study reveals several practical applications worthy of mention. Findings of this study offer insight on relationship between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception. The findings also show how much influence culture can have on them. It should be mentioned that this study was unfortunately not able to completely fulfill the aim of this research. This was because the differences between the cultures were not as significant as the author anticipated before start of this research.

The conclusions made in this study are mostly against findings in prior studies. In general, most researchers believe that self-disclosing a negative incident would result in higher brand perception; conversely, it is better for companies to not disclose a positive incident themselves. This study shows however, that self-disclosure will result in a higher brand perception no matter what the type of incident is. These differences offer new insights into the future research on the type of disclosure and the type of incident.

This study also focused on differences between masculine and feminine societies and how they would influence brand perception, a focus that was not particularly highlighted in previous findings. Deductively, it is known that brand perception is in general higher in a feminine society than in masculine one. These differences offer new insights into future research on differences in societies and it's influence on brand perception.

### ***6.2. Practical implications***

The next part focuses on the fact that all these findings may affect the companies and how they should act in response. First of all, as we have discussed earlier, self-disclosure will result in higher credibility regardless of the type of incident. Therefore, it can be recommended that companies should disclose the incident themselves and never wait for the third party to do so. Self-disclosure may lead to more credibility and trust among the shareholders, thus giving the company the possibility to lead the message and gain the desired effect.

While previous studies done by people like Holder-Webb, Cohen, Nath and Wood (2009)



suggested that it is better for the company to not self-disclose positive incident, this study suggests that self-disclosing a positive incident can be more advantageous. Therefore it can be recommended to the companies to self-disclose the positive incident themselves so the company and brand perception is superior than during negative incidents. Results have shown that the type of incident (type of award) has direct influence on brand perception as participants perceived the company to be more reliable when it disclosed a positive incident. The company was considered less reliable when it disclosed a negative incident.

Through the results it can also be recommended that when a company wants to disclose an incident or let it be disclosed by a third party, it should also pay attention to different culture values that are present in that country. Therefore companies need to evaluate and ascertain specific cultural aspects and values. With this knowledge, companies should adjust their disclosing strategy to specific countries to make sure they can gain the maximum benefit out of it.

Finally, companies should realize whether or not the society they are dealing with is feminine or masculine. Feminine societies are more willing to analyze daily activities of a company and are usually less skeptical when a company decides to disclose a positive incident itself.

### ***6.3. Limitation and future research***

Certain limits hindered further research. The first point and most important factor, according to the author, is the similarity between the two cultures. At the beginning of this research, the expectations were somehow different than the final results we gathered. According to previous studies, "The Netherlands" scores low at masculinity while "The US" on the other hand, scores fairly high. Looking at the results, we understand that masculinity scores among the US participants were even lower than the Dutch and are not comparable with our view of the United States, according to previous studies. The reason behind these differences can be that US participants were mostly from California with very different backgrounds. This difference also leads to a drastically different line of thinking from the other states in America. It can be inferred that the diversity of the population can result in an increased femininity of culture.

For future and further investigation, it is important to keep in mind, which states are similar to Europe (in their way of thinking) and which are vastly different. Choosing other states (less

similar or relatable to European culture) will help the researcher to understand the differences between the countries easier and will sketch a better view.

The second point of view was gathering data in US. Because I was only able to approach people in United States through social media (such as: Facebook, Twitter, Skype and FaceTime) as well as by phone, it was quite difficult to convince them to take a part in this study. It took a lot of time to convince them to fill in the online surveys. Lacking personal contact made it even more difficult to collect the data. As this was a survey, another bias was that people could answer questions incorrectly.

Future research should focus on other channels to contact people from different countries as the more people being surveyed in different state and countries can reduce biases significantly. Being able to use different channels makes it easier for the researcher to reach people and at a broader community. This will tremendously ease the gathering data process; facilitating researchers create a general picture of the existing situation.

Quantitative research methods have been used in this study to provide the author the possibility to gather as much data in a short time. Even though this method was much simpler to use, as the author did not have access to both countries at the same time, it has its own limitations. Future research should use both quantitative as well as a qualitative research method to create a general picture of the existing situation. Qualitative research will provide more in depth detail, creates openness, and simulates people's individual experiences as well as helping to avoid any pre-made judgments or biases. Quantitative data analyses are much more limited as they provide less elaborate accounts of human perception. The other problem is the fact that the data is not able to reflect on how people really think about a certain situation. Using both methods at the same time can help us find unlimited data as well as the needed explanation and reason behind each answer.

The last point of consideration is the manipulative nature of context that has been used in each scenario. While using this method can help us avoid the potential biases created by different variables, it also has its downsides. The author suggests that future research should focus on using scenarios based on real context. Scenarios based on real context might lead to different results, facilitating the understanding of real explanations behind the data gathered.

## 7. Conclusions

This study mainly explored the relationship between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception and how different cultural values could play a role in this relationship between the Netherlands and the United States. While in previous studies, most researchers claimed that it is better for the brand perception that companies disclose a negative incident themselves rather than let the positive incident be disclosed by a third party, results founded in this study are not in line with those findings. According to this study it is better for the brand perception that the company disclose the incident itself. It does not matter what kind of incident the company is dealing with, as long as the companies discloses the incident themselves, both brand credibility and brand attitude will increase. It should also be mentioned that the results show that brand credibility and brand perception are much higher during a positive incident (when disclosed by the company itself).

Lastly, the results show that culture has a significant influence on the relationship between stealing thunder and the type of incident on brand perception. While both countries evaluate brand attitude and brand credibility the same way (during positive and negative incidents), there are very apparent and distinct differences. It appears that the Dutch, in general, are more positive towards the company when the incident disclosed by the company is positive. And conversely are less negative towards the company when the disclosed incident is negative.

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# Appendices

## Appendix.A. Example of a scenario

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The Public Eye Award is awarded to companies that stand for tremendous misconduct of health and safety, environmental and social projects and that demonstrate no effort for responsible resource development.

The Public Eye Award highlights the social and economic consequences of the behavior of large corporations.

The goal of this award is to hold corporations accountable for their irresponsible business practices worldwide – no matter where these wrong-doings occur.

Leno Oil Company is one of the major oil producers in the world. While Leno Oil Company is a global organization, they are located in many different developing countries around the world.

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## ***Appendix.B. Questionnaire***

*Dear respondent,*

*Thank you for your cooperation regarding this survey. In the following you will see a newspaper article about an oil company receiving an award. Please, take your time to read the article carefully. Your opinion, feelings and attitude will be questioned, not your knowledge, so there are no right or wrong answers. The survey will take approximately 20 minutes to fill out and you can interrupt at any time. The results of this survey cannot be traced back to an individual respondent.*

*Please be aware that when you press start and start this questionnaire, you agree to participate in this study.*

*Kind regards,*

*Amir Eslami*

*Student Marketing Communication Science University of Twente*

1. What is your gender? (Demographic)

☐ Male

☐ Female

2. What is your age? (Demographic)

☐ 0 - 100

3. Which country are you living in? (Demographic)

☐ Netherlands

☐ United States of America



4. What is your highest level of education? (Demographic)

- ☐ Elementary School
- ☐ Lower vocational education
- ☐ Vocational education
- ☐ Bachelor degree
- ☐ University degree

5. Who is the sender of this information message? (Manipulation check)

- ☐ Leno Oil Company
- ☐ Third party

Please indicate, to what extent you agree with the following statements. (7 point Likert scale)

6. Leno Oil Company revealed the winning of the prize itself. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

7. The incident described in the article is positive for Leno Oil Company. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

8. Winning such a prize changes the image of Leno Oil Company. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

9. Winning this prize affects the reputation of Leno Oil Company. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

10. Leno Oil Company is responsible for receiving the prize. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

11. The article you just read is

- ☐ Very untrustworthy/ Very trustworthy
- ☐ Very unreliable/ Very reliable
- ☐ Very non-credible/ Very credible

What is your opinion about the following sentences? (7 point Likert scale) (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001) (Dependent variable: Corporate credibility)

12. Leno Oil Company has a great amount of experience. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

13. Leno Oil Company is skilled in what they do. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

14. Leno Oil Company has great expertise. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

15. Leno Oil Company does not have much experience. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

16. I trust the Leno Oil Company. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)
17. The Leno Oil Company makes truthful claims. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)
18. The Leno Oil Company is honest. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)
19. I do not believe what Leno Oil Company tells me. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

20. My overall impression of the Leno Oil Company is:

☐ Bad/Good

☐ Unfavorable/Favorable

☐ Unsatisfactory/Satisfactory

*As this research is taking place in several countries, this part is about your personal and cultural assumptions.*

Please indicate, to what extent you agree with the following statements. (7 point Likert scale)  
( Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011) (Moderator: culture, Fem vs. Mas)

21. It is more important for men to have a professional career than it is for women. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)
22. Men usually solve problems with logical analysis; women usually solve problems with intuition. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)
23. Solving difficult problems usually requires an active, forcible approach, which is typical of men. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)
24. There are some jobs that a man can always do better than a woman. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

Please indicate, to what extent you agree with the following statements. (7 point Likert scale)  
( Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011) (Moderator: culture, Power Distance)

25. People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)
26. People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)
27. People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)
28. People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

29. People in higher positions should not delegate important tasks to people in lower positions. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

Please indicate, to what extent you agree with the following statements. (7 point Likert scale)

( Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011) (Moderator: culture, Uncertainty Avoidance)

30. It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I'm expected to do. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

31. It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

32. Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

33. Standardized work procedures are helpful. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

34. Instructions for operations are important. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

Please indicate, to what extent you agree with the following statements. (7 point Likert scale)

( Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011) (Moderator: culture, Collectivism)

35. Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

36. Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

37. Group welfare is more important than individual rewards. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

38. Group success is more important than individual success. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

39. Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

40. Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

Please indicate, to what extent you agree with the following statements. (7 point Likert scale)

( Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011) (Moderator: culture, Long-Term Orientation)

41. Careful management of money (Thrift). (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

42. Going on resolutely in spite of opposition (Persistence). (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

43. Personal steadiness and stability. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

44. Long-term planning. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

45. Giving up today's fun for success in the future. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

46. Working hard for success in the future. (Strongly disagree...Strongly agree)

*I want to stay informed of the final results of this study*

☐ No

☐ Yes (fill in your email address please)

*This is the end of the questionnaire.*

*Thank you for your participation!*

*The results will be treated confidentially. Both the article above as well as the company name were fictitious and are specifically designed for this study.*

## ***Appendix.C. Measurement scales***

### Credibility (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001)

[1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree]

1. Leno Oil Company has a great amount of experience.
2. Leno Oil Company is skilled in what they do.
3. Leno Oil Company has great expertise.
4. Leno Oil Company does not have much experience. (R)
5. I trust the Leno Oil Company.
6. The Leno Oil Company makes truthful claims.
7. The Leno Oil Company is honest.
8. I do not believe what Leno Oil Company tells me. (R)

### Brand attitude (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001)

[1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree]

My overall impression of the Leno Oil Company is:

1. Bad/Good
2. Unfavorable/Favorable
3. Unsatisfactory/Satisfactory

### Masculinity vs. Femininity (Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011)

[1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree]

1. It is more important for men to have a professional career than it is for women.
2. Men usually solve problems with logical analysis; women usually solve problems with intuition.
3. Solving difficult problems usually requires an active, forcible approach, which is typical of men.
4. There are some jobs that a man can always do better than a woman.

#### Power distance (Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011)

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[1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree]

1. People in higher positions should make most decisions without consulting people in lower positions.
2. People in higher positions should not ask the opinions of people in lower positions too frequently.
3. People in higher positions should avoid social interaction with people in lower positions.
4. People in lower positions should not disagree with decisions by people in higher positions.

#### Uncertainty Avoidance (Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011)

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[1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree]

1. It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I'm expected to do.
2. It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures.
3. Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me.
4. Standardized work procedures are helpful and necessary.
5. Instructions for operations are important.

#### Collectivism (Yoo, Donthu & Lenartowicz, 2011)

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[1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree]

1. Individuals should sacrifice self-interest for the group.
2. Individuals should stick with the group even through difficulties.
3. Group welfare is more important than individual rewards.
4. Group success is more important than individual success.
5. Individuals should only pursue their goals after considering the welfare of the group.
6. Group loyalty should be encouraged even if individual goals suffer.

[1=strongly disagree; 7=strongly agree]

1. Careful management of money (Thriftiness).
2. Going on resolutely in spite of opposition (Persistence) .
3. Personal steadiness and stability.
4. Long-term planning.
5. Giving up today's fun for success in the future.
6. Working hard for success in the future.