

**ORGANIZATIONS IN CONTROL:
BEING PROACTIVE MEANS BEING
TRUSTWORTHY**

EXAMINING THE COMBINATION OF CRISIS TIMING, PRE-
CRISIS REPUTATION AND CRISIS TYPE ON CUSTOMERS'
JUDGEMENT OF AN ORGANIZATION

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MASTERTHESIS

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ABSTRACT

AIM. In most organizational crisis situations, organizations have to decide whether or not to disclose the crisis. More specifically, they have to decide when to communicate in order to minimize the harm to the organization's reputation. When an organization steals thunder, it breaks the news about its own crisis before a third party discloses it. The primary goal of this study was to determine the impact of this proactive crisis timing strategy on how an organization in crisis is judged by the customers in terms of ability, benevolence, integrity, forgiveness, and purchase intention compared with the reactive crisis timing strategy. To extend the research, the impact of pre-crisis reputation and crisis type on the dependent measures were taken into consideration as well. As a consequence, the research examined the combined effect of crisis timing with pre-crisis reputation and crisis type.

METHOD. Consequently, it resulted in a 2 (crisis timing: stealing thunder or thunder) x 2 (pre-crisis reputation: positive or negative) x 2 (crisis type: product or moral) between-subject design. In total 321 respondents were assigned to one of the eight conditions. The data were collected by using an online questionnaire. The respondents were exposed to a hypothetical crisis message and afterwards they had to indicate their attitude and behavioural intention towards the organization.

RESULTS. The results confirmed a higher main outcome for stealing thunder and a positive pre-crisis reputation on all the dependent measures in comparison with thunder and a negative pre-crisis reputation. Besides, results demonstrated a significant difference between the product and moral crisis type. A product crisis showed a significant higher value for integrity in comparison with the moral crisis. Although the moral crisis showed significantly higher values for ability and purchase intention than the product crisis. Further, there were significant interaction effects found for crisis timing with pre-crisis reputation and crisis type. Stealing thunder together with a positive pre-crisis reputation resulted in more positive outcomes for integrity, forgiveness and purchase intention. The outcomes for benevolence and purchase intention were significantly higher for stealing thunder together with a product crisis type.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION. This study gave valuable insight in the direct effects of crisis timing, pre-crisis reputation and crisis type. Moreover, the contingency effects of proactive crisis timing were taken into consideration. The combination of variables has not been examined before, thereby the research created a valuable contribution to crisis communication literature.

CONCLUSION. The current research supported that being proactive is an effective strategy for organizations experiencing a crisis. The combination with a positive pre-crisis reputation and product crisis softened consumers' judgement of an organization more in comparison with a negative pre-crisis reputation and moral crisis.

KEYWORDS: CRISIS MANAGEMENT; STEALING THUNDER; CRISIS TYPE; PRE-CRISIS REPUTATION; TRUSTWORTHINESS

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1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 GENERAL CONTEXT

It is not that long ago that sportswear company Nike received negative publicity for its child labour practices to the point of harming the company's image and hurting sales. Nike admits that they 'blew it' by employing children. Nike has managed to turn its image around, but large parts of the industry still have not changed (Business Insider, 2013). More recently, clothing brands such as Primark, C&A and H&M have been associated with child labour (SOMO & ICN, 2012). Another type of crisis in fashion industry is the use of toxic chemicals in clothing items. An examination of Greenpeace revealed that Zara had the most toxic chemicals in their clothing (Greenpeace, 2012; NOS, 2012). As these examples illustrated, a crisis could be related to values of the organization, child labour, or performance of the product, chemicals in clothing. In the mentioned crisis situations, the accused companies only confirm they do not support it or decided not to respond. But what if, the organization itself reveals the bad news. In other words, is proactive disclosure of information a viable strategy for a company to lessen the damage of a crisis? In addition, to what extent does the damage for an organization differ based on the reputation of the organization before the crisis and the type of crisis its involved in?

1.2 LEGAL CONTEXT

Research in law demonstrates that a crisis lessens reputational damage if the organization is the first to report the crisis. The research of Williams, Bourgeois and Croyle (1993) indicated that convicted suspects who revealed incriminating evidence first, and thereby took responsibility for their actions, were punished less frequently and severely for an offense than if the prosecutor introduced the negative information about the defendant. Besides, the suspect was judged more believable and was found less guilty (Dolnik, Case & Williams, 2003; Williams et al., 1993). Scholars suggest that the successful management of an organization in crisis also largely depends on what it says and does after the crisis hits (Benoit, 1997; Brown & White, 2011; Coombs, 2007). Organizations faced with the prospect of negative publicity can choose to wait for the information to be divulged by third parties or to self-disclose (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). Stealing thunder implies the fastest and most proactive approach to crisis communication and will be further examined in organizational crisis context.

1.3 RESEARCH PARADOX

When organizations face a crisis, they can choose to proactively release the crisis information. Stealing thunder might seem counterintuitive (Coombs, 2014). Managers might shiver at the thought of becoming the object of a stream of negative news stories (Fennis & Stroebe, 2014). Besides, there is a chance others may never find out. However, crisis information is distributed very swiftly (Palen, Vieweg, Liu & Hughes, 2009). In our networked world, the public is able to interact through social media with the medium and more importantly with each other (Winer, 2009). As a consequence, traditional sources of information lose control over the content and distribution of the message. The lack of a filter contributes to the potential of social media to develop a seemingly small-scale risk into a full-blown crisis (Chung, 2011). Moreover, if stakeholders find out that the organization consciously was hiding the crisis, it might create the impression of not caring about the safety of their stakeholders. Stakeholders are any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organization's objectives (Freeman, 1984). A lack of regard for stakeholder safety will intensify the damage a crisis inflicts of an organization. Therefore, the issue of how to respond and limit the crisis' damaging impact is a pivotal one for the survival of an organization. Prior research not only suggests that self-disclosure results in more positive evaluations (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005), it also shows that it leads to suspicion (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). The present study examines if proactive crisis management affects customers' judgement of an organization in a more positive way than a reactive approach.

1.4 CONTINGENCY

Furthermore, it is still unclear how the effects of crisis timing strategies are contingent. The contingency theory attempts to understand organizational issues from a contextual perspective. Applying this theory to our research, it means that determining how crisis timing impacts customers' judgement needs an analysis of the specific context. Therefore, pre-crisis reputation, positive and negative, and two crisis types, product and moral, are selected. These factors determine an organization's responsibility in a crisis according to the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) of Coombs (2007). As a consequence, there is the opportunity to test the combined effects of crisis timing, pre-crisis reputation and crisis type. The various effects are measured on the dependent measures trustworthiness, forgiveness and purchase intention. First, trustworthiness is selected, because it is a strong determinant of customers' attitudes toward an organization (Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Trust may also shield the organization from the negative consequences of its actions that violate customers' expectations (Johar, Birk & Einwiller, 2010). Besides, research suggests that organizations are seen as more credible when the public learn of the crises from the organization itself (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Second, forgiveness is selected, because it is a relational concept which plays a pivotal role in reducing conflicts and restoring interpersonal relationships (Moon & Rhee, 2012). An essential goal in crisis management is that stakeholders will continue their relationships with the organization after a crisis. Third, purchase intention is selected, because it focuses on behavioural intention instead of a person's cognition or attitude. Behavioural intention is viewed as a signal whether customers will remain with or defect from the company (Zeithaml, Berry & Parasuraman, 1996). Besides, research confirms that stealing thunder leads to supportive behaviour from customers to purchase their products (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005).

1.5 RESEARCH CONTRIBUTION

This study contributes to the research field of crisis communication in several ways. First, a crisis can strike any company at any time and their ability to respond well to the crisis is what sets the organization apart (Vassilikopoulou, Lepetsos, Siomkos & Chatzipanagiotou, 2009). It is meaningful to know how the blow of negative information on customers' responses could be softened by stealing thunder. The impact of crisis timing strategies has received only little research attention so far (Claeys, Cauberghe & Leysen, 2013). Second, this study adds value by examining not only the main effects of crisis timing, but of pre-crisis reputation and crisis type as well. Introducing those independent variables extends prior research on the evaluation of crisis timing, because there is the opportunity to test the combined effect. Third, this study assesses how customers, key organizational stakeholders, judge the organization in crisis. Coombs (2012a) argues that perception of stakeholders is the key to design effective communication strategies repairing the relationship. Trustworthiness, forgiveness and purchase intention are essential elements to indicate the value customers place on the relationship with the organization. In general, the combination of variables has not been examined before, thereby the research creates a valuable contribution to crisis communication literature.

1.6 RESEARCH GOAL

In summary, the primary contribution is to give more insight into the effects of crisis timing in combination with pre-crisis reputation and crisis type on trustworthiness, forgiveness and purchase intention. The overall research question will be: To what extent do the outcome values of crisis timing (stealing thunder or thunder) together with pre-crisis reputation (positive or negative) and crisis type (product or moral) differ for customers' judgement of the organization in terms of trustworthiness, forgiveness and purchase intention?

1.7 OVERVIEW

In order to answer the research questions thoroughly, this study will be pursuing the following approach. The theoretical framework will be presented in chapter two, to provide the rationale for

conducting this research. Chapter three will focus on the operationalization of the research method. Chapter four will describe the results and how the data were analysed, while the results will be explained in chapter five the discussion. Chapter six will contain implications of the research results in theoretical and practical sense. The limitations and suggestions for future research will be presented in chapter seven. This study will end with the final conclusion.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 ORGANIZATIONAL CRISIS

2.1.1 DEFINITION

This study focuses on the organizational crisis context. Pearson and Clair (1998) take an organizational perspective and define a crisis as: “a low-probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organization and is characterized by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly” (p. 60). Specifically, organizational crises are highly ambiguous situations, to have a low probability of occurring but, nevertheless, pose a major threat to the survival of an organization. Scholars have argued that crises should not be solely defined as devastating events and the definition of crisis should include publics’ perception, as it can greatly affect crisis outcomes (Moon & Rhee, 2012). For instance, Coombs (2012a) defines crisis as “the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens the organization’s performance and generates negative outcomes” (p.2). He advocates that perception is the key to design effective communication strategies to maintain or repair the relationship. The SCCT of Coombs (2007) is a dominant crisis theory that identifies how key facets of the crisis situation influence attributions about the crisis and the perception of the organization held by stakeholders. Based on Weiner’s (1985) attribution theory, depending on the intensity of crisis responsibility attribution, the different crises could be clustered into three: victim, accidental, and intentional. Attribution of responsibility is weak in a victim cluster as the crisis is beyond the organization’s control, while it is minimal when the crisis is accidental. Attribution of responsibility is the highest if stakeholders believe the organization did not do anything to prevent the crisis.

2.1.2 CONSEQUENCES

A crisis is a critical situation that, if mishandled, can inflict serious damage on the organization. In general, there are three potential threats a crisis can inflict on an organization and its stakeholders, namely public safety, financial loss and reputation damage (Coombs, 2015). A crisis might result in questioning the organizational trustworthiness or ability to maintain its legitimacy (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). The foremost goal of crisis communication therefore is to restore the reputation of the organization and the trust of their stakeholders. To minimize the negative effects, organizations should put effort to reassure stakeholders that they are trustworthy. For example, organizations frame their messages to influence the public opinion about the organization. Concepts such as the public’s acceptance of messages and organizational reputation were frequently posited in previous research as outcome variables influenced by crisis communication messages (Moon & Rhee, 2012). However, there is limited research about how stakeholders process negative information and how organizations develop strategies to combat its effects (Xie & Peng, 2009). This study is primarily used to understand organization’s processes that underlie stakeholders’ attitudes and behaviour.

2.1.3 CRISIS COMMUNICATION

Crisis management provides guidance for crisis managers in order to limit the harm the crisis can inflict. It represents a set of factors designed to help organizations combat crises and to lessen the actual damage inflicted (Coombs, 2012a). A critical component of crisis management is communication (Coombs, 2012b; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Spence et al., 2014). Crisis communication is defined as “the collection, processing, and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation” (Coombs, 2012b, p. 20). In practical sense, it is essential for an organization in crisis to know when to communicate to prevent any form of potential damage to both the public and itself. Considering this, it is important to understand how communication tactics within an organization’s control affect stakeholders’ perceptions of the organization (Spence et al., 2014). In that line, it is also valuable for an organization to consider the ramifications of stakeholders receiving information from other sources. Scholars emphasize the timing of the release of information during crises (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Timely communication is critical as various stakeholders demand immediate

and thorough response from an organization in crisis (Seeger, 2006). Such communication, in the form of various crisis response strategies, shapes stakeholders' attribution of crisis responsibility and their attitude and behaviour towards the organization (Coombs, 2012). Crisis timing is a tactic within an organizations' control that might help to combat the negative effects of a crisis.

2.2 CRISIS TIMING

2.2.1 STEALING THUNDER

Stealing thunder, or being the first to reveal negative information about oneself, has been widely used in legal contexts. It refers to situations in which a defence attorney will bring up a weakness before the opposing counsel does. In courtroom context, Williams and colleagues (1993) argue that it results in significantly lower probabilities of guilt. Researchers in organizational context adopted this approach and stress the importance of proactive crisis communication as well (e.g. Arpan & Pompper, 2003; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). In organizational context, stealing thunder is defined as: "when an organization steals thunder, it breaks the news about its own crisis before the crisis is discovered by the media or other interested parties" (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005, p. 425). Conversely, thunder or reactive communication is known as when another party breaks the news about the crisis situation.

2.2.2 EFFECTS

Stealing thunder has been criticized for several reasons. Arpan and Pompper (2003) assert that when an organization steals thunder, the act can be seen as disguising the real facts. The media will be suspicious and pay more attention to the crisis. Besides, in trying to defend their threatened legitimacy, organizations can be convincing too much, which may trigger the customers to perceive the organization as manipulative and illegitimate (Ashforth & Gibbs, 1990). They suggest that the greater the needs for legitimation, the more sceptical consumers are of their attempts. Although stealing thunder has been criticized, convincing positive results of this strategy have been found in literature. First of all, Coombs (2007) claims that being quick in communicating with stakeholders may be perceived as being in control of the crisis situation, therefore, is a means to repair trust. Second, studies have empirically proven that when stealing thunder is used, organizations are perceived as more credible (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). They note that organizations are seen as more credible when the public learn of the crisis from the organization itself, rather than from secondary sources. Because customers do not expect that organizations will report negative information about their company, organizations create credibility. Higher ratings of credibility attributed to an organization's message result in greater acceptance of the crisis message. Third, it benefits the organization to release information, because reputational damage is intensified if another party is instead the first to reveal negative or damaging information (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012; Ondrus, 1998). When an organization steals the thunder, it has the opportunity to frame the message about oneself (Murphy, 1989). Findings of Wigley (2011) confirm that stealing thunder results in media coverage that is less prominent and enduring with more positively framed stories and headlines. Finally, Fennis and Stroebe (2014) claim a "company self-disclosure of negative information lessens damaging effects on consumer judgment and decision making" (p.109). The results firmly suggest that disclosing the crisis is an effective strategy; therefore, positive effects for stealing thunder or proactive communication will be hypothesized.

HYPOTHESIS 1: If an organization proactively communicates about its own crisis situation, customers' judgement of an organization will be more positive, compared to the situation in which a third-party breaks the news about the crisis situation.

2.3 IMPACT

2.3.1. TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trust is a main outcome that is taken into consideration in crisis communication research. A prominent definition is from Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995). They define trust as "the willingness of a party

to be vulnerable to the action of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party” (p. 712). One of the key phrases is the willingness to be vulnerable, because it indicates the possibility of being exploited or cheated. Mayer and colleagues (1995) identify ability, benevolence, and integrity as the core elements of trustworthiness. Ability refers to having knowledge, skills or competencies to influence a specific domain. Benevolence is “the extent to which a trustee is believed to want to do good to the trustor, aside from egocentric profit motives” (Mayer et al., 1995, p. 718). Finally, integrity involves “the trustors’ perception that the trustee adheres to a set of principles the trustor finds acceptable” (p. 719). The fundamental difference between trust and trustworthiness is that the two concepts belong to different actors. Trust is an attribute of a trustor and trustworthiness is an attribute of the trustee. In summary, trustworthiness rests in the object of trust, not in the trusting party.

2.3.2 STEALING THUNDER AND TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is key variable that suffers from negative actions of the organization. It is a primary construct of reputational measures (Coombs & Holladay, 2002) and prevents reputational harm. Further, Huang (2001) demonstrate that “trust can increase the possibility that stakeholders will continue their relationships with the organizations after a critical crisis event” (p. 319). Customers are less inclined to attribute the cause of misbehaviour to an organization when it is trusted (Johar et al, 2010). In addition, the main goal of stealing thunder is to reduce damage to organizational trustworthiness (Arpan & Pompper, 2003; Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Speaking against one’s self-interest is likely to make the person appear trustworthy and even likeable (Eagly, Wood & Chaiken, 1978). Research on source-position expectancies has found that people expect sources to take positions in their own self-interest, and when this does not occur, greater attributions of source trustworthiness and message validity result (Eagly & Chaiken, 1975; Eagly, Chaiken & Wood, 1981). Therefore, a favourable assessment will be hypothesized for each dimension of trustworthiness.

HYPOTHESIS 1A: If an organization proactively communicates about its own crisis situation, customers’ judgement of an organization’s ability will be more positive, compared to the situation in which a third-party breaks the news about the crisis situation.

HYPOTHESIS 1B: If an organization proactively communicates about its own crisis situation, customers’ judgement of an organization’s benevolence will be more positive, compared to the situation in which a third-party breaks the news about the crisis situation.

HYPOTHESIS 1C: If an organization proactively communicates about its own crisis situation, customers’ judgement of an organization’s integrity will be more positive, compared to the situation in which a third-party breaks the news about the crisis situation.

2.3.3 FORGIVENESS

When a crisis situation occurs, it gives people reason to think negatively about the organization. In interpersonal relationships, forgiveness is often discussed as a factor that may restore relationships. Xie and Peng (2009) define forgiveness as “one’s willingness to give up retaliation, alienation, and other destructive behaviours, and to respond in constructive ways after an organizational violation of trust” (Xie & Peng, 2009, p. 579). They describe forgiveness as a relational concept, which plays a pivotal role in reducing conflicts and restoring interpersonal relationships. The present study adopts the definition of Moon and Rhee (2012), which fits the organizational crisis context of the current research. They claim that forgiveness is “the public effort to reduce negative thinking, overcome unpleasant emotion and restore their damaged relationship with an organization due to a crisis” (p.679). Scholars regard it as an integrative concept encompassing a person’s cognitive, affective and behavioural responses. Cognitive explains how one understands and abandons negative attitudes (Oh, 2008). Affective indicates the extent to which one withdraws from hatred. Finally, behavioural is about improving the relationship.

2.3.4 STEALING THUNDER AND FORGIVENESS

Researchers have found a positive relationship between forgiveness and trust. Chung and Beverland (2006) suggest that the re-evaluation of corporate trustworthiness should be a critical process driving

one's forgiveness. In legal context, the suspect is judged more believable found less guilty when it reveals incriminating evidence first (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). Nevertheless, studies about one's willingness to forgive when an organization steals thunder are limited. Seon-Kyoung, Gower and Cho (2011) assert that when organizations admit responsibility for the crisis, employees' anger and blame can be minimized. Further, Liu, Austin and Jin (2011) conclude in their research that feelings of anger and disgust are least induced when the public hear about the crisis by traditional media and are self-disclosed. It is reasonable to assume that when people's negative feelings are minimized, it also takes less effort to forgive someone. Finally, in the study of Moon & Rhee (2012) forgiveness was indeed a useful concept in the assessment of message strategies. Based on those arguments, it is hypothesized that customers are more willing to forgive the organization when it reveals the negative information.

HYPOTHESIS 1D: If an organization proactively communicates about its own crisis situation, customers are more willing to forgive the organization, compared to the situation in which a third-party breaks the news about the crisis situation.

2.3.5 PURCHASE INTENTION

Finally, purchase intention focuses on behavioural intention. Brand purchase intention is a signal whether customers will remain with or defect from the company (Zeithaml et al., 1996). It is based on the potential buying decision of a consumer who has a belief and an attitude about one particular product. According to Espejel, Fandos and Flavián (2008) buying intention is a prediction of consumer attitude or behaviour towards a future purchase decision. In summary, purchase intention considers the beliefs and attitudes a consumer has towards a particular product to make the purchase in the future.

2.3.6 STEALING THUNDER AND PURCHASE INTENTION

Findings illustrate that when an organization steals thunder, the public have higher credibility perceptions towards an organization. Higher levels of supportive behaviour follow, they show a greater likelihood to purchase products from organizations in crisis when it steals thunder (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). Feelings and thoughts regarding a negative event impact the behavioural intentions of consumers and, consequently, their future purchase behaviour (Folkes, Koletsky & Graham, 1987; Jorgensen, 1996; Kim, Ferrin & Rao, 2008). In addition, Frijda, Manstead and Bem (2000) mentioned the notion of belief strength and indicate that beliefs only have a direct impact on intentions if they are strong enough. Experimental designs demonstrate a positive cause and effect relationship between stealing thunder and purchase intentions (Coombs, 2014). Hence, it can be hypothesized that in crisis events, when an organization steals thunder, the likelihood of customers purchase intentions will increase.

HYPOTHESIS 1E: If an organization proactively communicates about its own crisis situation, customers are more willing to purchase their products, compared to the situation in which a third-party breaks the news about the crisis situation.

2.4 CORPORATE REPUTATION

2.4.1 PRE-CRISIS REPUTATION

Reputation is a valued intangible asset. It is the most studied outcome variable in crisis communication research (Coombs, 2015). As defined by Fombrun and Van Riel (2004), in corporate sense, reputation is an evaluation of the organization driven by perceptions of stakeholders. Fombrun and Rindova (1996) give a comprehensive definition with "a collective representation of a firm's past actions and results that describes the firm's ability to deliver valued outcomes to multiple stakeholders". In addition, pre-crisis reputation describes the relationship between the organization and its public before the crisis situation.

2.4.2. EFFECTS

The amount of initial reputation loss depends on consumers' pre-crisis perceptions of the organization. A negative prior reputation will intensify attributions of crisis responsibility (Coombs, 1995, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Conversely, positive interactions with stakeholders build reputation capital and, therefore, scholars believe in the value of a favourable, pre-crisis reputation. From this perspective, an organization with a more positive pre-crisis reputation will still have a stronger post-crisis reputation, because it has more reputation capital to spend (Coombs & Holladay, 2006; Fennis & Stroebe, 2014). Hence, a favourable pre-crisis reputation is a buffer against the reputational capital lost during a crisis. According to Coombs and Holladay (2006) the prior reputation creates a halo effect that protects an organization during crisis. More recently, Claeys and Cauberghe (2014) confirm that organizations in crisis with a favourable pre-crisis reputation suffer less reputational loss than organizations with an unfavourable pre-crisis reputation. For instance, it protects organizations against subsequent negative publicity and external allegations. Expectancy confirmation theory offers an explanation (Coombs & Holladay, 2006; Edwards & Smith, 1996). In order to reduce cognitive dissonance, people tend to interpret inconsistent information in a way that makes it consistent to their prior expectations. Consequently, stakeholders appear to attribute less crisis responsibility to organizations with a favourable pre-crisis reputation (Eagly et al., 1978). If the company already has a shaky reputation due to negative events happening in the past, then there is no shield of a positive reputation, increasing the negative impact of the event. Therefore, positive effects will be expected for a positive pre-crisis reputation.

HYPOTHESIS 2: If an organization has a positive pre-crisis reputation, customers' judgement of an organization will be more positive, in comparison with a negative pre-crisis reputation.

HYPOTHESIS 2A: For an organization with a positive pre-crisis reputation, customers' judgement of an organization's ability will be more positive, in comparison with a negative pre-crisis reputation.

HYPOTHESIS 2B: For an organization with a positive pre-crisis reputation, customers' judgement of an organization's benevolence will be more positive, in comparison with negative pre-crisis reputation.

HYPOTHESIS 2C: For an organization with a positive pre-crisis reputation, customers' judgement of an organization's integrity will be more positive, in comparison with a negative pre-crisis reputation.

HYPOTHESIS 2D: For an organization with a positive pre-crisis reputation, customers will be more willing to forgive the organization, in comparison with a negative pre-crisis reputation.

HYPOTHESIS 2E: For an organization with a positive pre-crisis reputation, customers will be more willing to purchase their products, in comparison with a negative pre-crisis reputation.

2.5 CRISIS TYPE

2.5.1 PRODUCT-HARM CRISIS

The SCCT of Coombs (2007) uses a two-step process to assess attributions of crisis responsibility. The first step entails determining the crisis type. The second step entails evaluating intensifying factors in the situation as the pre-crisis reputation. In the current research, two specific types of crises will be described. The first type of crisis to distinguish is the product-harm crisis. Product-harm crises are complex situations when products are found to be defective, unsafe or even dangerous (Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Dutta & Pullig, 2011). Siomkos and Kurzbard (1994) define product-harm crisis as an abrupt break of the product life cycle. Regardless of their cause, product-harm crises result in vast financial costs for the company, negative effects on sales and even destruction of their corporate image (Siomkos, 1999). Their occurrences have become more frequent, particularly due to more complex products, stricter product-safety legislation and more demanding consumers (Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Vassilikopoulou, Chatzipanagiotou, Siomkos & Triantafillidou, 2011). Given the potential devastating consequences and increased frequency, responding to such crisis effectively becomes a priority for companies (Vassilikopoulo et al., 2009).

2.5.2 MORAL-HARM CRISIS

Another potential crisis type to distinguish is the moral-harm crises. Pauchant and Mitroff (1992) recognise the ethical content and argue that a crisis might arise from fundamentally ethical issues. Moral legitimacy is based on moral judgments whether an individual, institution, or action can be considered socially acceptable. Dutta and Pullig (2011) use the term value-related crisis to refer to social and ethical issues of organizations. Examples of value-related crises are the exposure of an organization being connected to child labour, sexual harassment, exploitation or racial discrimination. (Pullig, Netemeyer & Biswas, 2006). These crises are related to social responsibility and norms and values of an organization. Yoo and MacInnis (2005) describe the moral aspect of a message with emotional framing as it appeals to individuals' emotions and including subjective, evaluative properties. Individuals tend to judge the ethicality of an organisation's actions by applying their own standards (Rawwas, Strutton & Johnson, 1996). More specifically, these beliefs increase the intensity of blame (Alicke, 2000). It is necessary to ensure compliance of organizations business to acceptable standards of moral conduct by a given society. Moral motivation such as 'the right thing to do' is an evolutionary based reaction, which appear in cases of moral crises (Cropanzano, Goldman & Folger, 2005). There are studies examining consumers' ethical judgments regarding certain questionable behaviours, however, a lack of studies have applied the focus to crisis communication.

2.5.3 EFFECTS

Rational and emotional frames explain why consumers form their attitude toward the organization in different ways. Yoo and MacInnis (2005) reveal that the primary responses to emotional frames are likely to be feelings as they appeal to emotions. In contrast, rational frames trigger the evaluation of the message credibility as they appeal to cognitions. In summary, the moral crisis might appeal to individuals' emotions involving unethical behaviour, while the product crisis appeals to individual's cognitions involving an unsafe product. Therefore, a difference between the impact of a product and moral crisis is expected. For the product crisis it is more reasonable to expect a more favourable perception of benevolence and integrity. Those variables involve the character of the organization, doing the right thing. It is likely that a value-related crisis does harm the integrity and benevolence more than a performance-related crisis, because of the harm of the principals by ethical issues (Singh, Iglesias & Batista-Foguet, 2012). In that line of reasoning, it is also more reasonable to expect that customers have less sympathy for the organization in a moral crisis and therefore it is harder for them to forgive the organization. For the moral crisis it is more reasonable to expect a favourable perception of ability and purchase intention. Those variables relate to the competence of the organization, doing successful business. The gap between attitude and actual behaviour is an important reason why a value-related crisis creates less harm on purchase intention (Carrigan & Attalla, 2001). It appears that even when consumers perceive a brand as not very ethical, they do not necessarily buy or act ethically. Based on the arguments above, the following will be hypothesized.

HYPOTHESIS 3: Product and moral crisis type have a different impact on aspects of customers' judgement of the organization.

HYPOTHESIS 3A: Product crisis results in a more favourable assessment of benevolence, integrity and forgiveness, in comparison with moral crisis.

HYPOTHESIS 3B: Moral crisis results in a more favourable assessment of ability and purchase intention, in comparison with product crisis.

2.6 CRISIS TIMING AND PRE-CRISIS REPUTATION

The effect of stealing thunder might vary for pre-crisis reputation. Claeys and Cauberghe (2014) conclude that further research is needed to confirm the positive effects of a favourable pre-crisis reputation. Therefore, the present study explores to what extent a favourable pre-crisis reputation means an organization suffers less and rebounds more quickly after a crisis. For instance, the study of Turk and colleagues (2012) confirm that the interplay of an immediate response to a crisis, defensive with a visible CEO, and a good reputation resulted in the best stakeholder attitudes and purchase intentions. In contrast to the study of Fennis and Stroebe (2014) in which they confirm that the type of

disclosure did not affect consumers' 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, 2014). Hence, organizational reputation is frequently claimed as an outcome variable (Moon & Rhee, 2012), while this study positions pre-crisis reputation together with crisis timing. Studies about the interaction effects of stealing thunder are limited; therefore, the impact of crisis timing with pre-crisis reputation will be explored.

RESEARCH QUESTION 1: To what extent do the outcome values of crisis timing (stealing thunder or thunder) together with pre-crisis reputation (positive or negative) differ for customers' judgement of the organization in terms of trustworthiness, forgiveness and purchase intention?

2.7 CRISIS TIMING AND CRISIS TYPE

Further, the effect of stealing thunder might vary for crisis type. Just as previous studies have found that the success of message strategies varies with the type of crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 1996), the current study might find the same effects for stealing thunder. For instance, Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005) applied this tactic to organizational disclosure of crises and found that organizations that broke news about a fictitious product crisis were seen as more credible, and participants perceived the crisis as less severe. More recently, Spence and colleagues (2014) offer empirical evidence that statements from organizations experiencing crises may offset negative stakeholder responses. To test the contingency of those statements, the product and moral crisis are selected. A key difference is that the product crisis creates a threat to public safety, while the moral crisis is less likely to produce the same levels of welfare concerns (Coombs, 2012a). The coverage of a corporate crisis may provide different frames to influence publics' emotional response and subsequent perceptions. Therefore, the impact of crisis timing with crisis type will be explored.

RESEARCH QUESTION 2: To what extent do the outcome values of crisis timing (stealing thunder or thunder) together with crisis type (product or moral) differ for customers' judgement of the organization in terms of trustworthiness, forgiveness and purchase intention?

2.8 RESEARCH PURPOSE

The present study examines the extent to which proactive communication leads to a more positive judgement of the organization in terms of trustworthiness, forgiveness, and purchase intention. The stealing thunder strategy gives information about a negative occurrence as quickly as possible to all stakeholders. It is expected that their perception of the crisis event will be less hard and influenced positively. To extend the research, pre-crisis reputation and crisis type are examined in combination with crisis timing. The overall research question will be:

RESEARCH QUESTION: To what extent do the outcome values of crisis timing (stealing thunder or thunder) together with pre-crisis reputation (positive or negative) and crisis type (product or moral) differ for customers' judgement of the organization in terms of trustworthiness, forgiveness and purchase intention?

3. METHOD

3.1 DESIGN

An experimental study was conducted to determine the effects of crisis timing, pre-crisis reputation and crisis type. Respondents participated in a 2 (crisis timing: stealing thunder or thunder) x 2 (crisis type: product or moral) x 2 (pre-crisis reputation: positive or negative) between-subject design, see Figure 1. Consequently, eight different scenarios were created. The research adopted the preventable cluster, meaning the organization was in all the scenarios aware or capable of preventing the crisis situation. Preventable crises include management misconduct that knowingly places stakeholders at risk and violates laws or regulations (Coombs, 2015). For both crisis types it was the responsibility of the manager to oversee the entire production line. Furthermore, three covariates were included. The involvement and severity with the issue constructs were measured to see if the crisis situations were viewed as relevant and serious (Dutta & Pullig, 2011). The third covariate was fashion affinity, because of the crisis context.

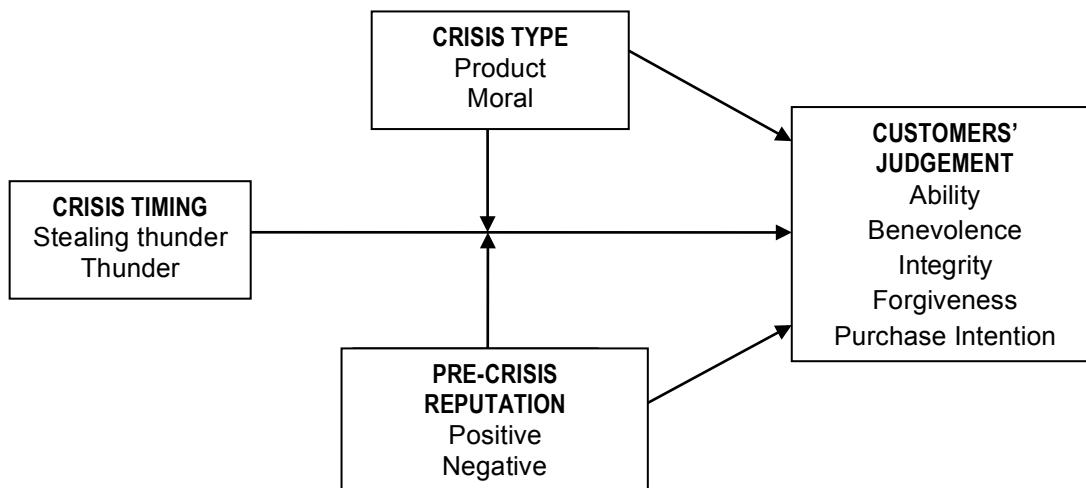


FIGURE 1. *Research design*

3.2 PROCEDURE

The online experiment was created with the program Qualtrics. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the eight conditions. Their participation was completely confidential and their personal information was not used to identify them or shared with third parties. After a short introduction, the hypothetical crisis message was shown. The respondents were asked to read the crisis situation carefully. Then, they completed a questionnaire. First, they answered manipulation check questions. For crisis timing the manipulation-check question, 'Who announced the crisis situation?' Pre-crisis reputation involved the question 'How has LeParis been described in the news before the crisis situation?' Finally, crisis type included the question, 'In what kind of crisis was LeParis involved?' After that, dependent measures and finally their demographics were asked. Demographics about respondents' age, sex, province of origin, educational level were asked. No incentives were provided, because participating took approximately ten minutes.

3.3 MATERIALS

The context concerned a clothing brand LeParis, a luxury brand to sensationalize the effects. The crisis and organization involved were fictitious to control the effect of pre-crisis reputation. It minimized the subject bias (Siomkos, 1999). A press statement in a Dutch newspaper article presented the crisis scenario. According to Kim, Hong and Cameron (2014) this is an accessible source of crisis information. The selected newspaper was NRC, because they describe themselves as an independent quality newspaper ("Over NRC Media", n.d.). They provide the public with relevant information to form

their own opinion, which is exactly the purpose of the current research. The materials were manipulated for crisis timing, crisis type and pre-crisis reputation. First, in the stealing thunder condition the NRC received the news from a press statement of LeParis. In the thunder condition they received the news from a report of Consumers' Association. Second, in the product crisis situation the clothes were defect due to high levels of toxic chemicals and in the moral crisis situation the organization used children to produce their clothing. The product harm crisis placed customers of the product directly at risk with cancer causing substances. The moral harm crisis involved ethical concerns about child labour, while not placing the customers directly at risk. Third, positive pre-crisis involved corporate social responsible behaviour and a profitable company which won the price for 'Company of the Year'. Negative pre-crisis concerned a company who was accused by unsatisfied customers and thereby almost bankrupt.

3.4 PRE-TEST

Before the questionnaire was distributed, a pre-test indicated inconsistencies in the materials. The main purpose of the pre-test was to check the three manipulations of the main study. The sample consisted of eight participants, five women and three men who ranged in age from 22 to 57. The personal network of the researcher was used to collect the participants. Participants were two times randomly assigned to one of the eight scenarios and were asked to complete the online questionnaire via Qualtrics. The focus of the pre-test was to test the clarity and content of the materials and questionnaire, to make sure the participants viewed the manipulations as indicated. Based on the participants' recommendations, small changes were made. First, the manipulation checks questions were more adapted to the text of the materials. Besides, additional text was added, to emphasize that the participants had the opportunity to read the crisis message again. Finally, the participants confirmed that they had no further associations with the company name and newspaper NRC. The final materials can be found in Appendix A.

3.5 MANIPULATION CHECK

First, to check whether the stealing thunder and thunder manipulation was viewed as indicated, the respondents had to choose between LeParis, value 1, or Consumers' Association, value 2. The results of the independent sample t-test indicated that respondents who read the situation in which LeParis announced the crisis situation scored significantly higher on stealing thunder ($M=1,14$, $SD=0,35$) compared to the situation in which the Consumers' Association announced the crisis situation ($M=1,99$, $SD=0,11$). There was a significant difference ($T=-29,81$; $p=0,00$). Second, to check whether the crisis scenario was seen as product or moral crisis, they had to choose between chemicals in clothing, value 1, or child labour, value 2. The results indicated that respondents who viewed the chemicals scenario scored significantly higher on product crisis ($M=1,01$, $SD=0,08$), compared to the child labour scenario ($M=1,99$, $SD=0,11$). There was a significant difference ($T=-91,12$; $p=0,00$). Third, to make sure the reputation before the crisis was perceived correctly, they had to choose between positive, value 1, or negative, value 2. The results indicated that respondents who read the positive description scored significantly higher on positive ($M=1,04$, $SD=0,19$) compared the negative description ($M=1,89$, $SD=0,31$). There was a significant difference ($T=-29,98$; $p=0,00$). In summary, the manipulations were successful.

3.6 PARTICIPANTS

A snowball sampling technique was used to recruit participants within the researcher's network. Participants were in turn requested to invite people within their network. In total 321 respondents completed the questionnaire. Regarding their gender, 41,1% were men and 58,9% were women. They ranged in age from 18 to 75 ($M=35,41$, $SD=14,94$). The most represented province was Gelderland with 53%. In general, the respondents were highly educated, with 38,0% HBO and 33,6% WO respondents. The complete overview of respondents' demographic information is shown in Table 1.

TABLE 1. *Respondents' demographic information*

DEMOGRAPHICS	N	%	M	SD
GENDER				
Men	132	41,1		
Women	189	58,9		
AGE			35,41	14,94
PROVINCE				
Drenthe	1	0,3		
Flevoland	1	0,3		
Friesland	1	0,3		
Gelderland	170	53,0		
Groningen	7	2,2		
Limburg	7	2,2		
Noord-Brabant	12	3,7		
Noord-Holland	26	8,1		
Overijssel	63	19,6		
Utrecht	24	7,5		
Zeeland	0	0,0		
Zuid-Holland	9	2,8		
EDUCATION				
Basic education	1	0,3		
Vocational education	4	1,2		
VMBO	13	4,0		
HAVO	11	3,4		
VWO	7	2,2		
MBO	47	14,6		
HBO	122	38,0		
WO	108	33,6		
Something else	8	2,5		

3.7 DEPENDENT MEASURES

The dependent variables ability, benevolence, integrity, forgiveness, and purchase intention were measured. Participants had to indicate their opinion on a five-point Likert-scale ranging from one 'strongly disagree' to five 'strongly agree'. The items were translated in Dutch and some were reversed coded. An overview of the scales and final questionnaire in Dutch can be found in Appendix B and C.

3.7.1 FACTOR ANALYSIS

A factor analysis was performed to find the underlying structure of the variables, see Table 2. In the final questionnaire, the variables transparency and word of mouth intention (WOM) were included. They had to be removed based on the factor analysis. The reason for removing transparency is because it remained that the items of transparency were loading with integrity. Since ability, benevolence and integrity should go together, transparency was removed. The same counted for WOM; those items were loading with purchase intention. Because of the stronger results for purchase intention, this variable continued with further analysis. For benevolence there were two items removed, namely 'This organization would knowingly do anything to hurt me' and 'This organization does not really look out for what is important for me'. For integrity the item, 'The organizations' actions and behaviours are consistent', was removed. Finally, for forgiveness the items 'I would regard LeParis as a good company although the crisis situation', 'The crisis situation prompts me to dislike LeParis' and 'I do not feel anger toward LeParis due to crisis situation' were removed. The removed items were not loading on the same component.

TABLE 2. *Rotated component matrix with absolute value of 0,4*

ITEMS	COMPONENT						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
TRUSTA1				0,58			
TRUSTA2				0,52			
TRUSTA3				0,74			
TRUSTA4				0,58			
TRUSTA5				0,58			
TRUSTB1		0,70					
TRUSTB2		0,77					
TRUSTB3						0,77	
TRUSTB4		0,57					
TRUSTB5						0,71	
TRUSTI1					0,50		
TRUSTI2					0,46		
TRUSTI3					0,60		
TRUSTI4							0,84
TRUSTI5					0,68		
FORGIVC1			0,55				
FORGIVC2			0,51				
FORGIVC3	0,57		0,45				
FORGIVA1			0,70				
FORGIVA2	0,61						
FORGIVA3	0,52						
WOM1	0,89						
WOM2	0,89						
WOM3	0,80						
WOM4	0,72						
PURIN1	0,78						
PURIN2	0,63						
PURIN3	0,72						

3.7.2 TRUSTWORTHINESS

Trustworthiness is the primary goal of stealing thunder, therefore, a key variable. The fifteen item-scale of Mayer and colleagues (1995) was adopted with the dimensions ability, benevolence and integrity. The factor analysis confirmed that the dimension were separate constructs. Ability remained with five items, for instance 'This organization is very capable of performing their job'. Cronbach's alpha was good with $\alpha=0,73$. Benevolence included three items, for example 'This organization is very concerned about my welfare'. Cronbach's alpha was acceptable with $\alpha=0,69$. Integrity consisted of four items such as, 'I believe sound principles guide the company's behaviours'. Cronbach's alpha was good with $\alpha=0,72$.

3.7.3 FORGIVENESS

Forgiveness is a useful concept in the assessment of crisis message strategies. Forgiveness was measured by the scale of Moon and Rhee (2012). The scale included three items for each dimension. First, cognitive items were for instance, 'I would not be able to change my negative thoughts about LeParis'. Second, affective items covered, 'I am disappointed about LeParis because of the crisis situation'. Finally, the behavioural items were not adopted, because this was already measured with purchase intention. The factor analysis resulted in the measurement of one forgiveness construct with two cognitive items and one affective item. Cronbach's alpha was good with $\alpha=0,71$.

3.7.4 PURCHASE INTENTION

Purchase intention consisted of three items, which were adopted from Stockmyer (1996). 'Because of the crisis incident, I will switch to some other brand', 'The likelihood of me buying this product again is high' and 'I will continue to buy this brand of product in the future'. Cronbach's alpha value of $\alpha=0,85$ was high.

4. RESULTS

4.1 MAIN EFFECTS

4.1.1 CRISIS TIMING, PRE-CRISIS REPUTATION AND CRISIS TYPE

The Analysis Of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to measure the main effects. Besides the Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) was performed with severity, because this was the only significant covariate. The results of the ANOVA test prove that crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation have statistically significant main effects on all the dependent measures ($P < 0,00$), as illustrated in Table 3. Crisis type only has a significant main effect on integrity ($F=6,92$, $P=0,01$) and purchase intention ($F=5,67$, $P=0,02$). Interestingly, ability becomes significant with severity ($F=2,67$, $P=0,10$ compared to $F=4,56$, $P=0,03$). Furthermore, purchase intention becomes even more significant with the covariate severity ($F=11,88$, $P=0,00$). This means that the severity of the issue is may be a stronger predictor for ability and purchase intention than the type of crisis.

TABLE 3. *Main effects of crisis timing, pre-crisis reputation and crisis type*

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	CRISIS TIMING		PRE-CRISIS REPUTATION		CRISIS TYPE	
	F	P	F	P	F	P
ABILITY						
ANOVA	11,24	0,00**	26,81	0,00**	2,67	0,10
ANCOVA	8,40	0,00**	26,59	0,00**	4,56	0,03*
BENEVOLENCE						
ANOVA	40,63	0,00**	10,02	0,00*	0,04	0,84
ANCOVA	35,73	0,00**	9,60	0,00*	0,05	0,83
INTEGRITY						
ANOVA	67,20	0,00**	25,15	0,00**	6,92	0,01*
ANCOVA	60,61	0,00**	25,05	0,00**	4,91	0,03*
FORGIVENESS						
ANOVA	27,83	0,00**	14,81	0,00**	0,00	0,98
ANCOVA	22,74	0,00**	14,60	0,00**	0,37	0,55
PURCHASE INTENTION						
ANOVA	20,15	0,00**	10,92	0,00**	5,67	0,02*
ANCOVA	14,73	0,00**	10,98	0,00**	11,88	0,00**

NOTE * $P < .05$, ** $P < .001$

To show which condition is significantly higher, the means and standard deviations are presented. Table 4 shows the means and standard deviations for crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation and Table 5 for crisis type. The results demonstrate higher values for stealing thunder on ability, benevolence, integrity, forgiveness, and purchase intention, in comparison with the thunder scenario. This means hypothesis 1a, 1b, 1c, 1d and 1e are supported. If an organization proactively communicates about its own crisis, customers' judgement of an organization's ability, benevolence, integrity as well as customers intention to forgive the organization and purchase their products are valued significantly higher, compared to the situation in which a third-party breaks the news about the crisis situation of the organization. Furthermore, higher values are found for a positive pre-crisis reputation in comparison with a negative pre-crisis reputation. This means hypothesis, 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d and 2e are supported. For an organization with a positive pre-crisis reputation, customers' judgement of an organization's ability, benevolence, integrity as well as customers intention to forgive the organization and purchase their products are valued significantly higher, in comparison with a negative pre-crisis reputation.

TABLE 4. *Descriptive statistics crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation*

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	STEALING THUNDER (160)		THUNDER (161)		POSITIVE (160)		NEGATIVE (161)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
ABILITY	3,00	0,68	2,75	0,66	3,06	0,05	2,69	0,05
BENEVOLENCE	2,78	0,77	2,26	0,70	2,65	0,79	2,38	0,75
INTEGRITY	2,89	0,73	2,26	0,63	2,78	0,77	2,38	0,68
FORGIVENESS	2,86	0,79	2,41	0,75	2,80	0,80	2,47	0,77
PURCHASE INTENTION	2,84	0,88	2,39	0,89	2,78	0,08	2,45	0,07

For crisis type, hypothesis 3a predicted that the product crisis results in a more favourable assessment of an organizations' benevolence and integrity, in comparison with the moral crisis. The results confirm that the product crisis scores higher on integrity (M=2,69, SD=0,75 compared to M=2,47, SD=0,74). Hence, the values of benevolence do not differ significantly. This is also visible in the close mean values for the product and moral crisis (M=2,53, SD=0,79 compared to M=2,51, SD=0,82). In sum, hypothesis 3a is partially supported. In addition, hypothesis 3b predicted that the moral crisis results in a more favourable assessment of ability and purchase intention, in comparison with the product crisis. The results confirm that the moral crisis scores higher on purchase intention (M=2,74, SD=0,94 compared to M=2,50, SD=0,88). The moral crisis scores slightly higher on ability (M=2,94, SD=0,67 compared to M=2,81, SD=0,65). The effect of ability was not significant without the severity of the crisis being described. Therefore, hypothesis 3b is partially supported, because the significant effect of ability cannot be subscribed to the type of crisis.

TABLE 5. *Descriptive statistics crisis type*

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	PRODUCT (160)		MORAL (161)	
	M	SD	M	SD
ABILITY	2,81	0,65	2,94	0,67
BENEVOLENCE	2,53	0,79	2,51	0,82
INTEGRITY	2,69	0,75	2,47	0,74
FORGIVENESS	2,63	0,79	2,64	0,82
PURCHASE INTENTION	2,50	0,88	2,74	0,94

4.2 INTERACTION EFFECTS

4.2.1 CRISIS TIMING AND PRE-CRISIS REPUTATION

The ANOVA was performed to measure the interaction effects. Besides, the ANCOVA test was performed with the covariate severity. First, the interaction effect of crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation was tested. The results in Table 6 prove there is a significant interaction effect for integrity (F=4,49, P=0,04), forgiveness (F=4,03, P=0,05) and purchase intention (F=5,58, P=0,02). This means that crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation simultaneously influence integrity, forgiveness and purchase intention.

TABLE 6. *Interaction effect crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation*

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	CRISIS TIMING X PRE-CRISIS REPUTATION	
	F	P
ABILITY		
ANOVA	2,12	0,15
ANCOVA	2,10	0,15
BENEVOLENCE		
ANOVA	2,48	0,12
ANCOVA	2,45	0,12

INTEGRITY		
ANOVA	4,49	0,04*
ANCOVA	4,53	0,03*
FORGIVENESS		
ANOVA	4,03	0,05*
ANCOVA	4,11	0,04*
PURCHASE INTENTION		
ANOVA	5,58	0,02*
ANCOVA	6,08	0,01*

NOTE * P < .05, ** P < .001

The means and standard deviation of the significant interaction effect can be found in Table 7. For stealing thunder and positive pre-crisis reputation, integrity (M=3,17, SD=2,61), forgiveness (M=3,12, SD=0,77) and purchase intention (M=3,12, SD=0,88) are valued the highest. For thunder and negative pre-crisis reputation, integrity (M=2,14, SD=0,63), forgiveness (M=2,32, SD=0,80) and purchase intention (M=2,34, SD=0,89) are valued the lowest.

TABLE 7. Descriptive statistics significant interaction effects crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	STEALING THUNDER POSITIVE (80)		STEALING THUNDER NEGATIVE (81)		THUNDER POSITIVE (80)		THUNDER NEGATIVE (80)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
	ABILITY	3,24	0,63	2,76	0,64	2,89	0,60	2,61
BENEVOLENCE	2,98	0,73	2,58	0,76	2,33	0,71	2,18	0,69
INTEGRITY	3,17	0,70	2,61	0,65	2,39	0,62	2,14	0,63
FORGIVENESS	3,12	0,77	2,61	0,73	2,49	0,71	2,32	0,80
PURCHASE INTENTION	3,12	0,88	2,56	0,80	2,45	0,90	2,34	0,89

Furthermore, the profile plots are presented on the next page, Figure 2 for integrity, Figure 3 for forgiveness and Figure 4 for purchase intention. The plots visualize the direction of the significant interaction effects for crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation. As illustrated in the three figures, the values differentiate themselves more for stealing thunder and a positive pre-crisis reputation. Meaning that stealing thunder and a positive pre-crisis reputation are stronger indicators for positive outcome values of integrity, forgiveness and purchase intention than thunder and a negative pre-crisis reputation. Especially in Figure 4, it becomes clear that using stealing thunder when a company has a positive pre-crisis reputation noticeably increases customers purchase intention. In other words, not using stealing thunder with a positive pre-crisis reputation extremely lowers customers purchase intention. The same effects count for integrity and forgiveness. For all three variables it is still beneficial to use stealing thunder with a negative pre-crisis reputation. Particularly in Figure 2, it becomes visible that the value of integrity decreases the most when a company with a negative pre-crisis reputation does not steal thunder.

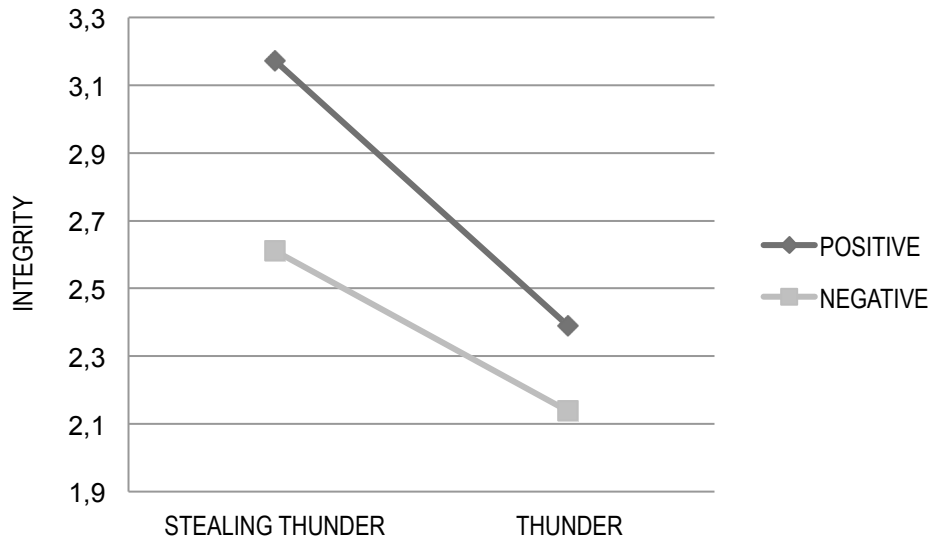


FIGURE 2. Plot Integrity for crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation

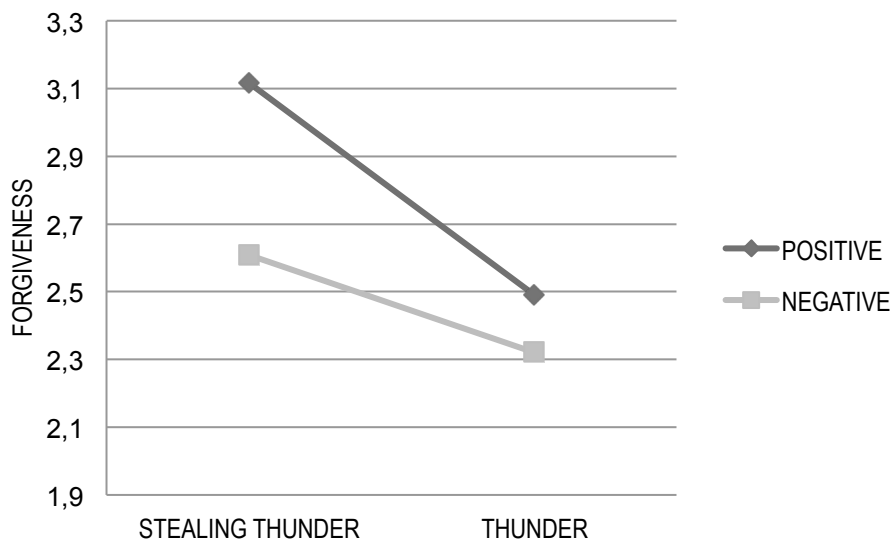


FIGURE 3. Plot forgiveness for crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation

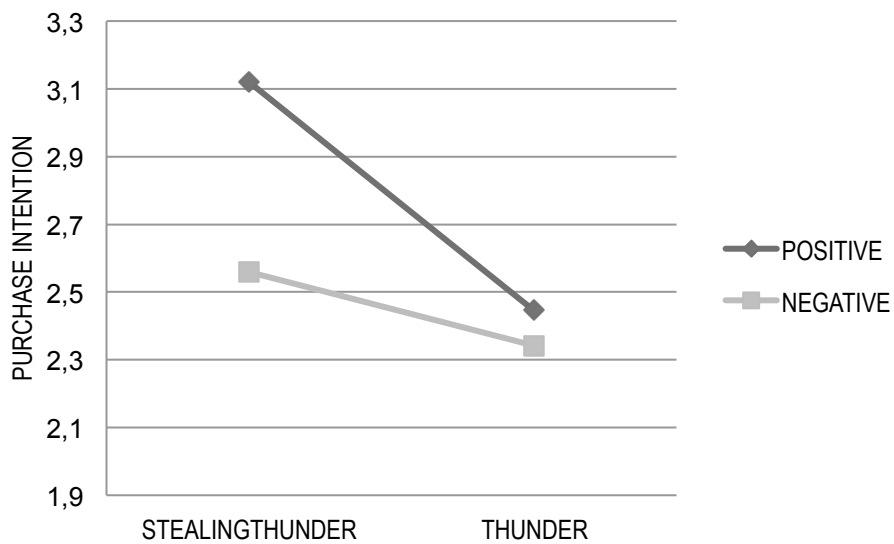


FIGURE 4. Plot purchase intention for crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation

4.2.2 CRISIS TIMING AND CRISIS TYPE

Second, the interaction effect of crisis timing and crisis type was tested. The results in Table 8 prove there is a significant interaction effect for benevolence ($F=17,09$, $P=0,00$) and purchase intention ($F=11,04$, $P=0,00$). This means that crisis timing and crisis type simultaneously influence benevolence and purchase intention.

TABLE 8. *Interaction effects crisis timing and crisis type*

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	CRISIS TIMING X CRISIS TYPE	
	F	P
ABILITY		
ANOVA	2,22	0,14
ANCOVA	1,75	0,19
BENEVOLENCE		
ANOVA	17,09	0,00**
ANCOVA	16,18	0,00**
INTEGRITY		
ANOVA	1,49	0,22
ANCOVA	1,12	0,29
FORGIVENESS		
ANOVA	2,50	0,12
ANCOVA	1,92	0,17
PURCHASE INTENTION		
ANOVA	11,04	0,00**
ANCOVA	10,25	0,00**

NOTE * $P < .05$, ** $P < .001$

The means and standard deviation of the significant interaction effects are demonstrated in Table 9. For stealing thunder and product crisis, benevolence ($M=2,95$, $SD=0,75$) and purchase intention ($M=2,88$, $SD=0,80$) are valued the highest. For thunder and product crisis, benevolence ($M=2,10$, $SD=0,70$) and purchase intention ($M=2,11$, $SD=0,78$) are valued the lowest. The results show that it is in particular valuable for the organization in crisis to proactively communicate about its own crisis when there is a product crisis situation.

TABLE 9. *Descriptive statistics interaction effects crisis timing and crisis type*

DEPENDENT VARIABLES	STEALING THUNDER PRODUCT (80)		STEALING THUNDER MORAL (81)		THUNDER PRODUCT (80)		THUNDER MORAL (80)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
	ABILITY	2,99	0,69	3,00	0,68	2,63	0,66	2,87
BENEVOLENCE	2,95	0,75	2,61	0,75	2,10	0,70	2,41	0,66
INTEGRITY	3,05	0,67	2,74	0,76	2,33	0,65	2,20	0,62
FORGIVENESS	2,93	0,77	2,79	0,81	2,34	0,69	2,48	0,81
PURCHASE INTENTION	2,88	0,80	2,80	0,96	2,11	0,78	2,68	0,91

Moreover, a profile plot is shown in Figure 5 for benevolence and in Figure 6 for purchase intention. In Figure 5, it becomes noticeable that it is especially effective to use stealing thunder when there is a product crisis. Not using stealing thunder when there is a product crisis strongly lowers customers' judgement of an organization's benevolence. Stealing thunder or thunder in case of a moral crisis, only makes a small difference for the outcome value of benevolence. The same effect counts for purchase intention, as illustrated in Figure 6. It really matters to use stealing thunder in case of a product crisis. Not using stealing thunder when there is a product crisis drastically lowers customers purchase intention. Stealing thunder or thunder in case of a moral crisis only makes a small difference

for the outcome value of purchase intention. It is for both outcome values still beneficial to use stealing thunder when there is a moral crisis. In summary, if the crisis is related to product failure, proactive communication of an organization becomes even more favourable than in a crisis related to the values and ethics of an organization.

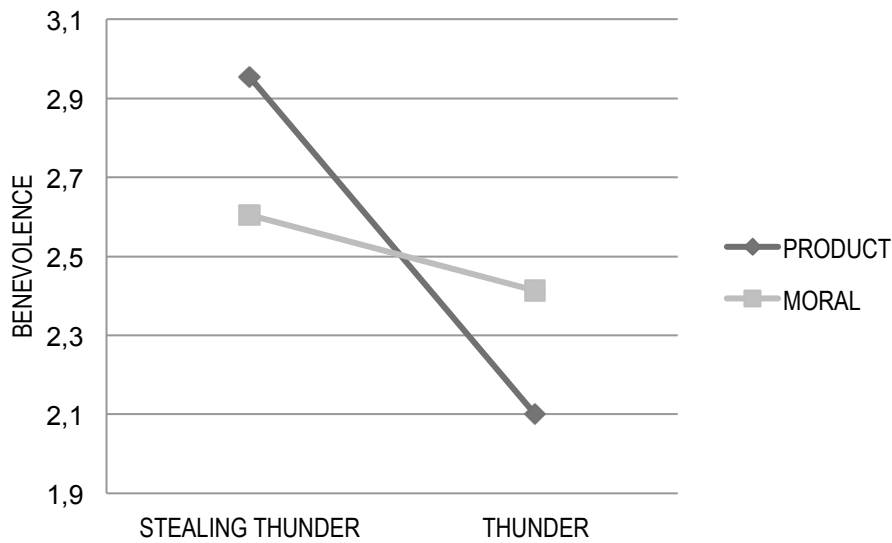


FIGURE 5. Plot benevolence for crisis timing and crisis type

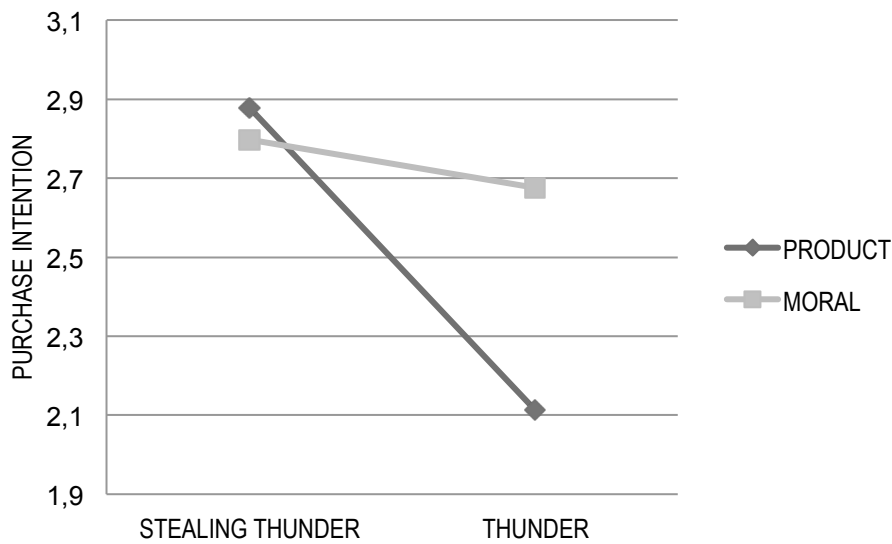


FIGURE 6. Plot purchase intention for crisis timing and crisis type

5. DISCUSSION

5.1 SUMMARY RESULTS

This study examined the relationship between organizational response after a crisis and customers' perception of the organization. The purpose was to measure the direct and interaction effects of crisis timing. In addition, the effects of pre-crisis reputation and crisis type were studied. A number of significant results were found. The results confirmed a positive main effect for stealing thunder and positive pre-crisis reputation on all the dependent measures. Consequently, hypotheses one and two were completely supported. Hypothesis three was only partially supported. The product crisis resulted in a more favourable assessment of integrity, not benevolence and forgiveness. Besides, the moral crisis resulted in a more favourable assessment of purchase intention, not ability without taken the issue severity into consideration. Finally, there were explorative research question composed about the degree of interactivity between crisis timing, pre-crisis reputation and crisis type. The current research showed the softest customers' judgement for stealing thunder with a positive pre-crisis reputation and product crisis. The interaction effects were not significant for all the dependent variables, but that will be explained below.

5.2 CRISIS TIMING

First of all, the main hypothesis was that an organization in crisis who proactively communicates about its crisis situation influences customers' judgement of the organization more positive, compared to the situation in which a third-party breaks the news about the crisis situation. The current research empirically proved that a proactive response is an effective strategy to enhance customers' judgement of the organization in terms of ability, benevolence, integrity, forgiveness, and purchase intention. This conclusion was backed by previous studies. Researchers assumed that when organizations steal thunder, their credibility would enhance, as they might be perceived as having a high sense of responsibility (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005; Spence et al., 2014; Wigley, 2011). In addition, supportive behaviour from customers to purchase their product follows. Furthermore, they considered that when stakeholders are informed about negative occurrences, their judgment might be less hard, and as a consequence their attitude and behaviour towards the organization will be improved. The results strongly supported this statement.

5.3 PRE-CRISIS REPUTATION

Furthermore, pre-crisis reputation had a significant main effect on all the dependent measures. As explained by Fombrun and Van Riel (2003), a positive reputation decreases the damages that may stem from the crisis. Organizations in crisis with a favourable pre-crisis reputation suffer less reputational loss than organizations with an unfavourable pre-crisis reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2006; Edwards & Smith, 1996). A favourable pre-crisis reputation is a buffer against the reputational capital lost during a crisis. The outcomes of the present study empirically proved this statement.

5.4 CRISIS TYPE

Moreover, crisis type had a significant main effect on ability, integrity and purchase intention. Interestingly, the product crisis scored higher on integrity and the moral crisis scored higher on ability and purchase intention. There is a clear distinction between the closeness of threat to human body between those two crisis types (Coombs, 2012a). The moral crisis might appeal to individuals' emotions involving unethical behaviour, which resulted in a lower value on integrity. While the product crisis appeals to individual's cognitions involving an unsafe product, which resulted in lower evaluations of ability and purchase intention. Carrigan and Attalla (2001) mentioned that personal reasons are more important to purchase a product than societal ones. To illustrate, when products are harmed with toxin, customers think of personal reasons of well being to not purchase the product. As a consequence, the product crisis was more harmful to purchase intention than the moral crisis. It must

be mentioned that the covariate severity remained effective for ability. Suggesting that issue severity may be a stronger predictor of ability than type of crisis. The study of Robbennolt (2000) found strong support for the notion that when an incident results in a more severe outcome, more blame will be attributed to a potentially responsible party. It is expected that the product crisis results in a more severe outcome, because it places the customers of the product directly at risk with the cancer causing substances in clothing items. Furthermore, it is still unclear why benevolence and forgiveness were not significant. Customers' judgement of benevolence and willingness to forgive did not differ significantly between the crisis types. A possible explanation might be that the companies' willingness to do good and repair the relationship only affects consumers who are personally attached and have interest in the product or company (Boulstrigde & Carrigan, 2000). Because of the fictitious organization, in both crises situations participants were not personally attached and could not have much interest in the company. Another explanation might be that there was an absence of framing the crisis message. With framing the crisis situation and its related messages, perceptions of the stakeholders can be influenced in a way that would be less harmful for the organization (Coombs, 2007). The stimulus materials of both crises situations were not framed with strong human-interest or moral frames, which could explain the absence of benevolence and forgiveness in the scenarios.

5.5 INTERACTION EFFECTS

5.5.1. CRISIS TIMING AND PRE-CRISIS REPUTATION

The first explorative research question was about the degree of interactivity between crisis timing and pre-crisis reputation. There was a difference between the outcome values for crisis timing in combination with pre-crisis reputation. The results confirmed a significant interaction effect for integrity, forgiveness and purchase intention. Stealing thunder together with a positive pre-crisis reputation resulted in the highest outcome values. Being proactive about the crisis situation with a positive pre-crisis reputation had more impact on the outcomes of integrity, forgiveness and purchase intention compared to being reactive and a negative pre-crisis reputation. However, it is still beneficial for an organization with a negative pre-crisis reputation to use stealing thunder. It indicates that customers found it more necessary for an organization with a positive pre-crisis reputation to announce the crisis situation and to be openly accountable for its own actions and decisions than with a negative pre-crisis reputation. It is in contrast with the results of the study of Fennis and Stroebe (2014), in which they found that if an organization had a good reputation before the crisis, this would function like a halo effect, negating the damaging effects of the crisis, no matter who disclosed the information. The current research supported the notion that an organization with a more favourable pre-crisis reputation still has a stronger post-crisis reputation, because it has a lot more reputational capital to spend to begin than with an unfavourable pre-crisis reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2006). Evidently, an organization in crisis with a positive pre-crisis reputation still suffers if it not makes use of the stealing thunder strategy. A possible explanation might be that the stealing thunder strategy is in line with the expectation of an organization with a positive pre-crisis reputation; an ethical action that enhance an organization's reputation. However, the variables ability and benevolence remained not significant. The reason for this might be that stealing thunder does not have enough effect on unfamiliar brands. Participants had no prior attitude towards the organization. Dawar and Pullitla (2000) suggests that prior brand attitude with low certainty may exacerbate the effects of negative events. Organizations with real reputations were not examined, thereby eliminating the possible effects of existing reputations.

5.5.2 CRISIS TIMING AND CRISIS TYPE

The second research question was about the degree of interactivity between crisis timing and crisis type. Benevolence did not have a main effect on crisis type; however, the results supported a significant interaction effect for benevolence and purchase intention. The effect of benevolence is expressed with a company who speaks against ones self-interest and takes responsibility. Stealing thunder together with a product crisis resulted in the highest outcome values of benevolence and

purchase intention. The effect of being proactive about the crisis situation when there is a product crisis had more impact on the outcomes of benevolence and purchase intention compared to the moral crisis. This indicates that customers found it more necessary for an organization to communicate about a defective product that can cause harm to a person than a product that is made in poor working conditions. Customers view it as more serious if the organization itself does not disclose the product crisis, because they expect for product crises more information than they do for moral crises (Dutta & Pullig, 2011). Customers' personal safety concerns are stronger for a product crisis. However, the variables ability, integrity and forgiveness remained not significant. A possible explanation might be that moral crises are of more interest to customers that are devoted to the organization and might take an ethical mistake even personal (Carrigan & Atalla, 2001). People make evaluations and judgments about the concept of messages based on their personal involvement towards a particular topic. The more personal involvement or relevance is aroused in the public, the more attribution of responsibility to the organization. Again, because of the fictitious brand in both crises situations, participants were not personally attached and could not have much interest in the company, which might result in no clear distinction between the values related variables of integrity and forgiveness. Furthermore, there was no spokesperson of the organization who expressed genuine sadness over the event. The expression of sadness might increase the positive impact of self-disclosure to an even greater extent (Clayes et al., 2013). Not only do organizations clearly benefit from communicating openly and self-disclosing a crisis, the findings also stress the advantage of expressing genuine emotions during communication efforts. These results comply with research on forgiveness in interpersonal relationships (Davis & Gold, 2011). When an organization offers a response that is considered sincere, consumers may be more likely to forgive the organization for its wrongdoing and evaluate it less negatively. In addition, both organizational crises are regarded as internal and controllable which gives the public reason to believe that the organization should take more responsibility (Moon & Rhee, 2012). In general, the reliability and sincerity could be harmed by both crisis types, because it refers to the ability to realize promises, to adequate knowledge, expertise skills and leadership (Singh, Iglesias & Batista-Foguet, 2012). Characteristics that are not evidently expressed in the crisis scenarios.

5.5.3 FINAL REMARKS

To make sure the interaction effects can be subscribed to the variable as indicated, the covariate severity was included. Crisis severity was directly related to organization's evaluation; however, the significant effects remained after including this covariate. For both interaction effects, customers' judgement of ability did not differ. A logical explanation is that respondents might not have been confident enough that the organization would survive the crisis. The organization's ability to overcome the crisis was not expressed in the scenarios. The lack of information in the crisis scenarios, gives not much insight into the capabilities of the organization. As a result, it might be difficult for respondents to judge an organization's ability, which leads to a neutral response. In general, further research is needed to explain why explicitly those variables remained significant and other variables not. However, this study took a first successful step in examining the combined effect of crisis timing together with pre-crisis reputation and crisis type on relevant variables for organizations experiencing a crisis.

6. IMPLICATIONS

6.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

The main goal of this study was to explore the effectiveness of stealing thunder as crisis timing strategy. The issue of how to respond to adverse events and limit its damaging impact is pivotal for company's survival. Further elaboration of the self-disclosure used by an organization is needed (Arpan & Pompper, 2003; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). A foundation for evidence-based proactive crisis communication is provided. By and large, the findings support the underexamined contention regarding the need for organizations to disseminate messages immediately. Besides, the value of a favourable pre-crisis reputation is confirmed. Furthermore, this research contributes to the field by making a distinction between product and moral crisis type. Especially the moral crisis is understudied, only two recent articles were found, which conducted a research into the effects of the moral crisis (Dutta & Pullig, 2011; Pullig et al., 2006). Product crises involve a defect or failure of an actual product, which can make the product useless or even dangerous (Vassilikopoulou et al., 2009). Researchers might focus more on the tangible assets of the product crisis in comparison with the moral crisis. Hence, it is empirically proven by the current research that there exists a significant difference between the effects of those two crisis types. Especially new are the interaction effects. This study moves the literature forward by empirically exploring the contingency of crisis timing. Including pre-crisis reputation and crisis type, provides literature with new insights about the effects of proactive crisis timing dependent upon the crisis situation. Prior research suggest that stealing thunder literature would be richer if future research address moderating factors between the self-disclosure strategy and its outcome variables (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). The combination of crisis timing, pre-crisis reputation and crisis type in the current research, give new and valuable insights to the crisis communication research. Strong empirical evidence is provided for the influence of the main and interaction effects on relevant outcome variables in a crisis situation.

6.2 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

The guidelines help managers to understand how their communicative choices will impact trustworthiness, forgiveness and purchase intention, dependent upon the crisis situation. The intention of this study is to create a basis in the field of proactive crisis management, so that companies can survive periods of crises with as little damage as possible. One essential question for companies to answer when an crisis incident has happened, is to report the incident or to wait for a third party to intervene. A key practical implication is that crisis managers are encouraged to be the first in terms of alerting customers. It gives the company the opportunity to frame the message, making sure that the damage done to the reputation of the company remains limited. If information about a crisis is not shared openly by the organization, the public is likely to obtain the information from other sources and the organization loses its ability to manage the crisis message. Moreover, this study confirms that organizations in crisis should pay attention to their pre-crisis reputation and crisis type. First of all, it is advisable for an organization in crisis to be proactive with a positive pre-crisis reputation. It leads to the highest outcome values of integrity, forgiveness and purchase intention. Crisis managers should avoid relying solely on the strength of the pre-crisis reputation. Instead, reputation management and the handling of the crisis will determine the overall outcome (Tucker & Melewar, 2005). An organization definitely suffers from not stealing thunder with a positive pre-crisis reputation. To a lesser extent, this statement counts for a negative pre-crisis reputation as well. Moreover, it is strongly recommended for an organization in crisis to be proactive when there is a product crisis. It is beneficial for the organization's judgement of benevolence and customers purchase intention. Remarkably, for a moral crisis it does not make an exceptional difference to disclose the crisis incident or not. Although, stealing thunder when there is a moral crisis still provides the highest outcome values. In summary, the strategy of proactive communication can be generally employed, but should certainly be used for organizations with a positive pre-crisis reputation and in a product crisis.

7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 GENERALIZATION

There are some limitations to mention for this study. First, because a random sample is difficult to obtain, a convenience sample is employed. The generalizability of the findings to the entire population of the Netherlands or other countries is limited. Besides, snowball sampling results in participants with the same traits. It becomes visible in the overrepresented province of Gelderland and the highly educated respondents. Future research should consider a wider range of samples to validate the results.

7.2 MANIPULATIONS

Second, it is valuable to consider other manipulations to examine in interaction with crisis timing. For instance, take the frame of message as variable into account. Yoo and MacInnis (2005) find that rational versus emotional ad formats cause consumers to form their attitude toward the organization in different ways. In this study, the news articles are framed without a strong reaction of the company. The presence of emotional or rational appeals of the organization could influence the response of the public (Brown & Dacin, 1997). Further, it might be interesting to include customers' emotions, like their feelings of anger and blame. Nabi (2003) reveals that emotions can serve a framing function, such that "repeated pairing of certain emotions with particular ideas or events shapes the way in which one interprets and responds to those events" (p. 227). The study of Kim and Cameron (2011) manipulated emotional framing by letting the organizational spokesperson express sadness. They advocate that emotions affect information processing and are key predictors of behavioural attitudes and intentions toward the organization. Moreover, issue severity prevails to be significant variable to include, because this was the only significant covariate. It might be advisable to include issue severity in a more detailed way. All are suggestions to emphasize on the contingency and strength of proactive crisis timing.

7.3 DEPENDENT VARIABLES

Third, based on the factor analysis the two dependent variables transparency and WOM are removed. Maybe in another context, those two can be considered as separate constructs. In the current research, transparency loads with integrity; however, it remains a conceivable variable to take into consideration. In order to fully account for the concept of transparency, clarification is needed between the operationalization of transparency, openness, and integrity, consistency in words and actions. Researcher already mention that research on transparency has been hindered due to a lack of clear differentiation between the concept of transparency itself, public trust in an organization, and outcomes of organizations' transparent communication efforts (Kim et al, 2014; Rawlins, 2009). The concept of transparency, which is engaging in disclosure, openness, or behaviour to pursue open communication, fits the goal of stealing thunder. Future research is definitely recommended to further process on the concept of transparency.

7.4 TYPE OF CRISIS AND ORGANIZATION

Fourth, the focus of the present study is on two crisis types, chemicals in clothing and child labour, and one organization, clothing brand LeParis. To increase the validity of the research further, future research is recommended to consider a broader range of industries, organizations and crises types. Additionally, the current study uses a hypothetical crisis instead of a real crisis event. A real crisis event may bridge the gap between intention and behaviour. Carrigan and Attalla (2001) illustrated that: "It has been suggested that many people believe there is a responsibility not to do harm. "57% said we should stop buying a product made by children and 21% supported actions against companies they perceive as unethical". A notable difference was found between supporting an action and actually carrying it out oneself. Although the stimuli created for this experiment are realistic

designed, they might have appeared fictitious. The reason to use a fictitious crisis scenario is to control the effect of pre-crisis reputation. A real-life organization limits the research, because participants already have strong perceptions about the organization. Many studies use fictitious organization in order to rule out potential confounding effects (Laufer & Jung, 2010). The use of fictitious organizations entails a difficulty to examine the actual impact of pre-crisis reputation and to accurately measure stakeholders' evaluation of the organizational post-crisis reputation. As an alternative, researchers should use existing favourable and unfavourable reputations from actual organizations (Coombs & Holladay, 2006). For instance, an experimental study by Turk and colleagues (2012) examines the impact of pre-crisis reputation by identifying a pool of corporations with good and bad reputations and using these for their stimuli.

7.5 LONGITUDINAL RESEARCH

Finally, the research is based on short-term results. Respondents learned about the crisis in a forced-exposure situation and were asked to evaluate the organization in crisis immediately thereafter. It remains hard to examine the impact of reputation based on the priming of the reputational valence at one moment in time. Reputation is built up in years; however, the long-term reputation could not be measured in this study. Considering the time frame of this study, an extensive and in-depth analysis of the reputation was too difficult to obtain. However, it is an interesting avenue for future research, therefore, longitudinal is recommended.

8. CONCLUSION

Crisis management is crucial for the survival of an organization. The results of this study validate the beginning statement of this study that whether an organization successfully manages a crisis, largely depends on how an organization acts after the crisis hits. It benefits the organization to release initial information about a crisis occurrence, because reputational damage is intensified if another party is the first to release information about the crisis. Besides, pre-crisis reputation and crisis type remain key predictors of the ultimate organization's evaluation. If the situation of the organization is taken into account, stealing thunder together with a positive pre-crisis reputation and product crisis result in the most positive customers' judgement of the organization. In summary, this study empirically demonstrates the utility of proactive behaviour in restoring or maintaining organizations' perception, with support for the notion that it is important for an organization to be quick in addressing the public. Stealing thunder is an ethical and effective strategy for organizations experiencing a crisis.

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APPENDIX A. STIMULUS MATERIALS



Door: Vivienne Hoekstra – 01-03-2015

“LeParis meldt giftige stoffen in kleding”

“Kankerverwekkende stoffen in kleding blijft een groot probleem. LeParis, een organisatie die kleding produceert voor de westerse markt, meldt gebruik chemicaliën in kleding.”

LeParis wordt gepromoot als een luxe kledingmerk. Nu blijkt dat in de productie van de kleding giftige chemicaliën zijn verwerkt die schadelijk zijn voor de gezondheid. Het gaat om de giftige stoffen NPE's, ftalaten en kankerverwekkende aminen. Een woordvoerder van LeParis maakte deze morgen zelf in een persconferentie bekend dat het bedrijf gebruik maakt van chemicaliën voor de productie van de kleding. LeParis is zich niet bewust van deze productiewijze en geeft aan strategieën te zoeken om het gebruik van schadelijke chemische stoffen uit het productieproces te weren. "LeParis is zich bewust van haar verantwoordelijkheid voor mens en natuur", zo laat de organisatie weten. "Daarom zijn wij bezig met het ontwikkelen van strategieën om het gebruik van schadelijke chemische stoffen uit het productieproces te weren."

De onderneming kwam eerder nog positief in het nieuws, omdat het bezig is met maatschappelijk verantwoord ondernemen gericht op het zorg dragen voor het milieu en de omgeving. LeParis is een inmiddels zeer winstgevend bedrijf en won in 2010 nog de prijs 'Onderneming van het Jaar'.

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De onderneming kwam eerder al negatief in het nieuws, omdat er meerdere rechtszaken tegen haar liepen. LeParis werd aangeklaagd door ontevreden klanten en personeelsleden die vonden dat zij niet goed behandeld werden binnen de organisatie. LeParis stond hierdoor op de rand van faillissement.

Door: Vivienne Hoekstra – 01-03-2015

“Consumentenbond ontdekt giftige stoffen in kleding LeParis”

“Kankerverwekkende stoffen in kleding blijft een groot probleem. Consumentenbond ontdekt chemische stoffen in kleding LeParis, een organisatie die kleding produceert voor de westerse markt.”

LeParis wordt gepromoot als een luxe kledingmerk. Uit onderzoek van de Consumentenbond rees de vraag of de productie wel verliep zoals het hoort. Nu blijkt dat in de productie van de kleding giftige chemicaliën zijn verwerkt die schadelijk zijn voor de gezondheid. Het gaat om de giftige stoffen NPE's, ftalaten en kankerverwekkende aminen. Dat meldt de Consumentenbond in een rapport op hun website. Het onderzoek betrof 120 verschillende kledingitems van het modemerken. De resultaten zijn schokkend “in maar liefst 90 van de onderzochte kledingitems werden producten met gevaarlijke chemicaliën aangetroffen”. De Consumentenbond meldt dat in de kleding “stoffen werden aangetroffen die niet alleen hormoonverstorend, maar ook kankerverwekkend kunnen zijn”.

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Door: Vivienne Hoekstra – 01-03-2015

“LeParis meldt gebruik kinderarbeid”

“Uitbuiting van kinderen blijft een groot probleem in Indiase textiel fabrieken. LeParis, een organisatie die kleding produceert voor de westerse markt, meldt kledingproductie bij een textielbedrijf in New-Delhi waar kinderarbeid voorkomt.”

LeParis wordt gepromoot als een luxe kledingmerk. Nu blijkt dat voor de productie van de kleding kinderen worden gebruikt. Het gaat om kinderen van soms nog geen tien jaar oud uit India. Een woordvoerder van LeParis maakte deze morgen zelf in een persconferentie bekend dat het bedrijf inderdaad de kleding produceert in India. LeParis is zich niet bewust van deze productiewijze en geeft aan strategieën te zoeken om de inzet van kinderen bij de productie van kleding te weren. “LeParis is zich bewust van zijn verantwoordelijkheid voor mens en natuur”, zo laat de organisatie weten. “Daarom zijn wij bezig met het ontwikkelen van strategieën om de inzet van kinderen in het productieproces te weren.”

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APPENDIX B. QUESTIONNAIRE SCALES

TABLE 1. *Measurement of items per construct*

TRUSTWORTHINESS	
ABILITY	
TRUSTA1	This organization is very capable of performing their job
TRUSTA2	This organization is known to be successful at the things tries to do
TRUSTA3	This organization has insufficient knowledge about the work that needs done*
TRUSTA4	I feel very confident about this organization's skills
TRUSTA5	This organization is not well qualified*
BENEVOLENCE	
TRUSTB1	This organization is very concerned about my welfare
TRUSTB2	My needs and desires are very important to this organization*
TRUSTB3	This organization would knowingly do anything to hurt me
TRUSTB4	This organization will go out of his way to help me
TRUSTB5	This organization does not really look out for what is important for me*
INTEGRITY	
TRUSTI1	This organization has a strong sense of justice
TRUSTI2	I never have to worry about whether this organization will stick to her word
TRUSTI3	This organization does not tries hard to be fair in dealings with others*
TRUSTI4	The organizations' actions and behaviours are very consistent
TRUSTI5	Unsound principles seem to guide this organizations' behaviour*
TRANSPARENCY	
TRANS1	LeParis does not tells me everything I need to know*
TRANS2	LeParis provides me with a learning opportunity about itself
TRANS3	LeParis enables me to know what it is doing
TRANS4	LeParis wants me to understand what it is doing
TRANS5	LeParis is not open with me*
FORGIVENESS	
COGNITIVE	
FORGIVC1	I cannot trust LeParis services anymore because of the crisis situation*
FORGIVC2	I would not be able to change my negative thoughts about LeParis because of the crisis*
FORGIVC3	I would regard LeParis as a good company although the crisis situation occurred
AFFECTIVE	
FORGIVA1	I am disappointed about LeParis because of the crisis situation*
FORGIVA2	The crisis situation prompts me to dislike LeParis*
FORGIVA3	I do not feel anger toward LeParis due to crisis situation
WORD OF MOUTH INTENTION	
WOM1	I would discourage friends to by products from LeParis*
WOM2	I would discourage family members or relative to buy products from LeParis*
WOM3	I would not recommend LeParis clothing to someone who asked my advice*
WOM4	I would say negative things about LeParis and its products to other people*
PURCHASE INTENTION	
PURIN1	Because of the crisis incident, I will switch to some other brand*
PURIN2	The likelihood of me buying this product again is quite high
PURIN3	I will continue to buy this brand of product in the future

NOTE *REVERSED CODED ITEMS

APPENDIX C. QUESTIONNAIRE DUTCH

Beste respondent,

Ik ben Ester van Laar, studente Corporate Communication aan de Universiteit Twente. Voor mijn afstudeeronderzoek doe ik onderzoek naar crisiscommunicatie met behulp van een vragenlijst. De vragenlijst zal ongeveer 10 minuten van uw tijd in beslag nemen.

In dit onderzoek staat uw mening centraal. Bij het invullen van de vragenlijst is het belangrijk dat u deze zo eerlijk en volledig mogelijk invult. Er bestaan geen goede of foute antwoorden. Deelname aan het onderzoek is geheel anoniem. Alle gegevens worden vertrouwelijk behandeld en niet aan derden verstrekt.

Bedankt dat u mee wilt doen aan het onderzoek.

Ester van Laar
e.vanlaar@student.utwente.nl

Ik stem geheel vrijwillig in met deelname aan dit onderzoek. Ik behoud me daarbij het recht voor om op elk moment, zonder opgave van redenen, mijn deelname aan dit onderzoek te kunnen beëindigen.

- Ik ga akkoord en ga verder naar het onderzoek
- Nee, ik wil niet deelnemen aan het onderzoek

De vragenlijst is opgebouwd uit drie delen. Allereerst krijgt u een nieuwsbericht te lezen. Lees dit bericht alstublieft zorgvuldig door, want in het tweede deel worden u een aantal vragen gesteld over het nieuwsbericht. In het laatste deel worden enkele algemene gegevens van u gevraagd.

DEEL 1 - NIEUWSBERICHT

Beantwoord de volgende vragen op basis van het nieuwsbericht dat u zojuist gelezen heeft. Wanneer u het antwoord niet zeker weet, kunt u het nieuwsbericht nogmaals lezen door één keer terug te klikken.

Wie meldt de crisissituatie?

- LeParis
- Consumentenbond

In wat voor soort crisis is LeParis betrokken geraakt?

- Chemische stoffen in kleding
- Kinderarbeid

Hoe kwam LeParis in het nieuws vóór de crisissituatie?

- Positief
- Negatief

In welke mate voelt u zich betrokken bij de omschreven crisissituatie?

- Helemaal niet betrokken
- Niet betrokken
- Een beetje betrokken
- Betrokken
- Heel erg betrokken

In welke mate vindt u de omschreven crisissituatie ernstig?

- Helemaal niet ernstig
- Niet ernstig
- Een beetje ernstig
- Ernstig
- Heel erg ernstig

Nu volgen een aantal stellingen per onderwerp. Lees deze goed door. De stellingen worden namelijk afwisselend positief en negatief geformuleerd. Per stelling kunt u kiezen uit vijf antwoorden:

1. Helemaal mee eens
2. Mee eens
3. Niet mee eens/niet mee oneens
4. Mee oneens
5. Helemaal mee oneens

Per stelling kunt u één antwoord geven. Kies het antwoord dat uw mening het beste weergeeft.

DEEL 2 – STELLINGEN LEPARIS

Geef aan in hoeverre u, na het lezen van het nieuwsbericht, eens bent met de volgende stellingen over LeParis. Houd daarbij in gedachten dat u vóór de crisissituatie graag producten kocht bij deze organisatie.

	Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Niet mee eens/ niet mee oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Deze organisatie is bekwaam genoeg om haar taak uit te voeren	1	2	3	4	5
Deze organisatie is succesvol in de dingen die ze probeert te doen	1	2	3	4	5
Deze organisatie heeft onvoldoende kennis over het werk dat gedaan moet worden	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ben overtuigd van de vaardigheden van de organisatie	1	2	3	4	5
Deze organisatie is slecht gekwaliceerd	1	2	3	4	5
	Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Niet mee eens/ niet mee oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Deze organisatie is erg bezorgd om mijn welzijn	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn behoeften en wensen zijn erg belangrijk voor deze organisatie	1	2	3	4	5
Deze organisatie zou mij opzettelijk kunnen kwetsen	1	2	3	4	5

Deze organisatie zou alles doen om mij te helpen	1	2	3	4	5
Deze organisatie kijkt niet naar wat belangrijk voor mij is	1	2	3	4	5
	Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Niet mee eens/ niet mee oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Deze organisatie heeft een sterk gevoel voor rechtvaardigheid	1	2	3	4	5
Ik hoef mij geen zorgen te maken of deze organisatie zich wel aan haar woord houdt'	1	2	3	4	5
Deze organisatie doet niet haar best om eerlijk met anderen om te gaan	1	2	3	4	5
De acties en het gedrag van de organisatie zijn consistent	1	2	3	4	5
Onverantwoorde principes lijken het gedrag van de organisatie te leiden	1	2	3	4	5

DEEL 2 – STELLINGEN LEPARIS

Geef aan in hoeverre u, na het lezen van het nieuwsbericht, eens bent met de volgende stellingen over LeParis. Houd daarbij in gedachten dat u vóór de crisissituatie graag producten kocht bij deze organisatie.

	Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Niet mee eens/ niet mee oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
LeParis vertelt mij niet alles wat ik moet weten	1	2	3	4	5
LeParis geeft een leermoment over zichzelf	1	2	3	4	5
LeParis zorgt ervoor dat ik weet waar het mee bezig is	1	2	3	4	5
LeParis wil graag dat ik begrijp waar het mee bezig is	1	2	3	4	5
LeParis is niet open naar mij toe	1	2	3	4	5

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	Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Niet mee eens/ niet mee oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Ik kan de services van LeParis niet meer vertrouwen door de crisissituatie	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ben niet in staat om mijn negatieve gedachten over LeParis te veranderen door de crisissituatie	1	2	3	4	5
Ik zie LeParis nog steeds als een goed bedrijf ondanks de crisissituatie	1	2	3	4	5
	Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Niet mee eens/ niet mee oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Ik ben teleurgesteld in LeParis door de crisissituatie	1	2	3	4	5
De crisissituatie zorgt ervoor dat ik LeParis niet meer leuk vind	1	2	3	4	5
Ik voel geen woede naar LeParis toe door de crisissituatie	1	2	3	4	5

DEEL 2 – STELLINGEN LEPARIS

Geef aan in hoeverre u, na het lezen van het nieuwsbericht, eens bent met de volgende stellingen over LeParis. Houd daarbij in gedachten dat u vóór de crisissituatie graag producten kocht bij deze organisatie.

	Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Niet mee eens/ niet mee oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Ik zou mijn vrienden afraden om producten van LeParis te kopen	1	2	3	4	5
Ik zou familieleden afraden om producten van LeParis te kopen	1	2	3	4	5
Ik zou kleding van LeParis niet aanbevelen als iemand mij om advies zou vragen	1	2	3	4	5
Ik zou negatieve dingen zeggen over LeParis en haar producten	1	2	3	4	5

DEEL 2 – STELLINGEN LEPARIS

Geef aan in hoeverre u, na het lezen van het nieuwsbericht, eens bent met de volgende stellingen over LeParis. Houd daarbij in gedachten dat u vóór de crisissituatie graag producten kocht bij deze organisatie.

	Helemaal mee oneens	Mee oneens	Niet mee eens/ niet mee oneens	Mee eens	Helemaal mee eens
Door het crisis incident, zou ik voor een ander merk gaan kiezen	1	2	3	4	5
De kans dat ik opnieuw een product van LeParis koop is groot	1	2	3	4	5
Ik zal doorgaan met het kopen van producten van dit merk	1	2	3	4	5

DEEL 3 – ALGEMENE GEGEVENS

Wat is uw geslacht?

- Man
- Vrouw

Wat is uw leeftijd?

In welke provincie woont u?

- Drenthe
- Flevoland
- Friesland
- Gelderland
- Groningen
- Limburg
- Noord-Brabant
- Noord-Holland
- Overijssel
- Utrecht
- Zeeland
- Zuid-Holland

Wat is uw hoogst afgeronde opleiding? Als u nog steeds een opleiding volgt, vul dan deze alstublieft in.

- Basisonderwijs
- Beroepsonderwijs
- VMBO
- HAVO
- VWO
- MBO
- HBO
- WO
- Anders, namelijk

DEEL 3 – ALGEMENE GEGEVENS

Houdt u zich met mode bezig?

- Heel weinig
- Weinig
- Gemiddeld
- Veel
- Heel veel

Hoe veel geeft u gemiddeld per maand uit aan nieuw kleding voor uzelf?

- 0-50 euro
- 50-100 euro
- 100-150 euro
- 150-200 euro
- Meer dan 200 euro

Hoe zou u uw uitgiftepatroon aan kleding omschrijven?

- Heel weinig
- Weinig
- Gemiddeld
- Veel
- Heel veel

Hoe vaak koopt u gemiddeld nieuwe kleding voor uzelf?

- Wekelijks
- Maandelijks
- Per seizoen
- Twee keer per jaar
- Eén keer per jaar of minder

U bent klaar met invullen van de vragenlijst. Ik wil u hartelijk danken voor uw tijd en moeite om de vragenlijst in te vullen.

Mocht u vragen hebben of geïnteresseerd zijn in de resultaten van het onderzoek, kunt u een e-mail sturen naar: e.vanlaar@student.utwente.nl.