



# **How to present a crisis**

**The effects of message timing, message framing and crisis severity on emotions, attitude and behavioral intentions**

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**How to present a crisis: the effects of message timing, message framing and crisis severity on emotions, attitude and behavioral intentions**

**Master thesis**

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## ABSTRACT

When a crisis hits an organization, the organization has to decide on a crisis communication strategy. Part of the strategy is to decide when to disclose the crisis and how to present the information about the crisis. The primary goal of this study is to experimentally investigate to what extent the timing, proactive or reactive, and framing, rational or emotional, of the crisis message and the impact of crisis severity, low or high, influence emotions, attitude and behavioral intentions. The latter were defined more specifically as anger and sympathy towards the company, competence-based and character-based trustworthiness of the organization, positive and negative word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. By means of an online survey the data was gathered. Participants were assigned to one of eight conditions, all containing a hypothetical crisis message. The findings of this study indicate that crisis severity strongly influences all crisis communication outcomes. Moreover, message framing is an effective crisis communication strategy when used in combination with message timing, as they positively influence sympathy, trustworthiness, positive word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. Furthermore, results show that emotions, both anger and sympathy, are predictors of trustworthiness, word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. This study contributes to the field of research by confirming previous research on message timing and extending literature on message framing and crisis severity in relation to crisis communication. In addition, the interplay between them is a valuable contribution to literature, as it has not been examined before. In sum, the current research supports the notion that a proactive response in crisis communication demands a rational frame for the crisis message, whereas a reactive response benefits from a more emotional frame.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many organizations experience a crisis at some point in their existence. Because of the damage a crisis can inflict, it demands from the organization to act immediately (Pearson & Clair, 1998; Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). The organization has to decide how to act and respond, or communicate, to their stakeholders. Scholars have studied response strategies increasingly in the past decades. Dependent on the type of crisis, different responses are appropriate, for example apology, denial or justification (Coombs, 2007). Only recently, scholars introduced message framing into the context of crisis communication (Claeys, Cauberghe & Leysen, 2013; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014). Thus, its effects on people's emotions, attitudes and intentions are still understudied. Also, its relevance for practitioners still has to be investigated. Therefore, the central focus of this study is to examine the use of message framing in the context of crisis communication.

Scholars refer to crisis communication as “the collection, processing, and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation” (Coombs, 2010, p. 20). They agree upon the surprising nature of a crisis, because the probability of its occurrence is low (Coombs, 2007; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). Additionally, they agree upon the high impact of a crisis, which is mostly negative, since it threatens the operations, viability, finances and reputation of an organization (Coombs, 2007; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Pearson & Mitroff, 1993). Crises can vary in size and shape. Through crisis communication, organizations can try to prevent any damage to their reputation (Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014). Furthermore, Benoit (1997) argues that in crisis communication “perceptions are more important than reality” (p. 178). This emphasizes the importance of the crisis message, whose purpose is not only to inform and convince the people who are involved, but also to do ‘damage control’ (Ray, 1999; Sturges, 1994).

Pearson and Mitroff (1993) argued early on that “an organization is vulnerable to limitless types of crises” (p. 49). In the Situational Crisis Communication Theory, which helps to determine how to protect the reputation of the organization through postcrisis communication, Coombs (2007) structures these types of crises into three crisis clusters: (1) the victim cluster, (2) the accidental cluster and (3) the preventable cluster. These three clusters range in their attribution of crisis responsibility from no responsibility (1), to minimal (2) and very strong attributions of crisis responsibility (3). The more the organization is held responsible for the crisis that occurred, the more the crisis will negatively impact the reputation of the organization (Coombs, 1998).

An organizational crisis is often a highly emotional event, for the victims, as well as the organization and its members involved (Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014). The emotions felt by the organization and its members during the crisis might be suppressed by people in the organization and not shown in organizational communication, as expressing them may be considered inappropriate (Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014). The organization could also choose to communicate the emotions felt.

Previous studies on message framing called for the need for more research on the subject. Firstly, a study into the effectiveness of message timing strategies combined with message framing, discussed the need of replicating their study with a less severe and less emotionally involving crisis (Claeys, Cauberghe & Leysen, 2013). The current study will do this by adding the impact of crisis severity. Thus, it will not only try to replicate their findings, but also examine how these results are affected by crisis severity. Secondly, previous studies concerning emotions in crisis communication primarily focused on emotions as an outcome of a message (Jin, 2009; Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014). Only recently scholars started to investigate emotions as a crisis message frame. Furthermore, the novelty of this study is that it will also investigate the impact of message framing on consumers' felt emotions (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014).

Consequently, this study aims to contribute to crisis communication research by adding the impact of crisis severity on crisis communication, and in addition, it aims to investigate the interplay between severity and the effects of message timing and framing. These three variables are chosen to examine to what extent crisis communication strategies will benefit the organization the most when affected by crisis severity. The research goal is to investigate if message timing combined with message framing and the impact of crisis severity affect crisis communication outcomes such as consumers' felt emotions, attitude and behavioral intentions. This leads to the following research question.

**RQ.** To what extent do the timing and the framing of the message and the severity of the crisis influence consumers' felt emotions, trustworthiness of the organization and behavioral intentions towards the organization?

## 2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this study the effect of message timing combined with message framing and crisis severity on crisis communication outcomes such as consumers' felt emotions, attitude and behavioral intentions is studied. Firstly, in this theoretical framework the dependent variables will be discussed. Secondly, the above mentioned constructs will be examined in detail.

### 2.1 Emotions, attitude and behavioral intentions

Communicating about a crisis can induce certain emotions among the company's stakeholders. In order to construct a crisis communication strategy to control the situation, it is helpful to understand the dominant emotions people feel in a crisis situation (Kim & Cameron, 2011). An emotion is experienced by an individual as a result of "his or her subjective evaluation regarding an event" (Kim & Cameron, 2011, p. 832) and as "pleasant or unpleasant, conducive or not conducive to one's goals, as changeable or not, and as compatible or incompatible with norms" (Lanctôt & Hess, 2007, p. 207). In a crisis situation people are mostly experiencing negative emotions, like anger, sadness, fright or anxiety (Jin, 2009). On the other hand, a positive emotion like sympathy towards the organization is formed as a result of how the organization deals with the crisis situation or people's judgement of the organization's responsibility (McDonald, Sparks & Glendon, 2010).

When in a crisis, the chances are high that the level of trustworthiness of the organization is endangered. Trustworthiness is defined as "the perceived characteristics of the trustee that serve as the primary basis on which individuals are willing to accept vulnerability" (Dirks & Skarlicki, 2009, p. 137). It consists of three constructs: competence, benevolence and integrity. Competence is defined by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman (1995) as "the group of skills, competencies, and characteristics that enable a party to have influence" (p. 717), benevolence is defined as "the willingness to do good to the trustor" (p. 718) and integrity is defined as "the trustor's perception that the trustee has principles" (p. 719).

It is expected that a crisis also affects behavioral intentions. One of the more dangerous is negative word-of-mouth, because as people engage in negative word-of-mouth it could also reach people who are unaware of the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Word-of-mouth intentions are defined as "informal, person-to-person communication between a perceived noncommercial communicator and a receiver regarding a brand, a product, an organization, or a service" (Harrison-Walker, 2001, p. 63). It could be divided into positive and negative word-of-mouth intentions, in which positive could refer to the likelihood that



someone would recommend the organization (Maxham, 2001) and negative would refer to the likelihood that someone would denigrate the organization (Richins, 1984). Other behavioral intentions are purchase intentions, defined as “an individual’s conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand” (Spears & Singh, 2004, p. 56).

## **2.2 Message timing**

As mentioned in the introduction, an organizational crisis requires the company to respond immediately. However, this does not necessarily mean that sending a crisis message immediately has the most positive effect. Timing refers to the moment the organization issues a message about the crisis (Coombs, 2015). This moment can occur at any given time during the crisis event. Thus, an organization has to decide when it will benefit them most to release their crisis message.

Message timing strategies are referred to by a diverse range of terms. In this study, the distinction will be made between a proactive and reactive crisis response. A proactive crisis response, which is similar to stealing thunder and self-disclosure, means the organization discloses the information about the crisis first, before any other party publishes it (Arpan & Pompper, 2003; Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005; Coombs, 2015), or more specifically, it encompasses a message which contains an admission of a weakness (this could be a mistake or a failure) or the existence of a crisis. The organization “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). The effectiveness of a proactive strategy might differ with different crisis types and, consequently, different ratings of responsibility (Arpan & Pompper, 2003).

Alternatively, if the organization decides not to or cannot exert a proactive strategy, another party, like the news media, is likely to disclose the crisis event. Consequently, if organizations do not respond, it might look as if they are not in control of the situation or they have something to hide, which might be interpreted negatively by the public (Holladay, 2009). Hence, this requires an organization to employ a reactive response.

When looking more closely into the interplay of timing strategies in the relationship between organizations and the news media, a proactive strategy seems to have the upperhand. The first argument to support this is that an organization that uses a proactive response will not only get less negative news coverage about the crisis, but also more positive headlines and stories (Wigley, 2001). Secondly, Arpan and Pompper (2003) also found that journalists may perceive a proactive response as news value that is associated with the crisis, even though they observed in their study that it “makes little to no difference in how journalists frame their

stories” (p. 302). Also, the organization presented all the information available in their proactive response, there is not much news value for journalists, because it is already known (Arpan & Pompper, 2003).

All the same, research has proven a proactive response has its advantages. Firstly, a proactive response enhances credibility ratings, which consists out of measuring honesty, sincerity and trustworthiness (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). This was proven again in a study conducted by Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005). Secondly, Weiner, Graham, Peter and Zmuidinas (1991) conducted a study into the effects of confessions and their timing. The results suggest that people would perceive a proactive response to be more trustworthy and it would elicit higher sympathy and consequently lower anger towards the organization (Weiner, et al., 1991). Additionally, McDonald, et al. (2010) found that if a company confessed about the crisis, hence, using a proactive response, it reduces anger and negative word-of-mouth and increases sympathy.

- H1.** A proactive response from the company leads to a **higher** a) sympathy for the company, b) competence-based trustworthiness, c) character-based trustworthiness, d) positive word-of-mouth intentions, e) purchase intentions and **lower** f) anger and g) negative word-of-mouth intentions, as compared to a reactive response.

### 2.3 Message framing

To respond to a crisis, a frame can be chosen. In communication, framing can be of impact as it presents two messages differently by framing the same content in one message “in terms of its source’s thoughts or feelings” (Mayer & Tormala, 2010, p. 444). It was found that framing in communication has profound implications for persuasion (Mayer & Tormala, 2010), which, if persuasion leads to a positive attitude towards the organization, is an advantage for a company in a crisis. Framing involves, according to Coombs (2007), the presentation of the information, for instance in words and phrases. By using a frame, the organization chooses certain factors to highlight. These factors will get more attention from the people who receive the message when evaluating the organization (Druckman, 2001). Entman (1993) defines it as follows: “to frame is to select some aspects of perceived reality and make them more salient in communicating the text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation and/or treatment recommendation for the item described” (p. 55).

When a crisis occurs, consumers perceive not the objective fact of the crisis event, but the facts released by either the organization involved in the crisis or the media (Cho & Gower, 2006). Therefore, framing a message is important, as it influences “the public’s evaluation of organizational responsibility for the crisis event” (Cho & Gower, 2006, p. 420). The presentation or framing of messages in a crisis situation can affect the consumers’ willingness to assess the content of the message (McKay-Nesbitt, Manchanda, Smith & Huhmann, 2011).

Scholars have different ways of looking at message framing depending on their fields of research. Marketing research discusses, for example, positive versus negative framing and their effects on persuasion (Maheswaran & Meyers-Levy, 1990). Emotions could also be used as a frame. Previously, researchers looked into the effect of experienced emotions as part of framing (Nabi, 2003). However, the use of emotions in the actual frame, which developed among marketing scholars (McKay-Nesbitt et al., 2011; Yoo & MacInnis, 2005), has only recently been introduced in the field of crisis communication (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; Claeys, Cauberghe & Leysen, 2013). On the one hand, there is rational framing, also referred to as rational appeals or informational ads (McKay-Nesbitt et al., 2011; Moon & Rhee, 2012; Yoo & MacInnis, 2005), which uses objective information to describe something. On the other hand, there is emotional framing, also referred to as emotional appeals or emotional ads (McKay-Nesbitt et al., 2011; Moon & Rhee, 2012; Yoo & MacInnis, 2005), in which emotions are used to evoke feelings on the part of the receiver. Considering the role emotions play in crisis communication, this distinction in framing will be investigated more thoroughly.

### *2.3.1 Rational framing*

When a message is framed in a rational manner, it presents the information about the crisis objectively and in a straightforward manner (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; McKay-Nesbitt et al., 2011) and in crisis communication it will give “factual and concrete information on the crisis event itself and describe the steps the organization is taking to manage the crisis situation” (Moon & Rhee, 2012, p. 681). The rational frame is operationalized by Claeys, Cauberghe and Leysen (2013) as direct, straightforward and objective, and by exactly presenting the damage of the crisis. In sum, in this study, rational framing will be regarded as the factual and straightforward description of the crisis event, without displaying any emotion or including dramatization of the information.

Rational framing is used to change the beliefs of the reader, because the reader relies on the arguments or reason presented in the message (Moon & Rhee, 2012). Hence, the message appeals to the rationality of the consumer (McKay-Nesbitt et al., 2011) and

consumers rely on arguments concerning product attributes (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999). By using such a frame, it demands consumers to focus their attention on the content of the message (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014). Especially, when people are highly involved with the crisis this focus will meet their need for information about the crisis (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; Yoo & MacInnis, 2005).

### 2.3.2 Emotional framing

Claeys, Cauberghe and Leysen (2013) operationalized the emotional frames in their study in line with Stafford and Day (1995) by including “subjective, evaluative properties and emotional loaded adjectives” (p. 299). But it is also referred to by using drama (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014). Moon and Rhee (2012) underscore that a message in that regard “focuses more on expressing the organization’s sincere sorrow, regret, and concern for those affected by a crisis in describing how the organization is managing the crisis situation” (p. 681). Altogether, in this study emotional framing will be regarded as an emotionally charged frame that presents information in a subjective manner.

By using emotions, the company influences how consumers perceive response type messages that are issued by the responsible company (Kim & Cameron, 2011). In their study, Kim and Cameron (2011) found anger and sadness to be the two most important emotions in times of crisis. Sadness was found to be more effective in an emotional corporate message, because consumers that experience anger as the dominant emotion, read the news less closely and, thus, develop more negative attitudes toward the company.

Kim and Cameron (2011) experimentally proved that emotional messages can lead to public responses. Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014) argue that by communicating emotion, the organization appears to be more human, which may decrease feelings of anger towards the organization. It not only appeals to the emotions of the consumer (Yoo & MacInnis, 2005), on which they depend for being effective (Albers-Miller & Stafford, 1999), but it also influences attitudes and behavioral intentions towards the organization (Kim & Cameron, 2011). Additionally, Kotler and Armstrong (1994) argue that “emotional appeals attempt to stir up either negative or positive emotions that can motivate purchase” (p. 468). Furthermore, communicating emotion can increase the trustworthiness of the organization (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996).

- H2.** An emotional frame leads to a **higher** a) sympathy for the company, b) competence-based trustworthiness, c) character-based trustworthiness, d)

positive word-of-mouth intentions, e) purchase intentions and **lower** f) anger and g) negative word-of-mouth intentions, as compared to a rational frame.

## 2.4 Crisis severity

An organizational crisis can vary in its (perceived) severity. Severity particularly focuses on the damage caused by the crisis (Fediuk, Coombs & Botero, 2010). This damage can include injuries, death, environmental damage, and financial damage (Coombs, 1998; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Severity of the crisis can also mean “the degree of discrepancy or gap between expectations and perceived organizational behavior/actions” (Fediuk, Coombs & Botero, 2010, p. 643). The larger the gap, the more severe the incident (Fediuk, Coombs & Botero, 2010) and the more severe the incident, the more the public will attribute crisis responsibility to the organization (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

When an organizational crisis affects the consumers or their goals directly, the crisis is more severe than when it is of little effect on the consumer (Fediuk, Coombs & Botero, 2010; Lee, 2004). For example, if the crisis involves a product they consume, negative emotional reactions can be provoked (Lee, 2004).

Early research did not find a relationship between crisis severity (cf. crisis damage) and the image of the company in an accidental crisis (Coombs, 1998). However, when severity relates negatively to the perceptions of the organization’s reputation, the more severe the crisis is perceived, the more negative the reputation (Claeys, Cauberghe & Vyncke, 2010). Lee (2004) hypothesized that people will be less sympathetic towards the organization and will mistrust the organization more if the organization is in a severe crisis as compared to a less severe crisis. However, this was not confirmed. In this study, this hypothesis will be tested again.

Additionally, Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005) found a relationship between the perceptions of crisis severity and purchase intentions in their study. If the crisis is perceived as less severe, purchase intentions will be greater. Research shows that future purchases are only affected shortly after a highly severe crisis has occurred (Vassilikopoulou, Siomkos, Chatzipanagiotou & Pantouvakis, 2009). This leads to the assumption that purchase intentions are low after a high-severity crisis.

Folkes (1984) conducted a research into the relation between causes of a product failure and consumer reactions in the setting of a product failure. The results indicated that when this failure is company-related, it leads consumers to experience anger towards the company and generate negative word-of-mouth behavior.

- H3.** A low-severity crisis leads to a **higher** a) sympathy for the company, b) competence-based trustworthiness, c) character-based trustworthiness, d) positive word-of-mouth intentions, e) purchase intentions and **lower** f) anger and g) negative word-of-mouth intentions, as compared to a high-severity crisis.

## 2.5 The interaction between message timing and message framing

Organizations could choose to use multiple communication strategies in a crisis situation. They could, for example, both intentionally decide to use a message timing and message framing strategy. Research suggests that framing works as an advantage when the party issuing the message employs a proactive response strategy, because they can frame negative information in a more positive light (Williams, Bourgeois, & Croyle, 1993). Additionally, Claeys, Cauberghe and Leysen (2013) argue that a proactive response leads to a more positive impact of message framing. They found that when a proactive response strategy is employed, an emotional frame results in less reputational damage from a crisis and a more positive postcrisis reputation than a rational frame. Part of measuring reputational damage, Claeys, Cauberghe and Leysen (2013) also investigated the level of trust in the organization. This leads to the assumption that an emotional frame in a proactive response more positively influences trustworthiness of the company.

- H4.** If the company employs a proactive response, an emotional frame leads to a **higher** a) sympathy for the company, b) competence-based trustworthiness, c) character-based trustworthiness, d) positive word-of-mouth intentions, e) purchase intentions and **lower** f) anger and g) negative word-of-mouth intentions, as compared to an emotional frame in a reactive response.
- H5.** If the company employs a reactive response, a rational frame leads to a **higher** a) sympathy for the company, b) competence-based trustworthiness, c) character-based trustworthiness, d) positive word-of-mouth intentions, e) purchase intentions and **lower** f) anger and g) negative word-of-mouth intentions, as compared to a rational frame in a proactive response.

## 2.6 The interaction between message framing and crisis severity

Concerning the interaction between message framing and crisis severity, no research has been conducted so far. However, Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014) argue that when an organization communicates emotion, or employs an emotional frame, the appropriateness of these emotions in the specific situation should be kept in mind. For example, it is expected that a company in a high-severity crisis, which induces negative emotions, will express some form of regret or remorse, as by doing that it portrays the organization as more humane and sincere. Therefore, it is hypothesized that an emotional approach to framing is more appropriate in a high-severity crisis as compared to a rational approach. Consequently, it is expected that in a low-severity crisis it is sufficient to present the crisis situation in a straightforward and rational manner by just providing the facts of the crisis. It displays the competence of the organization, and it is expected that people might perceive an emotional response as an overstatement in this case.

- H6.** If the company is in a low-severity crisis, a rational frame leads to a **higher** a) sympathy for the company, b) competence-based trustworthiness, c) character-based trustworthiness, d) positive word-of-mouth intentions, e) purchase intentions and **lower** f) anger and g) negative word-of-mouth intentions, as compared to an emotional frame in a low-severity crisis.
- H7.** If the company is in a high-severity crisis, an emotional frame leads to a **higher** a) sympathy for the company, b) competence-based trustworthiness, c) character-based trustworthiness, d) positive word-of-mouth intentions, e) purchase intentions and **lower** f) anger and g) negative word-of-mouth intentions, as compared to a rational frame in a high-severity crisis.

## 2.7 The interaction between message timing and crisis severity

Regarding the interplay between timing and severity, little research has been conducted. In their study, Arpan and Pompper (2003) hypothesized that participants in their study would perceive the crisis as less severe when a proactive response was used than when participants learned about the crisis on their own. This hypothesis was not supported. However, Arpan and Pompper's prediction about an interaction, leads to believe that there is some kind of relation between the two variables. It is assumed that in a low-severity crisis, the organization might want to solve the crisis first and think of a solution for those who are affected. This means they want to be one step ahead of their customers before responding to the crisis in public.

Therefore, a reactive response might suffice in a low-severity crisis. In addition, a high-severity crisis, because of its high impact, demands from the organization to act immediately (Pearson & Clair, 1998). It is therefore expected, a proactive response has a more positive impact in a high-severity crisis.

- H8.** If the company is in a low-severity crisis, a reactive response leads to a **higher** a) sympathy for the company, b) competence-based trustworthiness, c) character-based trustworthiness, d) positive word-of-mouth intentions, e) purchase intentions and **lower** f) anger and g) negative word-of-mouth intentions, as compared to a proactive response in a high-severity crisis.
- H9.** If the company is in a high-severity crisis, a proactive response leads to a **higher** a) sympathy for the company, b) competence-based trustworthiness, c) character-based trustworthiness, d) positive word-of-mouth intentions, e) purchase intentions and **lower** f) anger and g) negative word-of-mouth intentions, as compared to a reactive response in a low-severity crisis.

So far, there has not been any research into the three-way interaction effects of timing, framing and severity combined. Therefore, for the three-way interaction an exploratory research question is drafted, which will be addressed in the discussion section of this study.

- RQ.** To what extent does a proactive response as compared to a reactive response, in combination with a rational frame compared to an emotional frame and a low-severity crisis compared to a high-severity crisis lead to a higher or lower a) sympathy, b) anger, c) competence-based trustworthiness, d) character-based trustworthiness, e) positive word-of-mouth intentions, f) negative word-of-mouth intentions and g) purchase intentions.



### 3. METHOD

#### 3.1 Design

To test the hypotheses, a 2 x 2 x 2 between-subjects experiment was conducted. The first independent variable was the timing of the crisis message (proactive response vs. reactive response), the second independent variable was the framing of the crisis message (rational framing vs. emotional framing) and the final independent variable was the severity of the crisis (low severity vs. high severity). The dependent variables included felt emotions towards the company (anger and sympathy), trustworthiness of the company (competence-based and character-based), word-of-mouth intentions (positive and negative) and purchase intentions. Covariates in this study are involvement with health and involvement with the product.

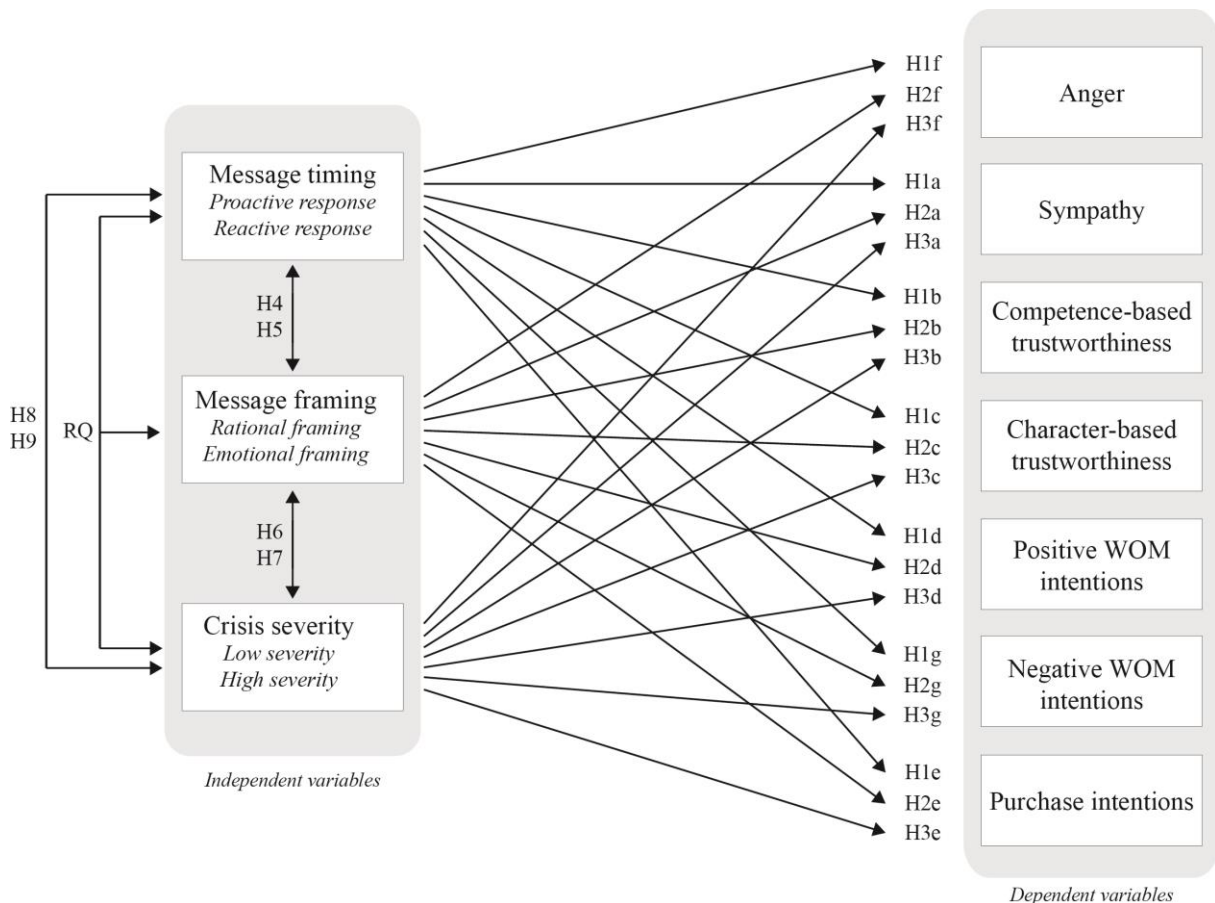


Figure 1. Research model

#### 3.2 Procedure

Participants were approached via social media (Facebook, LinkedIn) and e-mail and asked to participate in an online experiment. An online experiment was chosen as it would keep

participants in their own environment, instead of emphasizing a research environment. In real life people would also encounter a crisis message in their own environment and this study would more accurately mimic the reaction to that message.

When the participants have started the survey, they would have to read an introduction to the research. They were then presented with one of the eight scenarios, which were assigned randomly. After they had read the article, they had to fill out three manipulations checks. Subsequently, they were asked to answer questions regarding their felt emotions towards the company, their perceived trustworthiness of the company, their word-of-mouth intentions and their purchase intentions. To conclude, a few demographic questions were asked. After they had filled out the questionnaire they were thanked for their participation. All scenarios and questions were written in Dutch.

### **3.3 Stimulus Material**

The independent variables were manipulated in scenarios. The manipulations were embedded within a news article containing a product crisis related to a salad company. There were eight different scenarios, each regarding the timing of the response, the framing of the message and the severity of the crisis. To exclude attribution of responsibility as a possible determinant of the outcomes, this study focused on an accidental crisis. An existing news paper was used to present the article to increase the credibility of the content. The article contained news about a salad of the fictitious company SaladSurprise. The eight scenarios can be found in Appendix A.

The timing of the message was manipulated by letting the company release the information about the crisis first (proactive response) or by letting a third party release the existence of the crisis first and then letting the company respond to this news in a statement (reactive response).

As mentioned by Stafford and Day (1995) and Claeys, Cauberghe and Leysen (2013) an emotional frame includes the emphasis on subjective, evaluative properties. Therefore, in the emotionally framed conditions a lot of adjectives (e.g. “terrible mistake”, “sincere apologies”) were used to increase the drama in the response of the company. The predominant emotion used in the scenarios was sadness (e.g. “We are devastated”). In the rationally framed scenarios the information was presented more straightforward (e.g. “We do not know how this could have happened”).

The severity of the crisis was manipulated in a low-severity crisis and a high-severity crisis. The low-severity crisis was an error on the label of a salad. The high-severity crisis was a bacterial infection of the salad, which could lead to sickness and even death.

All scenarios also contained an apology, for the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) presumes that offering a crisis response strategy, like an apology, is necessary in a message about a highly severe crisis in a no thunder condition (Coombs, 2004).

### *3.3.1 Manipulation check*

In order to check if the independent variables, message timing, framing and crisis severity, were manipulated correctly a pre-test was conducted. A total of five questions were asked. They were asked how severe they would rate the crisis on a five-point Likert scale from 1= not severe at all to 5 = very severe. Additionally, regarding framing, the participants were asked if they thought the scenario was nonemotional/emotional, formal/informal, objective/subjective, which was based on a scale used by Claeys, Cauberghe and Leysen (2013). Finally, for timing, participants were asked who originally reported about the crisis, the company or another authority.

Eight people participated ( $M = 23.36$ ,  $SD = 1.93$ ), all were randomly assigned to the scenarios. An independent samples t-test was conducted to measure if the independent variables were manipulated correctly. A significant difference was found for severity ( $t(14) = -6.70$ ,  $p = .00$ ) with in the low severity ( $M = 2.11$ ,  $SD = .60$ ) and in the high severity ( $M = 4.43$ ,  $SD = .79$ ). A significant difference was also found for timing with for the proactive response ( $M = 1.00$ ,  $SD = .00$ ) and for the reactive response ( $M = 1.00$ ,  $SD = .00$ ). A significant difference was not found for framing ( $t(14) = -.61$ ,  $p = .55$ ) with for the rational framing ( $M = 3.25$ ,  $SD = .71$ ) and for the emotional framing ( $M = 3.50$ ,  $SD = .93$ ). After this pre-test was conducted, the manipulations for the framing condition were changed and a second pre-test was prepared.

A second pretest was performed in order to check the manipulations that were changed. This time six people participated ( $M = 23.17$ ,  $SD = 1.40$ ), again all were randomly assigned to two surveys. As in the first pre-test, independent samples t-tests were conducted to measure if the independent variables were manipulated correctly in the second pretest. A significant difference was found for framing ( $t(10) = -8.49$ ,  $p = .00$ ) with in the rational framing ( $M = 1.06$ ,  $SD = .14$ ) and in the emotional framing ( $M = 1.72$ ,  $SD = .14$ ). A significant difference was also found for timing ( $t(5) = -3.16$ ,  $p = .25$ ) with in the proactive response ( $M = 1.00$ ,  $SD = .00$ ) and the reactive response ( $M = 1.67$ ,  $S = .52$ ). A significant

difference was not found for severity ( $t(10) = -.32, p = .75$ ) with in the low severity ( $M = 3.2, SD = 1.10$ ) and in the high-severity condition ( $M = 3.43, SD = 1.27$ ). However, in the first pretest a significant difference for severity was found, therefore the manipulation of this condition was not changed.

In the main study the manipulations were checked again by means of an independent samples t-test. For all manipulations there proved to be a significant difference. For framing ( $t(303) = -12.33, p = .00$ ) with in the rational framing ( $M = 1.20, SD = .28$ ) and in the emotional framing ( $M = 1.62, SD = .32$ ). For timing ( $t(303) = -28.83, p = .00$ ) with in the proactive response ( $M = 1.08, SD = .28$ ) and the reactive response ( $M = 1.94, S = .24$ ). And for severity ( $t(261.89) = -15.95, p = .00$ ) with in the low severity ( $M = 2.42, SD = 1.10$ ) and in the high-severity condition ( $M = 4.21, SD = .82$ ).

### 3.4 Dependent measures

The measures have been collected through several other studies. Scales have been found for felt emotions towards the company (anger and sympathy) towards the company, trustworthiness of the company, word-of-mouth intentions (positive and negative) and purchase intentions. An overview of all the items used in the questionnaire is given in Appendix B. The results of the factor analysis are demonstrated in Table 2. In the final version of the questionnaire the variable willingness to forgive was also included. However, this variable was removed based on the factor analysis.

*Emotions.* In this study the felt emotions towards the company that have been under investigation are anger and sympathy. They were measured using a scale from McDonald, Sparks and Glendon (2010), containing four items for both emotions. However, after factor analysis one item for sympathy was removed. A five-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, has been used, which proved to be reliable in this study for both anger ( $\alpha = .908$ ) and sympathy ( $\alpha = .774$ ).

*Trustworthiness.* Trustworthiness was measured according to the three aspects, ability, benevolence and integrity. These were measured using 17 items adapted from Mayer and Davis (1999). A five-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, has been used. However, after conducting factor analysis the scale proved to be inconsistent. Therefore, the scale was reconstructed into 14 items measuring two constructs, competence-based trustworthiness and character-based trustworthiness. This distinction was based on the definition of trust by McLain and Hackman (1999), which was used in a study

by Beldad and Kusumadewi (2015). This scale proved to be reliable in this study for both competence-based trustworthiness ( $\alpha = .856$ ) and character-based trustworthiness ( $\alpha = .866$ ).

*Word-of-mouth intentions.* In this study both positive and negative word-of-mouth intentions were measured. Both were measured using a scale from Alexandrov, Lilly and Babakus (2013). A five-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 = not at all likely to 5 = very likely, has been used. It proved to be reliable in this study for both positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $\alpha = .916$ ) and negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $\alpha = .837$ ).

*Purchase intentions.* Purchase intentions were measured with a scale from Lin, Chen, Chiu and Lee (2011), consisting of four items. A five-point Likert-scale, ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, has been used, which proved to be reliable in this study ( $\alpha = .915$ ).

*Covariates.* The covariates in this study are *involvement with health*, which was measured with “I am aware of my health” and “I find my health important”, and *involvement with the product*, which was measured with “I like to eat a salad” and “Salads are an important part of my diet”. Both involvement with health ( $\alpha = .813$ ) and involvement with the product ( $\alpha = .741$ ) proved to be reliable. These variables were chosen because if the participants do not have any interest in their health or in a salad product, it is not likely they will be affected by the crisis situation. Especially when it comes to emotions. As can be seen in Table 1, the average scores for the covariates are high. This means the participants were involved with the product and their health, which proves their relevance in this study.

	$\alpha$	$M$	$SD$
<i>Anger</i>	.91	2.20	.89
<i>Sympathy</i>	.77	3.06	.78
<i>Competence-based trustworthiness</i>	.86	3.17	.66
<i>Character-based trustworthiness</i>	.87	3.30	.60
<i>Positive word-of-mouth intentions</i>	.92	2.59	.80
<i>Negative word-of-mouth intentions</i>	.84	2.40	.77
<i>Purchase intentions</i>	.92	2.87	.80
<i>Involvement with health</i>	.81	4.21	.59
<i>Involvement with the product</i>	.74	3.62	.89

**Table 1.** General descriptive statistics of the dependent variables and covariates

Constructs	Items	Component								
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Anger	Angry		-.83							
	Disgusted		-.81							
	Annoyed		-.72							
	Outraged		-.81							
Sympathy	Sympathetic								.57	
	Compassion								.75	
	Empathy								.74	
Competence-based trustworthiness	SaladSurprise is very capable of performing its job.				.60					
	SaladSurprise is known to be succesful at the things it tries to do.				.77					
	SaladSurprise has much knowledge about the work that needs done.				.78					
	I feel very confident about SaladSurprise's skills.				.54					
	SaladSurprise is well qualified.				.72					
Character-based trustworthiness	SaladSurprise is very concerned about my welfare.	.63								
	My needs and desires are very important to SaladSurprise.	.72								
	SaladSurprise would not knowingly do anything to hurt me.	.63								
	SaladSurprise really looks out for what is important to me.	.73								
	SaladSurprise will go out of its way to help me.	.74								
	SaladSurprise has a strong sense of justice.	.64								
	SaladSurprise tries hard to be fair in dealings with others.	.57								
	I like SaladSurprise's values.	.52								
Positive word-of-mouth intentions	Say positive things about this brand.					.65				
	Recommend this brand to others					.74				
	Recommend this brand to someone else who seeks my advice					.72				
Negative word-of-mouth intentions	Warn my friends and relatives not to buy this brand.								-.67	
	Complain to my friends and relatives about this brand.								-.80	
	Say negative things about this brand to other people.								-.81	
Purchase intentions	Given the chance, I intend to purchase from SaladSurprise.				.72					
	Given the chance, I predict that I should purchase from SaladSurprise in the future.				.79					
	It is likely that I will buy products from SaladSurprise in the near future.				.80					
	I expect to purchase from SaladSurprise in the near future.				.81					
Involvement with health	I am aware of my health.								.82	
	I find my health important.								.83	
Involvement with product	I like to eat a salad.									.73
	Salads are an important part of my diet.									.79

**Table 2.** Results of the factor analysis with VARIMAX rotation of the items and an absolute value of .50

### 3.5 Participants

Participants were gathered by using the personal network of the researcher. Direct messages were sent via social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) and by e-mail. A total of 427 surveys were started, 305 of these were useful for this study. Of these participants, 141 were male and 164 were female, as shown in Table 4.

The data were collected within a four week period. The mean age of the participants is 32.22 (SD = 13.12). The high standard deviation is caused by a variety of age groups who participated in the study (min = 18, max = 75). Nevertheless, the majority of the respondents (60.9 %) belonged to the age group 20 to 30. Additionally, almost 9 out of 10 participants (87.3 %) is highly educated (hbo and wo), as demonstrated in Table 3.

		<i>Proactive response</i>	<i>Reactive response</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Rational framing</i>	<i>Low severity</i>	35	34	155
	<i>High severity</i>	43	43	
<i>Emotional framing</i>	<i>Low severity</i>	40	35	150
	<i>High severity</i>	38	37	
<i>Total</i>		156	149	305

**Table 3.** *Distribution of conditions*

The design leads to eight experimental conditions. These conditions were randomly assigned to the participants. Table 3 shows the distribution of the conditions.

		<i>n</i>
<i>Gender</i>	Male	141
	Female	164
<i>Education</i>	Vmbo	5
	Havo	4
	Vwo	6
	Mbo	24
	Hbo	106
	Wo	160
<i>Province</i>	Groningen	6
	Friesland	4
	Drenthe	0
	Overijssel	48
	Gelderland	111
	Noord-Holland	31
	Zuid-Holland	36
	Flevoland	2
	Utrecht	30
	Noord-Brabant	25
	Limburg	6
	Zeeland	0
	I do not live in the Netherlands	6

**Table 4.** Distribution of the gender, education and current province of residence



## 4. RESULTS

There are three independent variables in this study, message timing, message framing and crisis severity. The dependent variables are anger and sympathy towards the company, competence-based trustworthiness, character-based trustworthiness, positive word-of-mouth intentions, negative word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. There were also two covariates in this study, involvement with the product and involvement with health.

To test the various hypotheses a MANOVA and MANCOVA was conducted using SPSS GLM. With these analyses two groups can be compared in their outcome on multiple dependent variables, also considering the coherence between the different dependent variables and covariates. In this section the results will be discussed. Firstly, the main effects will be discussed. Secondly, the interaction effects will be discussed. This section will be divided in two-way interaction effects and three-way interaction effects. All the effects will both be measured with and without the inclusion of the covariates.

The effects of message timing, message framing and crisis severity were tested by means of a MANOVA for independent groups. The descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) can be found in Table 5. The results of the MANOVA and MANCOVA are shown in Table 6.

	<i>Timing</i>		<i>Framing</i>		<i>Severity</i>	
	<i>Proactive response</i>	<i>Reactive response</i>	<i>Rational framing</i>	<i>Emotional framing</i>	<i>Low severity</i>	<i>High severity</i>
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
<i>Anger</i>	2.13(.86)	2.26(.92)	2.16(.82)	2.23(.96)	1.84(.80)	2.51(.85)
<i>Sympathy</i>	3.14(.74)	2.97(.80)	3.05(.73)	3.07(.82)	3.16(.81)	2.96(.74)
<i>Competence-based trustworthiness</i>	3.22(.63)	3.12(.66)	3.19(.67)	3.16(.67)	3.29(.67)	3.07(.64)
<i>Character-based trustworthiness</i>	3.36(.56)	3.24(.63)	3.25(.59)	3.36(.61)	3.43(.59)	3.19(.59)
<i>Positive word-of-mouth intentions</i>	2.64(.81)	2.53(.78)	2.60(.79)	2.57(.81)	2.87(.74)	2.33(.76)
<i>Negative word-of-mouth intentions</i>	2.35(.71)	2.45(.83)	2.41(.74)	2.39(.77)	2.15(.70)	2.62(.77)
<i>Purchase intentions</i>	2.91(.78)	2.84(.83)	2.79(.81)	2.96(.78)	3.11(.74)	2.66(.80)

**Table 5.** Descriptive statistics of the dependent variables

#### 4.1 Main effects for message timing

Without including the covariates, there was a significant main effect found for message timing on sympathy ( $F(1, 297) = 3.90, p = .05$ ) and a marginally significant effect was found for character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 297) = 2.79, p = .10$ ). This means that participants in the proactive response condition felt more sympathy ( $M = 3.14, SD = .74$ ) than in the reactive response condition ( $M = 2.26, SD = .92$ ). This also means that participants in the proactive response condition perceived the character-based trustworthiness of the company higher ( $M = 3.36, SD = .56$ ) than in the reactive response condition ( $M = 3.24, SD = .63$ ). Consequently, these results mean that hypothesis 1a is supported, as there is a significant effect for sympathy. Also, hypothesis 1c is only slightly supported, as there is a marginally significant effect for character-based trustworthiness. Hypothesis 1b, 1d, 1e, 1f and 1g are not supported.

Results were similar when including the covariates, as there was also a significant main effect found for message timing on sympathy ( $F(1, 295) = 5.14, p = .02$ ) and on character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 295) = 3.77, p = .05$ ). Consequently, these results mean that hypothesis 1a and 1c are supported. Hypothesis 1b, 1d, 1e, 1f and 1g are not supported.

#### 4.2 Main effects for message framing

For message framing, without including the covariates, a marginally significant effect was found for purchase intentions ( $F(1, 297) = 2.82, p = .09$ ). This means that participants in the emotionally framed condition scored higher on purchase intentions ( $M = 2.96, SD = .78$ ) than in the rationally framed condition ( $M = 2.79, SD = .81$ ). There were no significant effects for the other dependent variables. Consequently, these results mean that hypothesis 2e is only slightly supported, as purchase intentions is marginally significant. Hypothesis 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2f and 2g are not supported.

Next, for framing the results including the covariates are also similar to the results excluding the covariates. Including the covariates, a marginally significant effect was found for purchase intentions ( $F(1, 295) = 3.63, p = .06$ ). There were no significant effects for the other dependent variables. Consequently, these results mean that hypothesis 2e is slightly supported as purchase intentions is marginally significant. Hypothesis 2a, 2b, 2c, 2d, 2f and 2g are not supported.

Factors	Statistical Method	Anger	Sympathy	Competence-based trustworthiness	Character-based trustworthiness	Positive WOM	Negative WOM	Purchase intentions
		F(p-value)	F(p-value)	F(p-value)	F(p-value)	F(p-value)	F(p-value)	F(p-value)
Timing	MANOVA	1.45(.23)	3.90(.05*)	1.50(.22)	2.79(.10**)	1.59(.21)	1.00(.32)	.39(.54)
	MANCOVA	1.76(.19)	5.14(.02*)	1.36(.25)	3.77(.05*)	2.28(.13)	.90(.34)	.84(.36)
Framing	MANOVA	1.09(.30)	.02(.88)	.25(.62)	1.96(.16)	.39(.53)	.00(.99)	2.82(.09**)
	MANCOVA	.83(.36)	.09(.76)	.27(.60)	2.57(.11)	.22(.64)	.00(.99)	3.63(.06**)
Severity	MANOVA	50.16(.00*)	5.36(.02*)	9.79(.00*)	12.66(.00*)	40.29(.00*)	30.56(.00*)	26.20(.00*)
	MANCOVA	50.38(.00*)	4.40(.04*)	10.08(.00*)	11.55(.00*)	38.33(.00*)	31.44(.00*)	24.55(.00*)
Involvement with health	MANCOVA	4.68(.03*)	4.00(.05*)	.47(.50)	.00(.97)	.88(.35)	2.31(.13)	.11(.74)
Involvement with product	MANCOVA	.04(.84)	12.39(.00*)	.68(.41)	6.55(.01*)	7.90(.01*)	1.41(.24)	9.11(.00*)
Timing x Framing	MANOVA	1.63(.20)	2.84(.09**)	2.66(.10**)	4.59(.03*)	3.43(.07**)	.12(.73)	10.06(.00*)
	MANCOVA	1.27(.26)	2.90(.09**)	2.60(.11)	4.19(.04*)	3.28(.07**)	.09(.77)	9.63(.00*)
Severity x Timing	MANOVA	.00(.99)	.00(.95)	1.11(.29)	.05(.82)	.24(.62)	.13(.72)	1.83(.18)
	MANCOVA	.00(.98)	.00(.98)	1.07(.30)	.02(.89)	.34(.56)	.12(.73)	2.17(.14)
Severity x Framing	MANOVA	2.77(.10**)	.08(.77)	3.29(.07**)	.01(.95)	.14(.71)	1.44(.23)	.04(.84)
	MANCOVA	3.36(.07**)	.00(.95)	2.98(.09**)	.18(.67)	.00(.96)	1.27(.26)	.36(.55)
Severity x Timing x Framing	MANOVA	.02(.89)	6.88(.01*)	.25(.62)	1.56(.21)	2.09(.15)	.20(.66)	.08(.77)
	MANCOVA	.09(.77)	6.84(.01*)	.28(.60)	1.76(.19)	2.14(.15)	.27(.61)	.12(.73)

**Table 6.** Results of the MANOVA and MANCOVA (including involvement with health and involvement with the product as covariates) for the factors timing, framing and severity on the dependent variables (Note: \* significant at the .05 level, \*\* marginally significant at the .10 level)

### 4.3 Main effects for crisis severity

A significant main effect, without including the covariates, was found for crisis severity on anger ( $F(1, 297) = 50.16, p = .00$ ), sympathy ( $F(1, 297) = 5.36, p = .02$ ), competence-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 297) = 9.79, p = .00$ ), character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 297) = 12.66, p = .00$ ), positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 297) = 40.29, p = .00$ ), negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 297) = 30.56, p = .00$ ) and purchase intentions ( $F(1, 297) = 26.20, p = .00$ ). This means that participants in the low-severity condition scored higher on sympathy ( $M = 3.16, SD = .81$ ) than in the high-severity condition ( $M = 2.96, SD = .74$ ), while they scored lower on anger in the low-severity condition ( $M = 1.84, SD = .80$ ) than in the high-severity condition ( $M = 2.51, SD = .85$ ). The same happens with word-of-mouth intentions. Participants in the low-severity condition scored higher on positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $M = 2.87, SD = .74$ ) than in the high-severity condition ( $M = 2.33, SD = .76$ ), while they scored lower on negative word-of-mouth intentions in the low-severity condition ( $M = 2.15, SD = .70$ ) than in the high-severity condition ( $M = 2.62, SD = .77$ ). Additionally, this means that participants in the low-severity condition scored higher on competence-based trustworthiness ( $M = 3.29, SD = .67$  versus  $M = 3.07, SD = .64$ ), character-based trustworthiness ( $M = 3.43, SD = .59$  versus  $M = 3.19, SD = .59$ ) and purchase intentions ( $M = 3.11, SD = .74$  versus  $M = 2.66, SD = .80$ ) than in the high-severity condition. Consequently, this means that hypothesis 3 is supported.

The main effects for severity including the covariates are similar as the main effects without the covariates. A significant main effect was found for severity on anger ( $F(1, 295) = 50.38, p = .00$ ), sympathy ( $F(1, 295) = 4.40, p = .04$ ), competence-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 295) = 10.08, p = .00$ ), character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 295) = 11.55, p = .00$ ), positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 295) = 38.33, p = .00$ ), negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 295) = 31.44, p = .00$ ) and purchase intentions ( $F(1, 295) = 24.55, p = .00$ ). In the case of anger and negative word-of-mouth intentions the participants scored higher on the high-severity condition, whereas in the case of sympathy, competence-based trustworthiness, character-based trustworthiness, positive word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions, the participants scored higher on the low-severity condition. Consequently, this means that hypothesis 3 is supported.

#### 4.4 Interaction effects

The descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) can be found in Tables 7, 8 and 9. Next, the two-way interaction effects and the three-way interaction effects between all three variables are discussed.

##### 4.4.1 Message timing and message framing

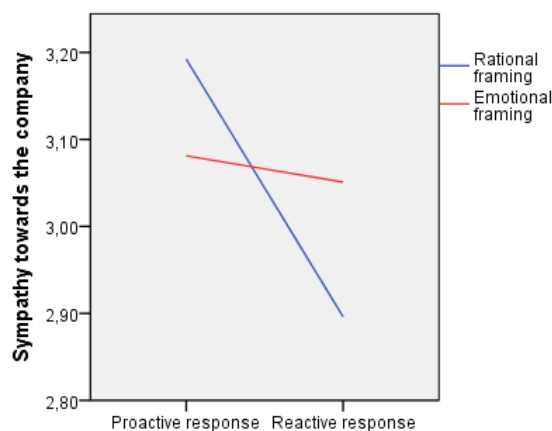
The descriptive statistics of the interaction effects between message timing and message framing are shown in Table 7. When excluding the covariates, there are interaction effects between timing and framing found for character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 297) = 4.59, p = .03$ ) and purchase intentions ( $F(1, 297) = 10.06, p = .00$ ). There were only marginally significant interaction effects found for sympathy ( $F(1, 297) = 2.84, p = .09$ ), competence-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 297) = 2.66, p = .10$ ) and positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 297) = 3.43, p = .07$ ). No interaction effects were found for anger ( $F(1, 297) = 1.63, p = .20$ ) and negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 297) = .12, p = .73$ ). This means that participants in the rational frame condition scored higher on character-based trustworthiness when a proactive response was used ( $M = 3.37, SD = .58$ ) than when reactive response was used ( $M = 3.13, SD = .57$ ). Additionally, they scored higher on character-based trustworthiness in the proactive response condition with an emotional frame ( $M = 3.34, SD = .55$ ) than in the reactive response condition ( $M = 3.37, SD = .67$ ). Also, this means that participants in the reactive response condition with an emotional frame scored higher on

	<i>Rational framing</i>		<i>Emotional framing</i>	
	<i>Proactive response</i>	<i>Reactive response</i>	<i>Proactive response</i>	<i>Reactive response</i>
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
<i>Anger</i>	2.04(.77)	2.28(.86)	2.22(.93)	2.24(.99)
<i>Sympathy</i>	3.19(.68)	2.90(.76)	3.08(.80)	3.05(.85)
<i>Competence-based trustworthiness</i>	3.30(.61)	3.08(.70)	3.15(.64)	3.17(.70)
<i>Character-based trustworthiness</i>	3.37(.58)	3.13(.57)	3.34(.55)	3.37(.67)
<i>Positive word-of-mouth intentions</i>	2.73(.85)	2.47(.70)	2.56(.78)	2.59(.85)
<i>Negative word-of-mouth intentions</i>	2.35(.66)	2.47(.81)	2.35(.77)	2.43(.86)
<i>Purchase intentions</i>	2.96(.80)	2.62(.80)	2.86(.76)	3.07(.80)

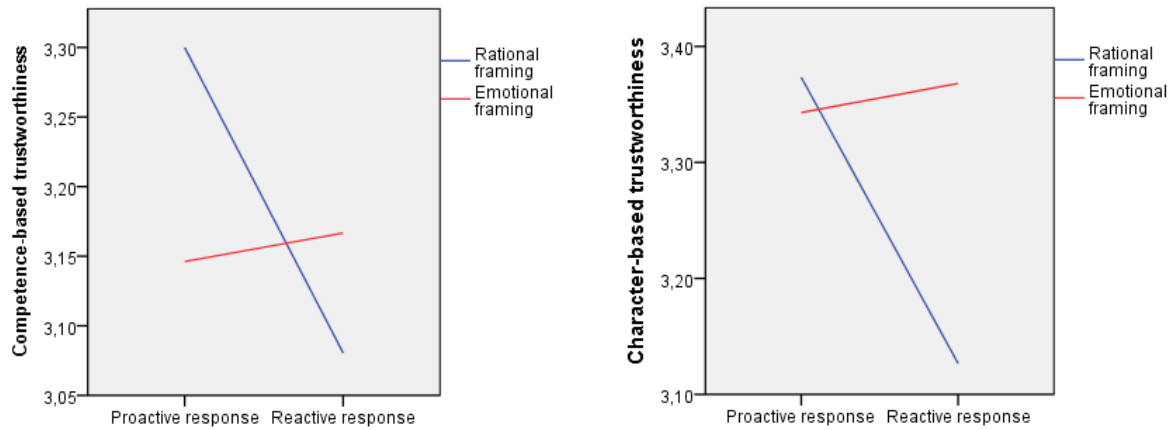
**Table 7.** Interaction effects for timing and framing

purchase intentions ( $M = 3.07$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) than in the proactive response condition ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = .76$ ). Additionally, they scored higher on purchase intentions in the proactive response condition with a rational frame ( $M = 2.96$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) than in the reactive response condition ( $M = 2.62$ ,  $SD = .80$ ). Additionally, this means that participants scored higher on sympathy in the proactive response condition with a rational frame ( $M = 3.19$ ,  $SD = .68$ ) than in the reactive response condition ( $M = 2.90$ ,  $SD = .76$ ). Also, in the proactive response condition with an emotional frame they scored slightly higher on sympathy ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) than in the reactive response condition ( $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = .85$ ). The results also mean that participants in the reactive response condition with an emotional frame scored higher on competence-based trustworthiness ( $M = 3.17$ ,  $SD = .70$ ) than in the proactive response condition ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = .64$ ). Additionally, they scored higher on competence-based trustworthiness in the proactive response condition with a rational frame ( $M = 3.30$ ,  $SD = .61$ ) than in the reactive response condition ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = .70$ ). Also, for positive word-of-mouth intentions it means that participants in the reactive response condition with an emotional frame scored higher ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD = .85$ ) than in the proactive response condition ( $M = 2.56$ ,  $SD = .78$ ). They also scored higher on positive word-of-mouth intentions in the proactive response condition with a rational frame ( $M = 2.73$ ,  $SD = .85$ ) than in the reactive response condition ( $M = 2.47$ ,  $SD = .70$ ). Consequently, this means that hypothesis 4a is marginally supported and 4b, c, d, e, f and g and 5 are not supported.

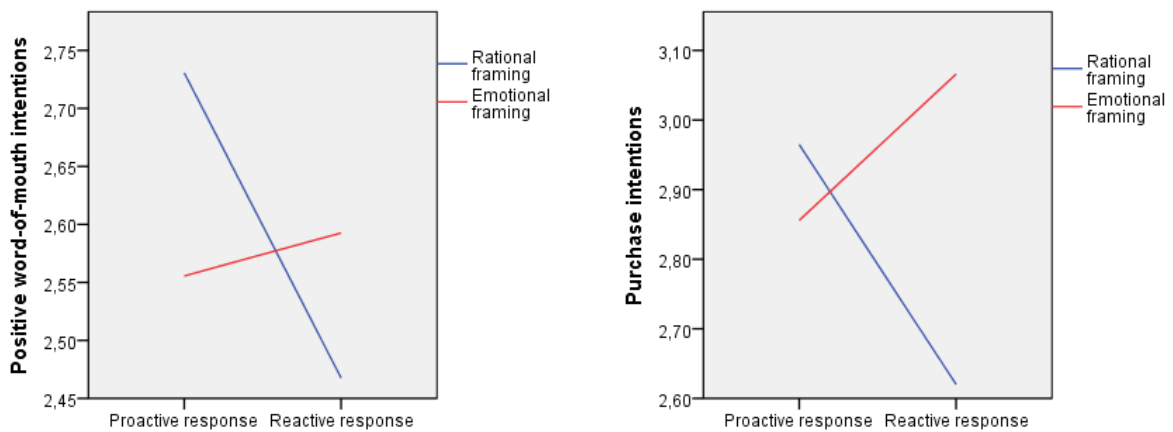
Also, when including the covariates, there are interaction effects between timing and framing found for character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 295) = 4.19$ ,  $p = .04$ ) and purchase intentions ( $F(1, 295) = 9.63$ ,  $p = .00$ ). There were only marginally significant interaction effects found for sympathy ( $F(1, 295) = 2.90$ ,  $p = .09$ ) and positive word-of-mouth intentions



**Figure 3.** Graph for interaction effect between timing and framing on sympathy.



*Figure 4 and 5. Graph for interaction effect between timing and framing on competence-based trustworthiness and character-based trustworthiness.*



*Figure 6 and 7. Graph for interaction effect between timing and framing on positive word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions.*

( $F(1, 295) = 3.28, p = .07$ ). No interaction effects were found for anger ( $F(1, 295) = 1.27, p = .26$ ), competence-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 295) = 2.60, p = .11$ ) and negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 295) = .09, p = .77$ ). Consequently, this means that hypothesis 4a is marginally supported and 4b, c, d, e, f and g and 5 are not supported.

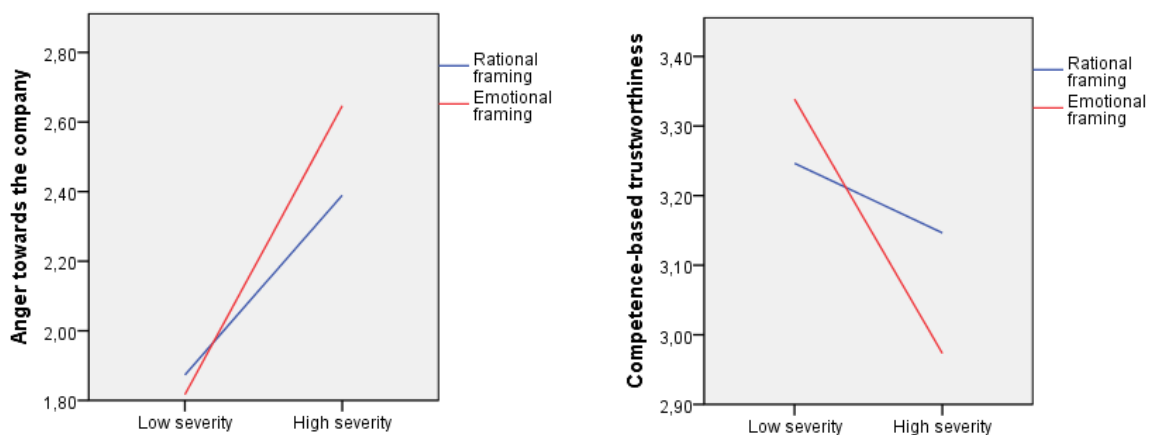
#### 4.4.2 Message framing and crisis severity

The descriptive statistics of the interaction effects between message framing and crisis severity are shown in Table 8. When excluding the covariates, a marginally significant interaction effect was found for anger ( $F(1, 297) = 2.77, p = .10$ ) and competence-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 297) = 3.29, p = .07$ ). No interaction effects were found for sympathy ( $F(1, 297) = .08, p = .77$ ), character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 297) = .01, p = .95$ ), positive

	<i>Low severity</i>		<i>High severity</i>	
	<i>Rational framing</i>	<i>Emotional framing</i>	<i>Rational framing</i>	<i>Emotional framing</i>
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
<i>Anger</i>	1.87(.78)	1.82(.82)	2.39(.79)	2.65(.91)
<i>Sympathy</i>	3.17(.77)	3.15(.84)	2.94(.68)	2.98(.80)
<i>Competence-based trustworthiness</i>	3.25(.72)	3.34(.63)	3.15(.62)	2.97(.66)
<i>Character-based trustworthiness</i>	3.38(.58)	3.48(.59)	3.15(.58)	3.23(.61)
<i>Positive word-of-mouth intentions</i>	2.92(.73)	2.83(.75)	2.34(.74)	2.32(.80)
<i>Negative word-of-mouth intentions</i>	2.20(.69)	2.10(.70)	2.57(.74)	2.68(.81)
<i>Purchase intentions</i>	3.03(.84)	3.18(.64)	2.60(.75)	2.73(.85)

**Table 8.** Interaction effects for framing and severity

word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 297) = .14, p = .71$ ), negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 297) = 1.44, p = .23$ ) and purchase intentions ( $F(1, 297) = .04, p = .84$ ). This means that participants in the high-severity condition with a rational frame scored higher on anger ( $M = 1.87, SD = .78$ ) than in the emotional frame ( $M = 1.82, SD = .82$ ). Additionally, they scored higher on anger in the high-severity condition with an emotional frame ( $M = 2.65, SD = .91$ ) than in the rational frame ( $M = 2.39, SD = .79$ ). The results also mean that participants in the low-severity condition with an emotional frame scored higher on competence-based trustworthiness ( $M = 3.34, SD = .63$ ) than in the rational frame ( $M = 3.25, SD = .72$ ). Additionally, they scored higher on competence-based trustworthiness in the high-severity



**Figure 8 and 9.** Graph for interaction effect between severity and framing on anger and on competence-based trustworthiness.



condition with a rational frame ( $M = 3.15$ ,  $SD = .62$ ) than in the emotional frame ( $M = 2.97$ ,  $SD = .66$ ). Consequently, this means that hypothesis 6 and 7 are not supported.

When including the covariates, a marginally significant interaction effect was found for anger ( $F(1, 295) = 3.36$ ,  $p = .07$ ) and competence-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 295) = 2.98$ ,  $p = .09$ ). No interaction effects were found for sympathy ( $F(1, 295) = .00$ ,  $p = .95$ ), character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 295) = .18$ ,  $p = .67$ ), positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 295) = .00$ ,  $p = .96$ ), negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 295) = 1.27$ ,  $p = .26$ ) and purchase intentions ( $F(1, 295) = .36$ ,  $p = .55$ ). Consequently, this means that hypothesis 6 and 7 are not supported.

#### 4.4.3 Message timing and crisis severity

The descriptive statistics for the interaction effects between message timing and crisis severity are shown in Table 9. Without including the covariates, there was a no significant interaction effect for severity and timing found for anger ( $F(1, 297) = .00$ ,  $p = .99$ ), sympathy ( $F(1, 297) = .00$ ,  $p = .95$ ), competence-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 297) = 1.11$ ,  $p = .29$ ), character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 297) = .05$ ,  $p = .82$ ), positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 297) = .24$ ,  $p = .62$ ), negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 297) = .13$ ,  $p = .72$ ) and purchase intentions ( $F(1, 297) = 1.83$ ,  $p = .18$ ). Consequently, this means that hypothesis 8 and 9 are not supported.

	<i>Low severity</i>		<i>High severity</i>	
	<i>Proactive response</i>	<i>Reactive response</i>	<i>Proactive response</i>	<i>Reactive response</i>
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
<i>Anger</i>	1.87(0.78)	1.82(0.82)	2.39(0.79)	2.65(0.91)
<i>Sympathy</i>	3.17(0.77)	3.15(0.84)	2.94(0.68)	2.98(0.80)
<i>Competence-based trustworthiness</i>	3.30(0.65)	3.29(0.70)	3.15(0.61)	2.98(0.67)
<i>Character-based trustworthiness</i>	3.38(0.58)	3.48(0.59)	3.15(0.58)	3.23(0.61)
<i>Positive word-of-mouth intentions</i>	2.92(0.73)	2.83(0.75)	2.34(0.74)	2.32(0.80)
<i>Negative word-of-mouth intentions</i>	2.20(0.69)	2.10(0.70)	2.57(0.74)	2.68(0.81)
<i>Purchase intentions</i>	3.03(0.84)	3.18(0.64)	2.60(0.75)	2.73(0.85)

**Table 9.** Interaction effects for severity and timing

When including the covariates, there was a no significant interaction effect for severity and timing found for anger ( $F(1, 295) = .00, p = .98$ ), sympathy ( $F(1, 295) = .00, p = .98$ ), competence-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 295) = 1.07, p = .30$ ), character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 295) = .02, p = .89$ ), positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 295) = .34, p = .56$ ), negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 295) = .12, p = .73$ ) and purchase intentions ( $F(1, 295) = 2.17, p = .14$ ). Consequently, this means that hypothesis 8 and 9 are not supported.

#### 4.4.4 Three-way interaction effects

The descriptive statistics for the interaction effects between timing, framing and severity are shown in Table 10. When excluding the covariates a three-way interaction effect between severity, timing and framing was found for sympathy ( $F(1, 297) = 6.88, p = .01$ ). This means that participants who saw a rational frame, scored higher on sympathy in the proactive response condition in a low-severity crisis ( $M = 3.45, SD = .60$ ) than in a reactive response ( $M = 2.89, SD = .84$ ). It also means that participants who saw a rational frame, scored higher on sympathy in the proactive response condition in a high-severity crisis ( $M = 2.98, SD = .68$ ) than in a reactive response ( $M = 2.90, SD = .70$ ). Additionally, it means that participants who saw an emotional frame, scored higher on sympathy in the proactive response condition in a low-severity crisis ( $M = 3.06, SD = .81$ ) than in a reactive response ( $M = 3.26, SD = .87$ ).

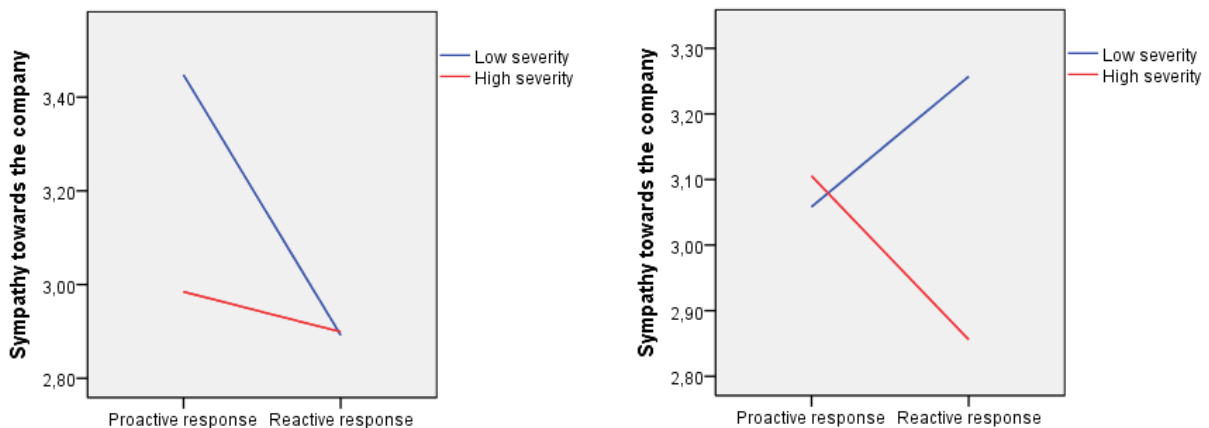


Figure 8 and 9. Graph for three-way interaction effect between timing and severity in the rational framing condition (left) and the emotional framing condition on sympathy.

	<i>Low severity</i>				<i>High severity</i>			
	<i>Proactive response</i>		<i>Reactive response</i>		<i>Proactive response</i>		<i>Reactive response</i>	
	<i>Rational framing</i>	<i>Emotional framing</i>	<i>Rational framing</i>	<i>Emotional framing</i>	<i>Rational framing</i>	<i>Emotional framing</i>	<i>Rational framing</i>	<i>Emotional framing</i>
	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>
<i>Anger</i>	1.75(.72)	1.83(.79)	2.00(.83)	1.81(.87)	2.28(.74)	2.64(.89)	2.50(.83)	2.65(.93)
<i>Sympathy</i>	3.45(.60)	3.06(.81)	2.89(.84)	3.26(.87)	2.98(.68)	3.11(.80)	2.90(.70)	2.86(.78)
<i>Competence-based trustworthiness</i>	3.33(.63)	3.27(.67)	3.16(.81)	3.42(.57)	3.27(.61)	3.02(.59)	3.02(.61)	2.93(.73)
<i>Character-based trustworthiness</i>	3.56(.52)	3.43(.57)	3.20(.59)	3.53(.63)	3.22(.59)	3.25(.52)	3.07(.56)	3.22(.69)
<i>Positive word-of-mouth intentions</i>	3.10(.72)	2.72(.70)	2.75(.71)	2.94(.79)	2.43(.83)	2.38(.82)	2.25(.62)	2.26(.78)
<i>Negative word-of-mouth intentions</i>	2.14(.62)	2.11(.62)	2.26(.76)	2.10(.79)	2.52(.65)	2.61(.83)	2.63(.82)	2.74(.81)
<i>Purchase intentions</i>	3.15(.78)	3.01(.66)	2.91(.89)	3.38(.56)	2.81(.78)	2.69(.82)	2.39(.65)	2.77(.89)

**Table 10.** Three-way interaction effects of the factors timing, framing and severity

Finally, it also means that participants who saw an emotional frame, scored higher on sympathy in the proactive response condition in a high-severity crisis ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = .80$ ) than in a reactive response ( $M = 2.86$ ,  $SD = .78$ ). There are no three-way interaction effects found for anger ( $F(1, 297) = .02$ ,  $p = .89$ ), competence-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 297) = .25$ ,  $p = .62$ ), character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 297) = 1.56$ ,  $p = .21$ ), positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 297) = 2.09$ ,  $p = .15$ ), negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 297) = .20$ ,  $p = .66$ ) and purchase intentions ( $F(1, 297) = .08$ ,  $p = .77$ ).

When including the covariates, a three-way interaction effect between timing, framing and severity was found for sympathy ( $F(1, 295) = 6.84$ ,  $p = .01$ ). There are no three-way interaction effects found for anger ( $F(1, 295) = .09$ ,  $p = .77$ ), competence-based trustworthiness ( $F(1,$

295) = .28,  $p = .60$ ), character-based trustworthiness ( $F(1, 295) = 1.76$ ,  $p = .19$ ), positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 295) = 2.14$ ,  $p = .15$ ), negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $F(1, 295) = .27$ ,  $p = .61$ ) and purchase intentions ( $F(1, 295) = .12$ ,  $p = .73$ ).

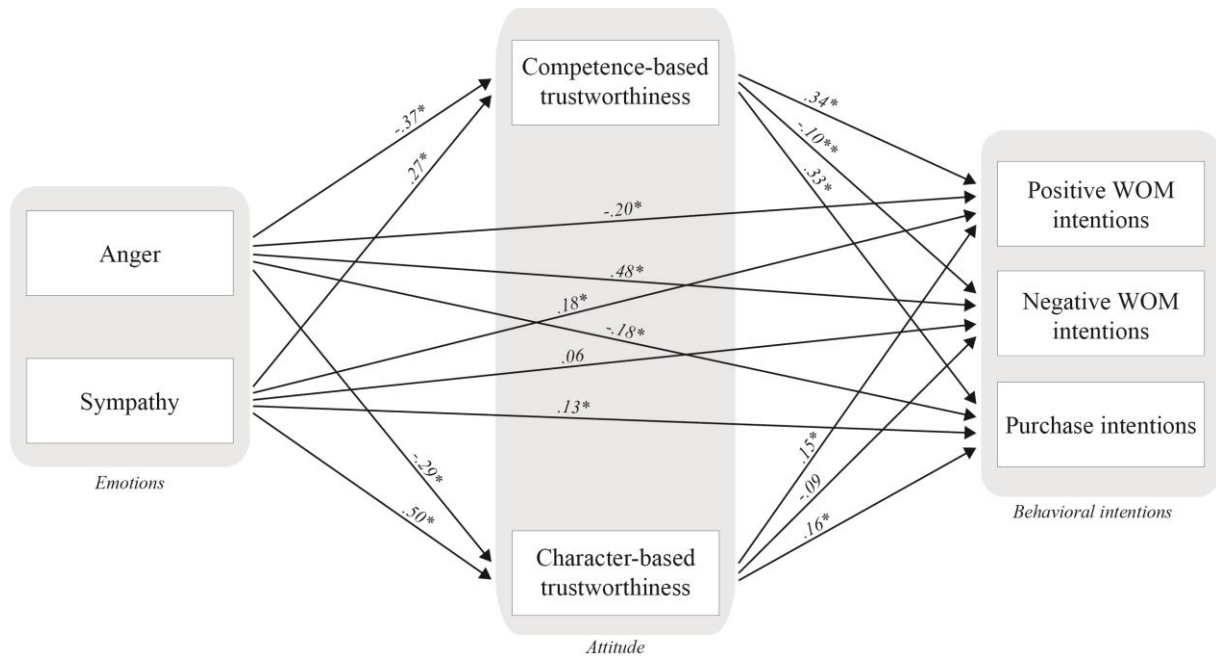
#### 4.6 Regression analysis

In this study, an additional regression analysis was performed. This was meant to explore the influence of emotion on attitude and emotion and attitude on behavioral intentions. In this analysis, anger and sympathy were categorized as emotion. Competence-based and character-based trustworthiness were categorized as attitude. Positive and negative word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions were categorized as behavioral intentions. The results can be found in Table 11.

Competence-based trustworthiness can be predicted for 25.4 % ( $R^2 = .254$ ) by anger and sympathy ( $F(2, 302) = 51.37$ ,  $p = .00$ ). The emotion anger has a significant influence on competence-based trustworthiness ( $\beta = -.37$ ,  $p = .00$ ), as well as the emotion sympathy ( $\beta = .27$ ,  $p = .00$ ). Additionally, character-based trustworthiness can be predicted for 39.7 % ( $R^2 = .397$ ) by anger and sympathy ( $F(2, 302) = 99.34$ ,  $p = .00$ ). The emotion anger has a significant influence on character-based trustworthiness ( $\beta = -.29$ ,  $p = .00$ ), as well as the emotion sympathy ( $\beta = .50$ ,  $p = .00$ ).

Standardized regression paths		Unstandardized Coefficients				
		B	S.E.	Beta	t	p
Emotion	EA → AT	-.28	.04	-.37	-7.26	.00*
	EA → CT	-.19	.03	-.29	-6.27	.00*
	EA → WP	-.18	.04	-.20	-4.06	.00*
	EA → WN	.42	.05	.48	8.80	.00*
	EA → PI	-.16	.05	-.18	-3.36	.00*
	ES → AT	.23	.04	.27	5.19	.00*
	ES → CT	.39	.04	.50	10.82	.00*
	ES → WP	.19	.06	.18	3.44	.00*
	ES → WN	.06	.06	.06	1.02	.31
	ES → PI	.14	.06	.13	2.39	.02*
Attitude	AT → WP	.40	.07	.34	6.22	.00*
	AT → WN	-.12	.07	-.10	-1.73	.09**
	AT → PI	.40	.07	.33	5.81	.00*
	CT → WP	.20	.08	.15	2.46	.02*
	CT → WN	-.12	.09	-.09	-1.38	.17
	CT → PI	.21	.08	.16	2.54	.01*

Table 11. Results of regression analysis (Note: \* significant at the .05 level, \*\* marginally significant at the .10 level)



**Figure 9.** Results of the regression analysis (Note: \* significant at .05 level, \*\* marginally significant at .10 level)

Positive word-of-mouth intentions can be predicted for 42.9 % ( $R^2 = .429$ ) by anger, sympathy, competence-based and character-based trustworthiness ( $F(4, 300) = 56.43$ ,  $p = .00$ ). The emotion anger has a significant influence on positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $\beta = -.20$ ,  $p = .00$ ), as well as the emotion sympathy ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $p = .00$ ). Competence-based trustworthiness also has a significant influence on positive word-of-mouth intentions ( $\beta = .34$ ,  $p = .00$ ), as well as character-based trustworthiness ( $\beta = .15$ ,  $p = .02$ ).

Negative word-of-mouth intentions can be predicted for 31.5 % ( $R^2 = .315$ ) by anger, sympathy, competence-based and character-based trustworthiness ( $F(4, 300) = 34.48$ ,  $p = .00$ ). The emotion anger has a significant influence on negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $\beta = .48$ ,  $p = .00$ ) and character-based trustworthiness has a marginally significant effect on negative word-of-mouth intentions ( $\beta = -.10$ ,  $p = .09$ ).

Purchase intentions can be predicted for 37.4 % ( $R^2 = .374$ ) by anger, sympathy, competence-based and character-based trustworthiness ( $F(4, 300) = 44.77$ ,  $p = .00$ ). The emotion anger has a significant influence on purchase intentions ( $\beta = -.18$ ,  $p = .00$ ), as well as the emotion sympathy ( $\beta = .13$ ,  $p = .02$ ). Competence-based trustworthiness also has a significant influence on purchase intentions ( $\beta = .33$ ,  $p = .00$ ), as well as character-based trustworthiness ( $\beta = .16$ ,  $p = .01$ ).

## 5. DISCUSSION

### 5.1 General discussion

The goal of this experimental study into crisis communication by an organization facing a crisis situation was to investigate the interplay between message timing, message framing and crisis severity and their influence on emotions, attitude and behavioral intentions, specifically anger and sympathy towards the company, competence-based and character-based trustworthiness, positive and negative word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. This experimental study builds on previous research by confirming prior studies on message timing and extending current knowledge on message framing and the impact of crisis severity on crisis communication. The main findings indicate that crisis severity significantly influences all crisis communication outcomes. Consequently, hypothesis 3, which stated that a low-severity crisis more positively influenced the dependent variables than a high-severity crisis, was completely supported. Additionally, the results show that message timing combined with framing has a significant influence on sympathy, trustworthiness, positive word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. However, only the hypothesis for the effect on sympathy (H4a) was supported. This study suggests that the sole use of message framing is of little relevance in crisis communication. It had only marginal effects on purchase intentions. Further examination of the relationships amidst the dependent variables indicated that emotion, both anger and sympathy, are predictors of trustworthiness, word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. These findings will be discussed in more detail.

In this study two covariates were added to confirm that the main and interaction effects would come from the corresponding variables. Irrespective of the covariates, most effects remained the same. Only the main effects of message timing on sympathy and character-based trustworthiness were strengthened when the covariates were included. Therefore, it can be concluded that, even though the participants rated the covariates high, they were not important predictors of the main effects of message framing and crisis severity, as well as all the interaction effects..

### 5.2 Message timing

First of all, in this study it was hypothesized that issuing a crisis message proactively has a positive effect on the dependent variables. The findings of this study proved that by using a proactive response sympathy for the organization will increase. Herewith, it confirmed the

study of McDonald, Sparks and Glendon (2010). The effect on sympathy could be explained, as the organization might be perceived as an initiator who is transparent and takes responsibility when they respond proactively. Additionally, as was proven in studies conducted by Arpan and Pompper (2003) and Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005), the results of the current study confirmed that a proactive response will slightly enhance character-based trustworthiness. This makes sense, as the effect is expressed by displaying their willingness to do good and their integrity. Proactive behavior only emphasizes this. Surprisingly, in contrast with previous research, the current study did not prove that a proactive response will reduce anger or negative word-of-mouth intentions (McDonald, Sparks & Glendon, 2010; Weiner, et al., 1991). An explanation for this might be the nature of the crisis, for example the origin or crisis type. These factors cannot be influenced by the timing of the message, but they might initially instigate feelings of anger and negative word-of-mouth intentions. Once these feelings and intentions exist, not even the most appropriate timing of the message can change it.

### **5.3 Message framing**

Moreover, message framing only has a marginally significant main effect on purchase intentions. More specifically, an emotional frame more positively affects purchase intentions than a rational frame. Scholars explain this, as they argue that emotional framing evokes emotion (Kotler & Armstrong, 1994) and experiencing emotions affects purchase intentions (Coombs, 2007; Kotler & Armstrong, 1994). The regression analysis in the current study provides evidence to support this. So, even though emotions were not significantly affected, it is shown in the results that they are increased in the emotional frame. Remarkably, the results of this study did not prove that message framing enhances sympathy, trustworthiness or positive word-of-mouth intentions or reduces anger or negative word-of-mouth intentions. It was expected that framing the message would persuade people to positively evaluate the organization. However, a discrepancy in the results is shown, as both anger and sympathy were enhanced by the emotional frame. This might indicate that the frames were not correctly manipulated or the influence of other factors is too large for a main effect to occur. Additionally, it is still unclear why the results for competence-based and character-based trustworthiness are not significant, as it was argued that by communicating emotion the trustworthiness of the organization would increase (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996). A possible explanation might be that, according to the participants, the principles the organization and the

willingness to do good (character-based trustworthiness) are transferred in a credible way by the frame used (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995).

All things considered, this study suggests that the independent use of framing in a crisis message is not sufficient to significantly influence consumers' felt emotions, attitudes or behavioral intentions. This could be explained by the fact that people perceive and process frames differently and might have different preferences accordingly. For example, there might be a link between the type of frame used and the personality of the reader. In sum, this study proves the sole use of a framing strategy is not effective.

## **5.4 Crisis severity**

Furthermore, the severity of the crisis proved to significantly influence all dependent variables, even though an organization is not always able to influence the severity of a crisis. As was hypothesized, the results prove that a low-severity crisis enhances sympathy, trustworthiness, positive word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions and reduces anger and negative word-of-mouth intentions. These findings proved hypotheses formulated by Lee (2004), regarding a high-severity crisis leading to less sympathy and mistrust, to be true. It also confirmed the results of Arpan and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005), as a high-severity crisis leads to low purchase intentions. The impact of crisis severity on the dependent variables could be explained by the high impact a crisis has on the organization, as well as its consumers. The more severe the crisis, the greater the damage. A crisis not only discloses the possible risks a consumer is exposed to (Lee, 2004), it underscores them and raises awareness about the risks among the customers.

## **5.5 Interaction effects**

### **5.5.1 Message timing and message framing**

Firstly, an important contribution of this study is that proof was found of a significant influence of message timing and framing on sympathy, competence-based and character-based trustworthiness, positive word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. The results indicate that in a proactive response an emotional frame enhances sympathy, as was hypothesized. In contrast to the hypotheses, proof was found that in a reactive response an emotional frame also leads to enhanced sympathy. This could be explained by the fact that communicating emotion as an organization makes the organization come across as more human (Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014), independently of the timing of the response, and



this induces emotion. Additionally, the current research proved that competence-based and character-based trustworthiness, positive word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions would increase when a rational frame is used in a proactive response. Whereas, those variables in a reactive response would increase when an emotional frame is used. This contradicts findings of previous research (Claeys, Cauberghe & Leysen, 2013), in which an emotional frame in a proactive response has a more positive effect on reputational damage, which included the level of trust. However, these contradictions might arise because of a difference in crisis type. As in the current study a product-harm crisis was used, as opposed to the preventable crisis in the study conducted by Claeys, Cauberghe and Leysen (2013), which was highly severe and even cost lives. In sum, from these results it could be derived that message framing in this regard, so using either rational or emotional framing, is a useful crisis communication strategy, but because there was only one main effect found for framing, framing would only prove to be effective when used in combination with other strategies.

### **5.5.2 Message framing and crisis severity**

Next, when looking at the interaction effects between framing and severity, this study provides only little evidence that the interplay between the two variables affects anger and competence-based trustworthiness. High severity had a negative effect on anger, which could be explained by the attribution of crisis responsibility, the more the public will attribute crisis responsibility to the organization (Coombs & Holladay, 2002), the more it elicits anger (Coombs, 2007). Consequently, as crisis severity already influences anger, introducing a frame might strengthen this influence. In the high-severity crisis emotional framing more negatively influences anger than in a low-severity crisis. This might be explained by the appropriateness of the emotions used in the emotional frame. People might think the company is trying to mitigate or minimize the crisis. Remarkably, in a high-severity crisis an emotional frame elicits more anger than a rational frame. This might be explained by the fact that people might perceive an emotional frame, which dramatizes the situation and uses a lot of adjectives, as being weak and taking on the victim role, whereas people want and need the organization to be strong and handle the situation thoroughly. Also, a rational frame in a high-severity crisis more positively influences competence-based trustworthiness than in an emotional frame. This suggests that when the crisis is more severe the company benefits more if they present the facts and not mitigate it with emotions. As a result, people perceive the company as more competent.

### **5.5.3 Message timing and crisis severity**

Additionally, in the current study no proof was found of an effect of message timing interacting with crisis severity on anger, sympathy, trustworthiness, word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. Consequently, this means that regardless of the crisis severity the organizational response in the form of a crisis message could be issued either proactively or reactively, as the timing of the response is not significantly affected by crisis severity. This is in line with research conducted by Arpan and Pompper (2003), who found no relation between perceived crisis severity and the timing of the message. These results could be explained by the fact that the timing of the message does not influence the crisis severity. However, if the timing does not match the severity it seems likely it will affect felt emotions. Remarkably, this was not the case.

### **5.5.4 Three-way interaction effects**

Considering there has not been any research into the effects of timing, framing and severity, the present research did an exploratory research into the three-way interaction effects. It was found that anger was more positively influenced in both a low and high-severity crisis with a proactive response when a rational frame was used, than with a reactive response when a rational frame was used. However, with an emotional frame there was greater difference between severity in the proactive and reactive response. Anger was more positively influenced in a proactive response for a high-severity crisis than in a reactive response, whereas for a low-severity crisis the reactive response more positively influenced anger than a proactive response. This leads to the conclusion that in almost every case, as was found in the main effects, a proactive response has the most positive influence, regardless of the type of framing or the severity of the crisis. The exception is a low-severity crisis combined with an emotional frame where a reactive response is more effective. Further elaboration on those effects is needed. The focus could be on explaining why the effects occur.

## **5.6 Regression analysis**

Regarding consumers' felt emotions, it was found that they predict the trustworthiness of the organization, word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. The findings indicate that anger negatively influences trustworthiness of the organization, positive word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions and positively influences negative word-of-mouth intentions. Researchers confirm these findings, as anger is an emotion that influences the processing of the organization's message and also how consumers evaluate and judge the

company (Kim & Cameron, 2011). When a stakeholder experiences anger, he or she is likely to indulge in negative word-of-mouth (Coombs and Holladay, 2004; Coombs, 2007; McDonald, Sparks & Glendon, 2010). Additionally, it negatively influences negative word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions (Coombs & Holladay, 2007), as was confirmed in this study. On the other hand, sympathy positively influences trustworthiness of the organization, positive word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. Further research could look into the proposed model in relation to other forms of crisis communication more deeply. For example, the case of no crisis message being present, or the case of indirect communication through word-of-mouth or the media. Also, both competence-based trustworthiness and character-based trustworthiness proved to be influencing purchase intentions in the current study. This is in line with research of Lin, et al. (2011), into the effect of trust on purchase intentions (trust was used as a mediator).

## 6. IMPLICATIONS

### 6.1 Theoretical implications

The aim of this study was to examine the efficacy of an organizational crisis message when constructed according to a message framing and message timing strategy. This study contributes to the field of crisis communication by challenging previous research on the interplay between timing and framing (Claeys, Cauberghe & Leysen, 2013), as it provides new insights into their effects on public's responses. All the same, it stresses the need for further elaboration on the subject. Moreover, this study reinforces the importance of proactively issuing crisis messages, as the organization benefits from that kind of behavior. Furthermore, evidence-based studies only discuss the direct effects of crisis severity, though the interplay of crisis severity with either message timing or message framing continued to be understudied. As far as research on the nature of a crisis goes, crisis type and crisis responsibility have been extensively studied (Coombs, 2007), and evidence-based research generated effective recommendations for action (Coombs, 2015). The current study contributes to research as it fills the gap existent for crisis severity. Herewith, it is empirically proved that crisis severity affects emotion, attitude and behavioral intentions. In addition, this study reveals interaction effects between crisis severity and message framing. Therewith, it paves the way for crisis communication researchers to include crisis severity in their research.

### 6.2 Managerial implications

In times of crisis, organizations should determine their crisis communication strategy. By means of these remarks, crisis managers should realize their crisis message affects public perceptions, as the moment the message and its frame become public, they are influencing crisis communication outcomes. These guidelines will give insight into the effects of communication efforts on emotion, attitude and behavioral intentions, dependent on crisis severity.

First of all, when a crisis hits the organization the crisis manager's first priority is to determine the cause, damage and severity of the crisis. This information is key to establish the communication strategy, as it became clear in this study that the crisis severity already impacts crisis communication outcomes, independently from any communicational activity. A pivotal practical implication is that crisis managers should be inclined to sway these outcomes into their advantage by matching the right framing approach to the crisis severity. It is advised to frame the crisis message in a rational manner when the situation is highly severe.

Remarkably, even though the impact of a low-severity crisis is little and it is not a highly emotional event, findings of this study recommend an emotional approach in a low-severity crisis.

Furthermore, crisis managers are advised to contemplate proactive behavior, as it enhances sympathy and character-based trustworthiness. The present study has demonstrated that an organization suffers from combining a message timing strategy with the wrong framing strategy. The findings prove that a rational approach is most effective for the organization in a proactive response, whereas a reactive response would negatively impact sympathy, trustworthiness, positive word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. In contrast to the latter, an emotional approach maximizes outcomes in a reactive response, while proactive behavior is not beneficial for an emotional approach. Therefore, it is recommended for crisis managers to implement the abovementioned remarks accordingly. Despite the fact that an emotional frame is not the appropriate strategy in every case, crisis managers should not underestimate the importance of message framing, as by expressing emotion the organization comes across as more human (Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014). To a lesser extent, the sole use of message framing, absent of another crisis communication strategy, is not advised, as the direct effects of message framing are negligible. However, as mentioned above, when interacting with message timing or crisis severity, the effect of framing is strengthened.

Moreover, another implication is that crisis managers are encouraged to recognize the importance of consumers' felt emotions, as they proved to predict both trustworthiness and behavioral intentions. Consequently, crisis managers are advised to focus their communication efforts on positively influencing those emotions, as by doing that their efforts both beneficially impact felt emotions towards the organization and they, in turn, impact the trustworthiness of the organization and consumers' behavioral intentions.

In light of these findings, it is recommended for crisis managers to consciously strategize about the moment to present the crisis message and they are encouraged to choose a rational or emotional frame accordingly. It is deemed unwise to remain passive in a crisis situation, as it might result in damaging the public's perception of the organization and consequently, suffer from negative word-of-mouth and fewer sales.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are some limitations to this study that can be mentioned. Occasionally these limitations will provide angles for future research. In this study convenience sampling was used to collect the data. Therefore, regarding the generalizability of this study, this study might be exposed to a selection bias, as the survey was mainly distributed among students and the network of the researcher. Consequently, the results are not generalizable among all age groups or among all educational levels, as the majority of the participants is highly educated. Educational level gives an indication of an individual's cognitive ability and skills (Wiersema & Bantel, 1992), differences in educational level might influence information processing. People with a higher level of education are more capable to process information and are able to distinguish different stimuli, as compared to people with a lower educational level (Schroder, Driver, & Streufert, 1967; Wiersema & Bantel, 1992). Consequently, because of the high level of education the participants in this study might perceive the different manipulations correctly, whereas people with lower levels of education might not. It is recommended that further research should look into the impact of educational level on the perceptions of the frames used in crisis messages. Furthermore, the present study was mainly conducted among Dutch citizens, which means it cannot be generalized among other nationalities or cultures. Consequently, further research could be conducted among different cultures to see if the effects of framing differ. According to Ray (1999) culture plays an important part in choosing the right crisis communication strategy. Culture affects responses because of what is believed to be appropriate in that specific situation (Stephens, Malone & Bailey, 2005). Previous research argues that different cultures ascribe different meanings to certain events (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2011) and also categorize emotions differently (Russell, 1991). This suggests (1) that the expression of emotion in a crisis message might not be perceived as anticipated in different cultures, and (2) even the crisis itself, and its severity, may be perceived differently. The focus of future research could be on differences in perceptions of the communicated emotions in a crisis message and on the influence this has on the outcomes. Ultimately, research into cultural effects and educational level could be combined.

Concerning the validity of this study, several factors could be of influence on the current results. Firstly, the selection bias mentioned earlier could also influence the validity of the research. Secondly, all variables but one, willingness to forgive, were validated in the factor analysis. Also, one item out of the four items that measured sympathy did not load correctly and was therefore deleted. It is expected this might be due to a translation error as

the item (“I feel sorry for the company”) has multiple translations in Dutch. After it was deleted, the scale for sympathy proved to be reliable and still measured the right construct. Thirdly, all the variables in the stimulus material were found to be significantly manipulated. This validates the results of this research.

Furthermore, participants could have had difficulties with rating the trustworthiness of the organization as this study contained a fictitious organization. The advantage of a fictitious company is that the results are not biased by previous experiences with the organization and participants base their answers purely on what they have read in the survey. However, a fictitious company might lack a sense of reality and therefore it may be cause for too little involvement with company and the crisis. Also, its unfamiliar name may already trigger certain responses. This lack of realism was counterbalanced by using a real newspaper, which already established its credibility. Nevertheless, the findings cannot be generalized to other existing companies. Moreover, the results cannot be generalized to a real environment, as effects regarding intentions were investigated and not regarding actual behavior. Behavioral intentions are a determinant of the action (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). However, scholars do note that time interval might change the actions formerly intended (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1980). Also, meta-analysis of meta-analyses of the relation between intentions and actual behavior has shown that only 28% of all intentions result in a variance in behavior (Sheeran, 2002). Consequently, an intention-behavior gap will arise. This suggests that although the findings indicate participants intent to purchase or engage in word-of-mouth, when it comes to the actual action they might relinquish their intentions. Further research could replicate this study, but measure actual behavior instead of intentions.

In addition, involvement with the product might be an issue, as this study uses a very specific product/company, namely a salad company. Future research could include other types of products or companies, also outside of the food industry.

For this research, definitions for rational and emotional framing were researched and formulated through the comparison of existing definitions. It is recommended that further research would investigate qualitatively the true meaning of emotional and rational framing and the differences between the two. Several scholars studied framing, but all define the construct differently. For example, whether or not to include factual information and numbers in rational framing (Claeys, Cauberghe & Leysen, 2013). Additionally, as mentioned above, different cultures categorize emotions differently (Russell, 1991), which suggests there also might be cultural differences in what is considered rational and emotional. With that in mind,

the current study could be replicated, also including a control condition where no type of framing is used.

Previous crisis research identified crisis response strategies, such as denial, apology and justification (Coombs, 2007). The current research omits these strategies as a variable and is limited to an apology in the stimulus material. For this reason, further research could look into the interaction effects of these crisis response strategies and message framing on crisis communication outcomes. In addition, as was advised in the implications section, message framing is most effective when combined with another crisis communication strategy. In the current study framing only interacts with message timing. However, other strategies could also be compatible and be further research. For example, the choice of medium or, as mentioned above, crisis response strategies.



## **8. CONCLUSION**

In a case of a crisis, the organization should initiate in a crisis communication strategy. Elements of this strategy include how to formulate and when to issue a crisis message. This study demonstrates that crisis severity significantly influences consumers' perceptions of the organization. Moreover, it validates the importance of matching the right timing strategy with the right frame concerning crisis communication. In addition, the current research supports the notion that proactive behavior in crisis communication demands a rational approach in presenting the crisis message, whereas reactive behavior needs a more emotional approach. Additionally, crisis severity proved to be a significant factor of influence on crisis communication outcomes. Furthermore, the present study signifies the importance of felt emotions in crisis communication, as they predict trustworthiness of the company and word-of-mouth intentions and purchase intentions. Therefore, an organization should purposely target their communication efforts on influencing consumers' felt emotions.

## **9. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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## APPENDIX A: Stimulus material

# NRC HANDELSBLAD

Maandag 13 april 2015

Algemeen Handelsblad (1828) en Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (1844)

nrc.nl

## SaladSurprise meldt mislabelling salade

AMSTERDAM - Vanmorgen maakte een woordvoerder van SaladSurprise tijdens een persconferentie bekend dat een van hun salades verkeerd gelabeld is. Het gaat om de salade 'Italiaanse kip'. Op het label staat de productinformatie en de naam van de salade 'Pittige Marokkaanse kip'. Het gaat om duizenden mislabelde salades.

De woordvoerder verklaarde tijdens de persconferentie: "Tijdens een routinesteekproef van een van onze eigen controleurs werd het verkeerde label op de salade ontdekt. De oorzaak is nog onbekend. Er wordt een onderzoek gestart om deze te achterhalen, zodat het in de toekomst kan worden voorkomen. Het bedrijf wil zijn excuses aanbieden voor de veroorzaakte overlast. De betreffende producten worden zo snel mogelijk uit de schappen gehaald."

# NRC HANDELSBLAD

Maandag 13 april 2015

Algemeen Handelsblad (1828) en Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (1844)

nrc.nl

## SaladSurprise meldt besmetting salade

AMSTERDAM - Vanmorgen maakte een woordvoerder van SaladSurprise tijdens een persconferentie bekend dat een van hun salades besmet is met Salmonella. Het gaat om de kip in de salade 'Italiaanse kip'. De bacterie kan leiden tot maag- en darmklachten, hartproblemen en in het ergste geval zelfs tot overlijden. Het gaat om duizenden besmette salades.

De woordvoerder verklaarde tijdens de persconferentie: "Tijdens een routinesteekproef van een van onze eigen controleurs werd de Salmonella-bacterie in de salade ontdekt. De oorzaak is nog onbekend. Er wordt een onderzoek gestart om deze te achterhalen, zodat het in de toekomst kan worden voorkomen. Het bedrijf wil zijn excuses aanbieden voor de veroorzaakte overlast. De betreffende producten worden zo snel mogelijk uit de schappen gehaald."

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De woordvoerder verklaarde tijdens de persconferentie: "We ontdekten tot onze schrik salades met het verkeerde label tijdens een routinesteekproef van een van onze eigen controleurs. Hoe dit heeft kunnen gebeuren weten we echt niet, maar we zijn er erg kapot van. We gaan dan ook een onderzoek starten om de oorzaak te achterhalen en dit in de toekomst te kunnen voorkomen. We bieden iedereen die overlast heeft gehad van deze verschrikkelijke fout onze oprechte excuses aan. De betreffende producten worden zo snel mogelijk uit de schappen gehaald."

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De woordvoerder verklaarde tijdens de persconferentie: "We ontdekten tot onze verbijstering salades met de Salmonella-bacterie tijdens een routinesteeekproef van een van onze eigen controleurs. Hoe dit heeft kunnen gebeuren weten we echt niet, maar we zijn er erg kapot van. We gaan dan ook een onderzoek starten om de oorzaak te achterhalen en dit in de toekomst te kunnen voorkomen. We leven mee met de families die getroffen zijn door deze verschrikkelijke fout en bieden onze oprechte excuses aan. De betreffende producten worden zo snel mogelijk uit de schappen gehaald."

# NRC HANDELSBLAD

Maandag 13 april 2015

Algemeen Handelsblad (1828) en Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (1844)

nrc.nl

## SaladSurprise reageert op berichten mislabelde salade

AMSTERDAM - Vanmorgen reageerde een woordvoerder van SaladSurprise op het bericht van de Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit (NVWA) dat eerder in de media verscheen omtrent een salade. De NVWA meldde daarin dat de salade 'Italiaanse kip' verkeerd is gelabeld. Op het label zou de productinformatie en de naam van de salade 'Pittige Marokkaanse kip' staan. Het zou gaan om duizenden mislabelde salades.

De woordvoerder verklaarde: "Het bericht van de Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit klopt. Tijdens een routinesteeekproef van een van onze eigen controleurs werd het verkeerde label op de salade ontdekt. De oorzaak is nog onbekend. Er wordt een onderzoek gestart om deze te achterhalen, zodat het in de toekomst kan worden voorkomen. Het bedrijf wil zijn excuses aanbieden voor de veroorzaakte overlast. De betreffende producten worden zo snel mogelijk uit de schappen gehaald."

# NRC HANDELSBLAD

Maandag 13 april 2015

Algemeen Handelsblad (1828) en Nieuwe Rotterdamsche Courant (1844)

nrc.nl

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De woordvoerder verklaarde: "Het bericht van de Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit klopt. Tijdens een routinesteeekproef van een van onze eigen controleurs werd de Salmonella-bacterie in de salade ontdekt. De oorzaak is nog onbekend. Er wordt een onderzoek gestart om deze te achterhalen, zodat het in de toekomst kan worden voorkomen. Het bedrijf wil zijn excuses aanbieden voor de veroorzaakte overlast. De betreffende producten worden zo snel mogelijk uit de schappen gehaald."



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De woordvoerder verklaarde: "Helaas klopt het bericht van de Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit. We ontdekten tot onze schrik salades met het verkeerde label tijdens een routinesteekproef van een van onze eigen controleurs. Hoe dit heeft kunnen gebeuren weten we echt niet, maar we zijn er erg kapot van. We gaan dan ook een onderzoek starten om de oorzaak te achterhalen en dit in de toekomst te kunnen voorkomen. We bieden iedereen die overlast heeft gehad van deze verschrikkelijke fout onze oprechte excuses aan. De betreffende producten worden zo snel mogelijk uit de schappen gehaald."

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De woordvoerder verklaarde: "Helaas klopt het bericht van de Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit. We ontdekten tot onze verbijstering salades met de Salmonella-bacterie tijdens een routinesteekproef van een van onze eigen controleurs. Hoe dit heeft kunnen gebeuren weten we echt niet, maar we zijn er erg kapot van. We gaan dan ook een onderzoek starten om de oorzaak te achterhalen en dit in de toekomst te kunnen voorkomen. We leven mee met de families die getroffen zijn door deze verschrikkelijke fout en bieden onze oprechte excuses aan. De betreffende producten worden zo snel mogelijk uit de schappen gehaald."

**APPENDIX B: Measurement items****Anger**

EA1	Angry
EA2	Disgusted
EA3	Annoyed
EA4	Outraged

**Sympathy**

ES1	Sympathetic
ES2	Sorry*
ES3	Compassion
ES4	Empathy

**Competence-based trustworthiness**

TA1	SaladSurprise is very capable of performing its job.
TA2	SaladSurprise is known to be succesful at the things it tries to do.
TA3	SaladSurprise has much knowledge about the work that needs done.
TA4	I feel very confident about SaladSurprise's skills.
TA5	SaladSurprise is well qualified.

**Character-based trustworthiness**

TB1	SaladSurprise is very concerned about my welfare.
TB2	My needs and desires are very important to SaladSurprise.
TB3	SaladSurprise would not knowingly do anything to hurt me.
TB4	SaladSurprise really looks out for what is important to me.
TB5	SaladSurprise will go out of its way to help me.
TI1	SaladSurprise has a strong sense of justice.
TI2	I never have to wonder whether SaladSurprise will stick to its word.*
TI3	SaladSurprise tries hard to be fair in dealings with others.
TI4	SaladSurprise's actions and behaviors are not very consistent.*
TI5	I like SaladSurprise's values.
TI6	Sound principles seem to guide SaladSurprise's behavior.*

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**WOM intentions – Positive**

---

- |     |   |
|-----|---|
| WP1 | Say positive things about this brand.                     |
| WP2 | Recommend this brand to others.                           |
| WP3 | Recommend this brand to someone else who seeks my advice. |

---

**WOM intentions – Negative**

---

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| WN1 | Warn my friends and relatives not to buy this brand.   |
| WN2 | Complain to my friends and relatives about this brand. |
| WN3 | Say negative things about this brand to other people.  |

---

**Purchase intentions**

---

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| PI1 | Given the chance, I intend to purchase from SaladSurprise.                           |
| PI2 | Given the chance, I predict that I should purchase from SaladSurprise in the future. |
| PI3 | It is likely that I will buy products from SaladSurprise in the near future.         |
| PI4 | I expect to purchase from SaladSurprise in the near future.                          |

---

**Involvement with health**

---

- |     |                             |
|-----|-----------------------------|
| IH1 | I am aware of my health.    |
| IH2 | I find my health important. |

---

**Involvement with the product**

---

- |     |  |
|-----|--|
| IP1 | I like to eat a salad.                   |
| IP2 | Salads are an important part of my diet. |
- 

Note: \* item was deleted after factor analysis

## APPENDIX C: Questionnaire Dutch

Beste deelnemer,

Bedankt voor uw medewerking aan deze vragenlijst. Deze vragenlijst wordt gebruikt voor mijn master thesis voor de opleiding Communication Studies aan de Universiteit Twente. In deze vragenlijst worden een merk en een bepaalde situatie aan u gepresenteerd, gevolgd door een aantal vragen die ingaan op deze situatie. Er wordt alleen naar uw mening gevraagd, er zijn geen goede of foute antwoorden. Tot slot wordt naar een aantal demografische gegevens gevraagd. Het invullen van de vragenlijst duurt ongeveer tien tot vijftien minuten.

De resultaten van deze vragenlijst worden anoniem verwerkt. De gebruikte namen, voorbeelden en het krantenartikel in deze vragenlijst zijn fictief en zijn niet op bestaande merken of producten gebaseerd. De resultaten worden alleen gebruikt voor academische doeleinden.

Voor vragen of opmerkingen kunt u een e-mail sturen naar [i.g.j.vaneerden@student.utwente.nl](mailto:i.g.j.vaneerden@student.utwente.nl).

Nogmaals hartelijk dank voor uw medewerking!

Met vriendelijke groeten,

Irene van Eerden  
Student Master Communication Studies, Universiteit Twente

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Op de volgende pagina ziet u een krantenartikel. Lees het artikel goed door, de vragen die volgen gaan over de inhoud van dit artikel. U kunt ook altijd terug naar het artikel.

---

### DEEL 1: Nieuwsbericht

SaladSurprise is een bedrijf dat gemengde salades maakt. In hun assortiment zitten zowel vegetarische salades als salades met vlees, kip of vis. De producten van SaladSurprise worden in de bekende supermarkten verkocht en het bedrijf heeft mede daardoor een marktaandeel van 25% op weten te bouwen.

Hieronder ziet u een krantenartikel uit het NRC Handelsblad. In het artikel wordt een productcrisis van het merk SaladSurprise beschreven. Lees het artikel en beantwoord daarna de vragen op de volgende pagina's.

- *scenario* -

---

**Hoe zou je de situatie van Salad Surprise die in het artikel beschreven wordt beoordelen?**

Niet zo ernstig                Heel ernstig

**Hoe zou je de inhoud van het artikel beoordelen?**

Formeel	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Informeel
Objectief	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Subjectief
Niet emotioneel	<input type="radio"/> <input type="radio"/>	Emotioneel

**Wie berichtte het eerst over de situatie bij Salad Surprise?**

- Salad Surprise
- Nederlandse Voedsel- en Warenautoriteit

**Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met onderstaande stellingen.**

	Heel erg mee oneens	Mee oneens	Noch oneens, noch eens	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Salad Surprise is zeer geschikt voor het uitvoeren van zijn werk.	1	2	3	4	5
Salad Surprise staat er bekend om succesvol te zijn in die dingen die ze proberen te doen.	1	2	3	4	5
Salad Surprise heeft veel kennis over het werk dat gedaan moet worden.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb vertrouwen in de vaardigheden van Salad Surprise.	1	2	3	4	5
Salad Surprise is goed gekwalificeerd.	1	2	3	4	5

	Heel erg mee oneens	Mee oneens	Noch oneens, noch eens	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
SaladSurprise is bezorgd om mijn welzijn.	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn behoeften zijn belangrijk voor SaladSurprise.	1	2	3	4	5
SaladSurprise zou niet willens en weten iets doen om me te kwetsen.	1	2	3	4	5
SaladSurprise kijkt echt uit naar wat belangrijk voor mij is.	1	2	3	4	5
SaladSurprise zal er alles aan doen om me te helpen.	1	2	3	4	5

	Heel erg mee oneens	Mee oneens	Noch oneens, noch eens	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
SaladSurprise heeft een sterk gevoel van rechtvaardigheid.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik hoef me nooit af te vragen of SaladSurprise zich aan zijn woord houdt.	1	2	3	4	5
SaladSurprise probeert echt om eerlijk te zijn in de omgang met anderen.	1	2	3	4	5
De acties en het gedrag van SaladSurprise zijn niet erg consistent.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik houd van de waarden van SaladSurprise.	1	2	3	4	5
Gezonde principes lijken het gedrag van SaladSurprise te begeleiden.	1	2	3	4	5

	Heel erg mee oneens	Mee oneens	Noch oneens, noch eens	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Ik wil SaladSurprise het beste wensen.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik zal SaladSurprise veroordelen.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik zal niet positief over SaladSurprise denken.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik zal SaladSurprise afkeuren.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ben bereid om SaladSurprise te vergeven.	1	2	3	4	5

	Heel erg mee oneens	Mee oneens	Noch oneens, noch eens	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Als ik de kans krijg, ben ik van plan om een product van SaladSurprise te kopen.	1	2	3	4	5
Als ik de kans krijg, voorspel ik dat ik in de toekomst een product van SaladSurprise zou kopen.	1	2	3	4	5
Het is waarschijnlijk dat ik producten van SaladSurprise zal kopen in de nabije toekomst.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik verwacht te kopen van SaladSurprise in de nabije toekomst.	1	2	3	4	5

**Geef bij elk van onderstaande stellingen aan in hoeverre je dit ervaart ten opzichte van SaladSurprise.**

	Heel erg mee oneens	Mee oneens	Noch oneens, noch eens	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Ik ben boos.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik voel walging.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ben geërgerd.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ben diep verontwaardigd.	1	2	3	4	5

	Heel erg mee oneens	Mee oneens	Noch oneens, noch eens	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Ik voel sympathie.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ben bedroefd.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik heb mededogen.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik voel empathie.	1	2	3	4	5



**Hoe waarschijnlijk is het, dat u het volgende doet..**

	Heel erg onwaarsc hijnlijk	Waarschij nlijk	Noch onwarschij nlijk, noch waarschijn lijk	Waarschij nlijk	Heel erg waarschi jnlijk
Iets positiefs zeggen over SaladSurprise.	1	2	3	4	5
SaladSurprise aanbevelen aan anderen.	1	2	3	4	5
SaladSurprise aanbevelen aan iemand die mij om advies vraagt.	1	2	3	4	5
Mijn vrienden en familie waarschuwen SaladSurprise niet te kopen.	1	2	3	4	5
Tegen mijn vrienden en familie klagen over SaladSurprise.	1	2	3	4	5
Negatieve dingen zeggen tegen andere mensen over SaladSurprise.	1	2	3	4	5

**DEEL 2: Demografische gegevens****Wat is je geslacht?**

- Man
- Vrouw

**Wat is uw leeftijd? ....****In welke Nederlandse provincie woont u op dit moment?**

- Groningen
- Friesland
- Drenthe
- Overijssel
- Gelderland
- Noord-Holland
- Zuid-Holland
- Flevoland
- Utrecht

- Zeeland
- Noord-Brabant
- Limburg
- Ik woon niet in Nederland

**Wat is uw hoogst genoten of huidige opleiding?**

- Basisonderwijs
- Vmbo
- Havo
- Vwo
- Middelbaar beroepsonderwijs
- Hoger beroepsonderwijs
- Universitair onderwijs
- Overig

Geef aan in hoeverre u het eens bent met onderstaande stellingen.

	Heel erg mee oneens	Mee oneens	Noch oneens, noch eens	Mee eens	Heel erg mee eens
Ik eet graag een salade.	1	2	3	4	5
Salades zijn een belangrijk onderdeel van mijn eetpatroon.	1	2	3	4	5
Ik ben me bewust van mijn gezondheid.	1	2	3	4	5
In vind mijn gezondheid belangrijk.	1	2	3	4	5

Bedankt voor uw deelname!