

Master Thesis
in
Marketing Communication

**Employer Brand in Crisis:
Effects of a Values-related Crisis
on Employer Brand Trust,
Image and Attractiveness**

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Abstract

Developing a strong employer brand is essential for attracting skilled employees and has become increasingly challenging in view of the war for talent that currently prevails the job market, especially in Germany. As crises are known to have a devastating effect on brands, an organisational crisis can also weaken an employer brand and its goal of attracting the right talents. As yet, however, no research has investigated the employer brand in times of crisis from the perspective of prospective applicants. This study addresses the research gap by exploring the degree to which the values-related crisis type (environmental vs. privacy issues), the pre-crisis reputation (favourable vs. unfavourable), and the crisis timing strategy (proactive vs. reactive) have an effect on an employer brand. For this purpose, a 2 x 2 x 2 experimental design was applied and an online survey among 280 German students and job seekers was conducted. The results of multivariate as well as univariate analyses of variance and covariance confirm that an organisation's crisis type as well as pre-crisis reputation have an impact on employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness. More specifically, privacy issues and a negative pre-crisis reputation result in lower levels of trust in, a more negative image of, and less attraction to the employer brand than environmental issues and a positive reputation prior to the crisis. In contrast, the crisis timing strategy of an organisation influences only employer brand trust significantly: Particularly, it has a more negative impact when a third party discloses the crisis instead of an organisation's CEO. These results imply that employer brand trust is influenced the most by a values-related crisis. Hence, future studies on crisis communication and employer branding should take this outcome variable into account. Further, it is recommended to organisations to proactively communicate a values-related crisis because it positively influences their credibility, which represents an essential component of employer brand trust. Nevertheless, organisations are not advised to rely solely on crisis timing strategies but assess other strategies to protect its image and attractiveness as an employer prior to a values-related crisis as well as to restore it afterwards.

Keywords

Values-related crisis, crisis type, crisis timing strategy, pre-crisis reputation, employer brand trust, employer brand image, employer attractiveness.

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Abbreviations

BP	British Petroleum
CA	Corporate ability
CSP	Corporate social performance
CSR	Corporate social responsibility
EA	Employer attractiveness
EBI	Employer brand image
EBT	Employer brand trust
HR	Human resources
JA	Job attractiveness
MANOVA	Multivariate analysis of variance
MANCOVA	Multivariate analysis of covariance
P-J fit	Person-job fit
P-O fit	Person-organisation fit
RQ	Research question
SC	Source credibility
VW	Volkswagen
WOM	Word of mouth

1 Introduction

Whether product recalls, corporate fraud or other types of crises, news across the world almost daily report on an organisation in crisis, of which the nature can differ. However, particularly crises of management failure were the most numerous and widespread in recent years. One example is the global financial crisis of 2008 in which several banks in the United States went bankrupt (Lerbinger, 2012). Organisational crises in the food and beverage industry include, for instance, Nestlé's exploitation of the environment in Indonesia as well as Lidl's systematic employee monitoring in Germany. While the latter illegally monitored its employees without their knowledge, using concealed cameras ("Mitarbeiter bespitzelt," 2008), Nestlé sourced palm oil from illegal slash-and-burn farming in the rainforest of Indonesia in order to manufacture consumer products ("Millionen Hektar Wald," 2016). As a consequence, these well-known global organisations have been accused of fraud and mismanagement at the executive level (Caldiero, Taylor, & Ungureanu, 2009). Thus, values-related crises that typically involve ethical issues (Dutta & Pullig, 2011) have become increasingly frequent and are usually highly publicised. As the focus in prior research has been on product-harm crises that occur due to faulty products (Grunwald & Hempelmann, 2010), this study takes the two values-related crises cases from the food industry as research context.

Despite such crises in which organisations are often under pressure to downsize, they need to continue recruiting employees (Buhse & Scherer, 2016) in order to rebuild their workforce which is one of its most valuable assets (Rynes & Cable, 2003). However, in view of the war for talent that currently prevails the job market (Michaels, Handfiels-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001), organisations are competing with one another for the lack of skilled employees. To differentiate themselves from their competitors and to position themselves as an employer of choice for potential employees in the job market, more and more organisations put the concept of employer branding into practice (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Thereby, organisations aim at building an image as great place to work in the mind of job seekers (Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy, & Berthon, 2002). By applying branding principles to their human resources management, organisations attempt to strategically create an attractive employer brand that provides a source of competitive advantage in attracting talents at the early recruitment stage (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Ambler & Barrow (1996) have first defined such an *employer brand* as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company" (p.187).

Nevertheless, brand crises can have a devastating impact on "a brand's perceived ability to deliver expected benefits thereby weakening the brand equity" (Dutta & Pullig, 2011, p. 1281). This, in turn, can cause severe damage to an organization's image and decrease its attractiveness as an employer to prospective applicants (Kanar, Collins, & Bell, 2008). After the economic crisis in 2008, for instance, 47 % of employees and 32 % of employers of the banking and financial services community thought that the employer brand values have had to change. However, 77 % of employers and 61 % of employees did not believe that the employer brand had been damaged from the crisis (Hays, 2010). Another interesting finding of Hays' survey in 2010 has been that only 40 % of employees and 28 % of employers thought that the organisation's attraction strategies had suffered as a result of the crisis. Similarly, media are reflecting this controversial matter among prospective applicants: While some do not want to work for a bank that is involved in criminal activities, have become insecure due to the bank's downsizing, and doubt whether to apply, others are still interested in applying at the bank (Buhse & Scherer, 2016). Hence, an interesting question that remains is whether prospective applicants perceive an organisation as a trustworthy, reputable and attractive employer in times of crisis.

Prior research has surprisingly neglected to investigate the employer brand or its trust, image and attractiveness in times of crisis, neither related to products nor to values, from the perspective of potential applicants. Most empirical studies on organisational crises have been pursued on product-related crises within the consumer context and focussed on how organisations should strategically respond to a crisis (e.g. Claeys & Caubherge, 2012, 2014; Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2009) to mitigate negative emotions and reactions or to repair the trust (Fennis & Stroebe, 2014; Kim, Dirks, Cooper, & Ferrin, 2006) and image (e.g. Caldiero et al., 2010) of consumers. Previous research on recruitment has mainly examined what potential applicants attracts during the initial phase of recruitment and how company-independent recruitment sources such as negative publicity and word-of-mouth communication influence job seekers' attraction and intention to apply to an organisation (e.g. Kanar et al., 2010; Van Hove & Lievens, 2005). Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore how job seekers evaluate the employer brand in times of crisis. This leads to the following research question:

RQ. To what extent do crisis type, pre-crisis reputation, and crisis timing strategy have an effect on (a) employer brand trust, (b) employer brand image, and (c) employer attractiveness?

First, *crisis type* was selected because it is the major determining factor in how much crisis responsibility stakeholders attribute to an organisation and how they react to a crisis. As an organisation can respond to a crisis in various ways, an understanding of the influence of different crisis types can help an organisation deciding on the most effective response (Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Dutta & Pullig, 2011) and timing strategy (Claeys & Caubherge, 2012).

A second factor that enables an organisation to assess how much crisis responsibility its stakeholders will attribute to it (Coombs, 2007) and to determine the crisis impact is its own *pre-crisis reputation*. Previous findings from consumer research, using controversial approaches, have claimed protecting but also damaging effects of a positive pre-crisis reputation on the reputational assets of an organisation (e.g. Sohn & Lariscy, 2012). Which is valid for job seekers in the recruitment context, in which reputation serves as a signal of an organisation's attributes and behaviour to job seekers, who have to decide whether to apply for a job based on scarce information resulting from their job search (Cable & Turban, 2003)?

Third, previous crisis communication research has focussed on understanding how the crisis type influences the selection of a response strategy (e.g. Coombs, 2007). Arpan and Pompper (2003) as well as Arpan and Roskos-Ewaldson (2005) have noted that the effectiveness of a self-disclosure strategy might vary according to the crisis type likewise. Following this recommendation for future research, this study focuses on *crisis timing strategies* in order to offer advice to organisations in crisis. Although researchers have highly recommended a proactive disclosure of crisis information because it allows an organisation to protect its reputation from severe damage, the cases of Nestlé and Lidl show that most organizations respond reactively after the media publicised the crisis. A yet unanswered question concerning this is whether job seekers react differently when an organisation first discloses its crisis news.

Fourth, *employer brand trust* was considered as a key variable in the crisis context because Fennis and Stroebe (2014) have proven that negative news can influence consumers' trust. Also job applicants gather information about potential employers during recruitment and form an initial perception of an organisation's trustworthiness that is likely to influence their attraction to apply to the hiring organisation (Klotz, Motta Veiga, Buckley & Gavin, 2013). Likewise, job seekers form an image of a potential employer and compare it with their personal values in order to evaluate whether they are congruent with the organisational values, which predicts their attraction to an organisation (Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Cable, 1997). Compared to employer reputation that is defined as job seekers' belief about the public's evaluation of an organisation, *employer brand image* refers to job seekers' own beliefs about an organisation as an employer (Cable & Turban, 2001), which is of higher interest for this study.

Finally, *employer attractiveness* is understood as an attitudinal construct that can already be assessed in the first stage of recruitment and relates to actual application decisions in later stages (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Thus, employer attractiveness can serve as a competitive advantage (Cable & Turban, 2001) to get the right talent (Parment, 2009) in view of the war for talent that currently prevails the job market (Michaels, Handfiels-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). Hence, it could be interesting whether job seekers like to work for an organisation in crisis and make great effort to do so (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003).

The findings from this experimental study contribute to the field of crisis, recruitment, and employer branding by facilitating understanding of job seekers reaction to a crisis as well as the development of an effective crisis communication and employer branding strategy in times of crisis. Drawing on crisis and recruitment literature by incorporating these crisis variables as determinants of employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness, this study presents an entirely new model of the effects of an organisational crisis on the employer brand. This conceptual research model is tested through a statistical analyses of the data collected from students and job seekers from Germany, which particularly suffers from the lack of qualified personnel.

In order to effectively investigate how a value-related crisis influences an organisation's employer brand, this article begins with a discussion of the concepts of an organisational crisis and of the variables crisis type, pre-crisis reputation and crisis timing strategy. In the second part of this article, the research design, instrument, procedure, and participants to test this model are explained in detail. Thereafter, the results of the multivariate and univariate analyses of variance and covariance are presented, arranged according to the outcome variables. Fourth, the research findings, limitations, as well as the implications arising from this study are discussed and recommendations for future research in this topic are made. Lastly, this article concludes with a revision of what this study can contribute to the crisis and employer branding research.

2 Theoretical Framework and Hypotheses Development

To effectively discuss the effects of a values-related crisis on an employer's brand from the perspective of prospective applicants, it is first necessary to consider how an organisational crisis is characterised and how it influences the employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness respectively. Second, theories and findings from the crisis literature are reviewed to analyse how the independent variables crisis type, pre-crisis reputation, and crisis timing strategy are conceptualised and what effects they have in the recruitment context. Finally, the resulting hypotheses about their influence on the employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness are depicted in a conceptual research model that will be examined in the subsequent chapters.

2.1 Organisational Crises

An organisational crisis is defined as a “low-probability, high-impact event that threatens the viability of the organisation and is characterised by ambiguity of cause, effect, and means of resolution, as well as by a belief that decisions must be made swiftly” (Pearson & Clair, 1998, p. 60). Focussing on the negative, long-term consequences, Seeger, Sellnow and Ulmer (1998) have added that a corporate crisis is a specific, unexpected, and non-routine event or series of events that evoke high levels of uncertainty and threaten or are perceived as threat to organisational high-priority goals such as the image, legitimacy, profitability, and the survival of an organisation. In the context of recruitment, such a high-priority goal that might be threatened by a crisis of the recruiting organisation is the attraction of prospective applicants.

Aside the consequences for an organisation's viability and goals, a crisis can affect various stakeholders such as employees, customers, and community members, who can learn about the crisis from the news media, other people, or directly from the organisation. However, most stakeholders receive information about a crisis from news reports in the mass media (Coombs, 2007) that are considered to be credible information sources (Rampl & Kenning, 2014) that prefer to report negative news more frequently than positive news (Dennis & Merrill, 1996). The resultant negative publicity of a crisis amplified by the mass media influences consumers' trust in a brand as the media contribute to a generalised public image of the crisis, which in turn causes a public perception of risk (Yannopoulou, Koronis, & Elliott, 2011). However, research has neither investigated the effects of negative publicity nor of a crisis on *employer brand trust*, which is defined as the “employer's perceived honesty, credibility and ability to satisfy applicant demands” (Jiang & Iles, 2011, p. 107).

Another result of a crisis that has a strong, negative effect on an organisation's attractiveness as employer and actual application decisions of prospective applicants is word-of-mouth (WOM), which is conceptualized as informal, interpersonal communication. It comes from conversations with social sources such as family members, friends or acquaintances, who are often consulted by applicants about jobs and organisations (Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003; Van Hove & Lievens, 2005, 2007). Representing a company-independent and therefore more credible information source than the sources provided by an organisation, WOM seems to be preferred by applicants in the case of contradictory information (Van Hove & Lievens, 2005, 2007), which is often the case in times of crisis. Negative WOM, as a result of a crisis, consequently presents a risk to the *employer attractiveness*. The latter is most frequently described as the envisioned benefits that prospective applicants see in working for an organisation (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005).

As organisational attractiveness relates to the reputation of an organisation as an excellent employer (Highhouse et al., 2003), negative publicity generated through a corporate crisis can also threaten the image of an organisation (Turban & Greening, 1997; Dean, 2004). A recent example includes the financial and cultural crisis of Deutsche Bank that made losses of billions of euros and manipulated gold as well as silver prices as well as the benchmark interest rates (Frühauf, 2016). As a result, the bank's image is currently still damaged ("Deutsche Bank baut um," 2015). This could be crucial to inexperienced job seekers who might rely on employer brand images for advice in decision making when comparing organisations based on the many unknown attributes of the job and organisation during their job search (Collins & Stevens, 2002). An *employer brand image*, in particular, is defined as "image associated with an organisation uniquely in its role as an employer" (Knox & Freeman, 2010) and consists of instrumental attributes such as pay and symbolic traits such as prestige (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). The latter is assumed to interact with job seekers' social identity concerns (Highhouse, Thornbury, & Little, 2007) indicating that they do not want to identify themselves or to be associated with such an organisation having a negative image.

Based on the effects of these consequences an organisational crisis entails for stakeholders, it is assumed that the crisis negatively influences not only consumers and employees but also prospective applicants and their intention to apply to a recruiting organisation.

In times of crisis, an immediate, honest and open response to a crisis, particularly of an organization's spokesperson or leader such as the CEO, can reduce uncertainty, enhance the reputation, image, and credibility of an organization with its stakeholders (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 2003) and restore the trust of them (Utz, Schulz, & Glocka, 2013). More precisely, to protect its reputation as employer, which is defined as job seekers' perception about how the public evaluates an organisation (Cable & Turban, 2001), an organisation can use a crisis communication strategy. That is "the collection, processing, and dissemination of information required to address a crisis situation" (Coombs, 2010). Various studies have systematically examined the selection of appropriate crisis response strategies (e.g. Claeys & Caubherge, 2012, 2014; Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2009). However, to effectively respond to a crisis, an organisation should consider the nature of crisis (Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2002; Dutta & Pullig, 2011), which will be discussed in the next section.

2.2 Crisis Types

Identifying the type of crisis is the first decision that enables an organisation to assess how much crisis responsibility the stakeholders of an organisation will attribute to a crisis event (Coombs, 2007). According to Weiner's (1980) attribution theory, people determine the cause for an event, particularly for negative ones, which can result in negative emotions such as anger and negative social behaviour such as punishment. Based upon the stakeholders' attribution of responsibility, Coombs (2007) has divided crises into victim, accidental, and intentional crises. Especially the latter are characterised by strong attributions of organisational responsibility for a crisis, which represent a severe threat for an organisation's reputation and therefore suitable cases for studying the effect of a values-related crisis on prospective applicants. Intentional crises can be subdivided into crises of skewed management values and crises of management misconduct (Lerbinger, 2012). While the first one occurs when an organisation focusses on short-term profits and stockholders' interests instead of long-term social values and employees' or communities' interests, a deliberate violation of laws or regulations serves as an example of a management misconduct (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).

2.2.1 Product-related and Values-related Crises

As opposed to product-harm crises that occur due to faulty products or services provided by an organisation (Grunwald & Hempelmann, 2010), a *values-related crisis* “involves social or ethical issues surrounding the values espoused by the brand” (Dutta & Pullig, 2011, p. 1282). While a product-related crisis weakens consumers’ perception of a brand’s ability to provide functional benefits expected by consumers, a values-related crisis casts doubt on the ability of a brand to deliver symbolic and psychological benefits (Pullig, Netemeyer & Biswas, 2006). Both types of benefits affect the brand attitude and brand choice but symbolic benefits (e.g. prestige) are particularly of concern to job seekers (Highhouse et al., 2007) and useful for positioning differentiation (Dutta & Pullig, 2011) from competitors in their minds, which is important in early recruitment stages (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Thus, it is considered as more suitable for this study to explore the effects of a values-related crisis compared to a product-harm crisis.

More recently, Sohn and Lariscy (2012) have used the term corporate social responsibility (CSR) crisis to refer to an event that threatens an organisation’s “reputation associated with norms and values cherished by society, and socially expected obligations” (p. 6). The reason is usually a negatively deviant behaviour of an organisation that challenges its morality or integrity, or violates other socially approved norms (Sohn & Lariscy, 2012) and can occur in environmental (e.g. environmental pollution) or ethical (e.g. human rights violations) contexts (Romani, Grappi, & Bagozzi, 2012). As environmental exploitations and ethical scandals are among the most prevalent types of values-related crises (Carney & Jorden, 1993) and different stakeholders, they serve as two values-relates crises types for this research.

2.2.2 Environmental and Privacy Crises

Environmental exploitation is a recurrent example among food and beverage companies such as Nestlé that sourced the palm oil it needs as raw material to produce many consumer products from illegal slash-and-burn farming in the rainforest of Indonesia (“Millionen Hektar Wald,” 2016). In view of such a values-related crisis that can be categorised as a crisis of skewed management values, organisational activities on environmental issues might be particularly crucial to potential applicants who are ecologically conscious (Greening & Turban, 2000). Accordingly, Bauer, and Aiman-Smith (1996) have shown that potential applicants generally evaluate an organisation with an image of being ecologically concerned as a more attractive employer than an organisation that does not have a proactive attitude towards the environment. Prospective applicants who personally value and pay attention to environmental responsibility are more likely to intend to pursue employment with such an ecologically concerned organisation (Bauer & Aiman-Smith, 1996).

Nevertheless, Albinger, and Freeman (2000) have suggested that employee issues such as support of employee participation and benefits that will affect prospective applicants most directly, are weighted most heavily in their assessment of employer attractiveness. A practical example of an employee issues-related crisis includes the German food and beverage retailer Lidl. The company hired private investigators to discover thefts, usually committed by customers but also their own employees, in their branches. However, by using concealed cameras to systematically monitor and record not only details about the working methods of its employees but also about their private conversations, the privacy rights of Lidl’s employees were infringed. Although the retailer claimed that this illegal monitoring of employees was not on behalf of Lidl’s top management, a fine amounting to millions of euros was imposed on the retailer due to the violation of Germany’s Federal Data Protection Act (“Mitarbeiter bespitzelt,” 2008).

Such a violation of privacy rights in the workplace might be particularly crucial to German prospective applicants who are more concerned about their privacy than US-Americans, for instance. Belonging to an individualistic culture in which uncertainty is avoided, Germans are likely to feel threatened in uncertain situations and engage in risk adverse behaviour (Krasnova & Velti, 2010). Besides, privacy violation represents a breach in trust which is of particular importance in the recruitment context because applicants entrust their biographical data to potential employers already in the early phase of recruitment (Klotz et al., 2013). However, research lacks studies on this values-related crisis type that can be described as a crisis of management misconduct. Therefore, this study includes a crisis case that is similar to this example.

2.2.3 Effects of Crisis Types in the Recruitment Context

Singh, Iglesias, and Batista-Foguet (2012) have demonstrated that consumer perceived ethicality of a corporate brand has a positive impact on consumers' trust in the product brands of an organisation. Although the influence of brand ethicality on trust has not been studied in the context of recruitment, research has indicated that job seekers evaluate information about an organisation's values and its culture reputation based on their personal values to make initial job choice decisions. The more congruence job seekers perceive between their own values and the values signalled by a recruiting organisation, the higher the perceived person-organisation (P-O) fit (Cable & Judge, 1996), which in turn positively influences the attraction of job seekers to an organisation as employer (Jude & Cable, 1997).

In this context, a relevant organisational attribute is the corporate social performance (CSP), which is constituted of attention to employee welfare and the environment or rather organisational activities on social and environmental issues (Albinger & Freeman, 2000; Greening & Turban, 1997). It provides a signal of its values, norms and policies to job seekers who develop an image of functional job attributes such as working conditions based on it. This employment-related image, in turn, serves as basis for assessing organisational attractiveness (Greening & Turban, 1997), which is also influenced by symbolic attributes. These attributes distinguish an organisation from other employers providing equivalent instrumental attributes and serve as symbolic trait inferences about the organisation (e.g. sincerity and prestige; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Job seekers' concern for such symbolic attributes can be explained by their desire to control the impressions of their self that others have of them (Highhouse et al., 2007).

Following Ashforth and Mael's (1989) social identity theory, people define themselves with regard to what an organisation represents, which makes an employer to a part of people's social identity. Accordingly, job seekers anticipate an improved self-concept from working at a socially responsible employer by being associated with it by others (Turban & Greening, 1997). In addition, symbolic meanings are of particular importance to job seekers when they choose where to apply because they enable job seekers to assess the extent to which an organisation fulfils their need for self-expression (Highhouse et al., 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Job seekers who are concerned with expressing socially approved values are more attracted to an organisation that has a strict ethics policy and acts accordingly socially conscious. The reason is that they imagine themselves being able to express their values to others as well as being associated with an employer that signals symbolic attributes such as respectability, dignity and honour by others (Lievens et al., 2007).

Based on these findings, it is assumed that a values-related crisis of an organisation could create a tension between the values of prospective applicants and the culture of an organisation, which would have a negative impact on an employer's attractiveness. Further, it is assumed that an environmental or a social crisis of an organisation might be associated with shame and, thus, have a negative effect on the symbolic meanings of its employer brand. Finally, it appears that job seekers' attraction to an organisation could be influenced more negatively by a values-related crisis involving employee issues such as a violation of privacy rights in the workplace, than a similar crisis that is related to environmental issues. Taken together, this leads to the first hypotheses:

H1. A values-related crisis that involves privacy issues leads to (a) lower levels of employer brand trust, (b) a more negative employer brand image, and (c) lower levels of employer attractiveness than a values-related crisis that occurs due to environmental issues.

2.3 Pre-Crisis Reputation

Having identified the crisis type, evaluating its pre-crisis reputation is the second decision that enables an organisation to assess how much responsibility for a crisis event its stakeholders will attribute to the organisation (Coombs, 2007) to determine the impact of this event in the end.

2.3.1 Organisational Reputation

Organisational reputation is most commonly defined as a "collective representation of a firm's past behaviour and outcomes that depicts the firm's ability to render valued results to multiple stakeholders" (Fombrun, Gardberg, & Sever, 2000, p. 243). In other words, reputation is a perceptual construct present in the heads of an organisation's stakeholders that results from information about the organisation's past actions and conduct that the stakeholders receive from news media or when interacting with the organisation. This information is evaluated to determine the organisation's future behaviour and ability to meet the expectations of its stakeholders (Coombs, 2007; Helm & Tolsdorf, 2013). Based on these evaluations, reputations are either favourable or unfavourable and "widely recognised as valuable, intangible assets" (Coombs & Holladay, 2006) but can easily be destroyed through a crisis (Helm & Tolsdorf, 2013). Pre-crisis reputation, by contrast, describes "how well or poorly an organisation has or is perceived to have treated stakeholders in other contexts" in the past and influences the reputational threat constituted by a crisis (Coombs, 2007).

2.3.2 Positive Pre-Crisis Reputation

A favourable pre-crisis reputation has been found to protect the reputational assets of an organisation during a values-related crisis (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2015) and to contribute to a quicker recovery of these assets after the crisis. A simple explanation for the minimised loss of reputation and the stronger post-crisis reputation of an organisation with a positive prior reputation is that it has more reputational capital, which is accumulated over time, to spend than an organisation with an unfavourable pre-crisis reputation (Coombs, 2007). A more advanced explanation is the halo effect, which might serve either as a protective shield against reputational damage or give an organisation the benefit of the doubt (Coombs & Holladay, 2006). Based on the expectancy confirmation theory (Edwards & Smith, 1996), the halo as shield explanation states that stakeholders discount the negative information about an organisation in crisis and cling to its positive reputation instead.

Following Thorndike's theory (as cited in Claeys & Cauberghe, 2015) that the overall impression of people influences specific evaluations of these people, the halo as benefit of the doubt explanation, in contrast, claims that stakeholders attribute less responsibility for the

values-related crisis to an organisation because of its favourable reputation. While Coombs and Holladay (2006) have found support for the halo as shield only in a limited crisis domain and for organisations with very favourable pre-crisis reputation, the recent findings of Claeys and Cauberghe (2015) have also proven lower attributions of organisational responsibility for a crisis. Additionally, they have shown that a positive prior reputation protects an organisation against subsequent negative publicity and external allegations following a crisis and causing additional damage to an organisation's reputation and trust in the organisation (Kim, Carvalho, & Cooksey, 2007). Another approach to the buffering effect of a favourable prior reputation is Festinger's cognitive dissonance theory (as cited in Sohn & Lariscy, 2012), which suggests that stakeholders experience a cognitive dissonance when receiving negative information about an organisation in crisis. To reduce this dissonance, stakeholders ignore the crisis news that conflict with their prior belief in a positive reputation in order to confirm these beliefs (Sohn & Lariscy, 2012).

However, some researchers use Burgoon's (1993) expectancy violations theory as an argument for a boomerang effect of a favourable pre-crisis reputation, which might result in an even greater damage to an organisation than an unfavourable pre-existing reputation. They have argued that stakeholders punish a well-reputed organisation in crisis more harshly for its violations of their high expectations for the organisation's behaviour when processing negative crisis information about this organisation (Sohn & Lariscy, 2012). In other words, an organisation of high repute might have more to lose than one of ill repute.

2.3.3 Negative Pre-Crisis Reputation

An unfavourable pre-crisis reputation results in a velcro effect (Coombs & Holladay, 2002) that intensifies the negative impact of a values-related crisis on an organisation's post-crisis reputation, which consequently rebounds more slowly (Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2006). One example is the reputation of British Petroleum (BP) that was severely damaged after its drilling platform Deepwater Horizon exploded in 2010, thereby killing employees and polluting the environment (Egawhary, 2010). Due to its negative publicity prior to this event, Muralidharan, Dillistone, and Shin (2011) have assumed that the oil and gas company was even more vulnerable to reputational loss. In such a case, stakeholders do not experience a cognitive dissonance but process crisis news about an organisation (Coombs & Holladay, 2010) and attribute a higher responsibility to the organisation because they perceive the values-related crisis event as one of its misconducts (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). As an unfavourable pre-crisis reputation is the result of showing little consideration for stakeholders in other contexts in the past, it indicates that an organisation will continue to treat its stakeholders badly in the future. Consequently, consumers are less likely to intend to buy its products and to support such an organisation by engaging in positive word-of-mouth communication (Coombs, 2007).

2.3.4 Effects of Pre-crisis Reputation in the Recruitment Context

As previously mentioned, *employer reputation* is defined as job seekers' beliefs about how the public or other people affectively evaluate an organisation as employer and helps job seekers to make inferences about the employer image. The latter, in contrast, refers to job seekers' own beliefs about an organisation (Cable & Turban, 2001). Hence, reputation serves as a signal of an organisation's attributes and behaviour to job seekers who have to decide whether to apply for a job based on scarce information resulting from their job search. By signalling positive organisational and job attributes such as pride and pay, a favourable reputation positively influences job seekers' attraction to this employer which, in turn, determines job seekers' willingness to actively process information about it and to apply for a job (Cable & Turban, 2001, 2003). This can be explained by the social identity theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989)

according to which job seekers expect to feel pride and enhance their self-concept after joining and identifying with the well-reputed organisation that forms a part of their self-concept (Cable & Turban, 2003). Conversely, working for an organisation with an unfavourable reputation can lead to feelings of shame or embarrassment (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994).

Taking the findings from the consumer and the recruitment context together, it is assumed that a favourable reputation prior to a crisis protects an employer's brand from a values-related crisis instead of intensifying the damage to it. Despite the controversial approaches that have attempted to explain the effects of a positive pre-crisis reputation in the consumer context, reputation evolves over time. Therefore, reputation is more stable compared to crisis news about an organisation that is less persistent and, thus, easier to change than a reputation (Helm & Tolsdorf, 2013). This leads to the second hypothesis:

H2. When facing a values-related crisis, a negative pre-crisis reputation leads to (a) lower levels of employer brand trust, (b) a more negative employer brand image, and (c) lower levels of employer attractiveness than a positive reputation prior to a values-related crisis.

2.4 Crisis Timing Strategies

Considering how the stakeholders of an organisation will react to a crisis event and how severe the reputational threat will be enables an organisation to strategically respond and manage the crisis to protect its reputational assets (Coombs, 2007) and subsequent damage. As it is mostly aware of an event with crisis potential before it becomes public knowledge, an organisation has to decide whether it proactively communicates the crisis news or whether it reactively responds to a third party that has discovered and disclosed it first (Fennis & Stroebe, 2014).

2.4.1 Proactive Timing Strategy

Originated in the legal context, a proactive crisis timing strategy, known as stealing thunder, occurs when an organisation is the first that informs its stakeholders about a values-related crisis before a third party discovers and reports on it (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005). In the context of a values-related crisis, this self-disclosure strategy allows an organisation to effectively protect its reputation from severe damage by framing the negative information about its crisis in a positive way and its own terms as well as by downplaying the event's significance (Williams, Burgeois & Croyle, 1993). Even though the organisation thereby takes full responsibility for the crisis (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012), stakeholders perceive the crisis as less severe and the organisation as more credible (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005) which salvages organisational image (Spence, Lachlan, Omilion-Hodges, & Goddard, 2014). Additionally, they are more likely to accept an organisation's crisis communication messages because by taking the initiative to report negative information about itself, the organisation acts contrary to the negative expectations of its stakeholders (Eagly, Wood, & Chaiken, 1978). In this way, an organisation inoculates its stakeholders against upcoming negative news coverage so that it has less value for the media to report on the crisis event in the second instance (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). In fact, Wigley (2011) has confirmed that individuals who had applied stealing thunder had received a less intense and negatively framed crisis coverage by the media.

Finally, Fennis and Stroebe (2014) have demonstrated that the self-disclosure strategy mitigates the damaging effects of negative information about an organisation in crisis on the trustworthiness of an organisation and therefore on the choice behaviour of consumers. Likewise, Arpan, and Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005) have found that stealing thunder is linked to higher levels of intention to purchase a product that is involved in a crisis. This can be explained by the hypothesis that stakeholders change the meaning of negative information disclosed by

an organisation facing a crisis to make it consistent with their expectations of the organization (Williams et al., 1993).

However, Fennis and Stroebe (2014) have noted that stealing thunder does not actively restore or repair crisis damage caused by a negative information and that it may take more than merely disclose a values-related crisis if stakeholders deeply process the information. As opposed to Wigley (2011), Arpan and Pompper's (2003) survey among journalists has revealed that journalists associate a higher news value with a crisis disclosed by an organisation and are more interested in the story which might lead to further investigations of unrevealed facts. More important, taking the full responsibility for a values-related crisis entails a legal risk of exposure to financial liabilities for an organisation (Arpan & Pompper, 2003). Thus, most organizations seem to prefer the risk of a discovery by a third party and a disclosure by the media.

2.4.2 Reactive Crisis Timing Strategy

An organisation applying a reactive crisis timing strategy, known as thunder, waits to respond to inquiries from a third party, such as the government or the media, that breaks the news about the organisation's crisis first (Claeys, Cauberghe, & Leysen, 2013). Hence, it gives the third party the opportunity to frame the story in a certain way (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2012). Withholding information by remaining silent or stonewalling accusations of a third party let journalists perceive an information as secret and, thus, of higher value for news coverage which results in a more intense and negatively media coverage (Wigley, 2011). The messages generated by the press have a more negative impact on stakeholders' perceptions of an organisation's post-crisis reputation (Spence et al., 2014). Even when responding quickly to inquiries from a third party, an organisation responding reactively is perceived as less credible (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005) because it refused to take full responsibility, which not is recommended in the case of a preventable crisis (Coombs, 2007).

2.4.3 Effects of Crisis Timing Strategies in the Recruitment Context

Van Hoya and Lievens (2005) have proven that negative publicity has a persistent, negative impact on the attractiveness of an organisation as a potential future employer in the initial phase of recruitment. At this stage, an organisation attempts to attract prospective applicants (Collins & Stevens, 2002) who consult multiple sources of employment information including external, company-independent ones (Van Hoya & Lievens, 2005, 2007). As these sources do not always act in the best interest of an organisation, their negative information can have a devastating effect on job seekers' organisational attraction. Based on the obtained information, job seekers make inferences about unknown characteristics of organisations in order to form impressions about future employers, evaluate their viability, and decide whether to apply to them. As a result, prospective applicants can form a negative attitude towards an organisation as an employer, be less interested in it as a place to work, and thus in applying to an organisation (Kantar et al., 2010) that is facing a values-related crisis.

In light of these findings, it is assumed that a reactive crisis response indirectly lowers employer attractiveness by intensifying the negative news coverage of an organisation in crisis (Wigley, 2011). On the contrary, by proactively communicating a values-related crisis, an organisation applies not only an effective, but also an ethical crisis timing strategy (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen (2005) because it satisfies stakeholders' need for information to reduce their uncertainty that is created by a crisis and to protect themselves from potential threats (Coombs, 2007). This could meet the expectations of job seekers who are expected to be concerned with an organisation's culture and values (Cable, 1997) and therefore proactively influence their attraction to the organisation in crisis (Cable & Judge, 1996). Furthermore, stealing thunder is assumed to increase the credibility of an employer which is a substantial component of an

employer brand (Jiang & Iles, 2011), which in turn positively influences employer attractiveness (Rampl & Kenning, 2014). Hence, compared to thunder, stealing thunder seems to mitigate the negative effects of a values-related crisis on an employer brand and the following hypothesis is formulated:

H3. When facing a values-related crisis, a reactive crisis timing strategy leads to (a) lower levels of employer brand trust, (b) a more negative employer brand image, and (c) lower levels of employer attractiveness than a proactive crisis timing strategy.

2.5 Conceptual Research Model

Based on the literature review including the formulation of hypotheses in the antecedent sections, the following conceptual research model (see Figure 1) was derived and tested as described in the next chapter:

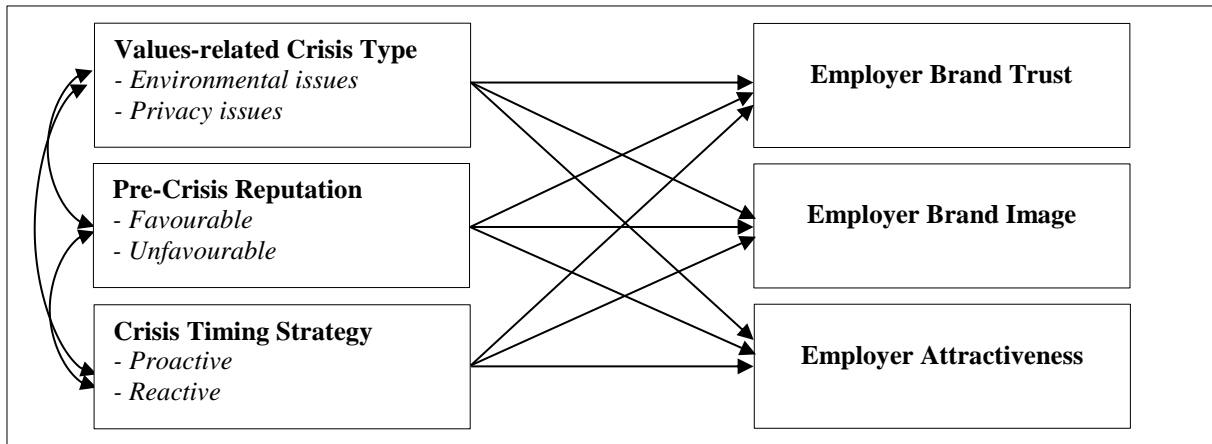


Figure 1. Conceptual Research Model.

3 Research Method

3.1 Design and Instrument

To test the research model conceptualised in the theoretical framework, this study used a 2 (values-related crisis type: environmental issues vs. privacy issues) x 2 (crisis timing strategy: proactive vs. reactive) x 2 (pre-crisis reputation: favourable vs. unfavourable) between-subjects experimental design. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the resultant eight conditions that combine the experimentally manipulated crisis variables in order to investigate their influence on employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness.

A self-completion online questionnaire (see Appendix A) was used as survey instrument as it allows to collect a large amount of data from a geographically dispersed population (Cooper & Schindler, 2014) and was regarded as suitable for the internet affine target group of students. In the introduction, participants were instructed to honestly answer the questions about a job advertisement and news article within one session. Instead of revealing the purpose of the study by mentioning the word “crisis”, participants were told that the research aimed to examine their individual perception of employers. To encourage them to take part in the survey, participants had the chance to win a voucher of the e-commerce company Amazon as it is known as a universally appealing incentive for students. In addition, German psychology students at the University of Twente could earn extra credit for research participation.

Having agreed that they were voluntarily participating in the survey, the participants first answered questions about their demographic information such as nationality, gender, age, and education to exclude people who did not belong to the target group. Second, they were exposed to a job advertisement and asked to rate the job attractiveness and person-job fit. Third, a crisis news about the company, which also advertised the job, described as “background information”, was shown and followed by manipulation check questions for the independent variables crisis type, timing strategy, and pre-crisis reputation. Finally, participants responded to items measuring the different dependent variables. After completing all questions, they were debriefed with regard to the fictitious material and the purpose of the research. Most participants completed the questionnaire in approximately ten minutes.

3.2 Stimulus Material

The stimulus material presented to the participants consisted of a job advertisement (see Figure 2) that was shown in all eight conditions (see *Note* of Table 8 on page 21 for an overview) and eight crisis news (Appendices B to I) of which one was randomly assigned to each participant. While the job advertisement provided a stimulus for participant’s intention to apply, the crisis news was manipulated to test the influence of the crisis variables on all outcome variables.



Junior Market Research Manager (m/w)

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- Unterstützung bei der Durchführung von Studien vom Briefing bis zur Ergebnispräsentation inkl. Ableitung von Handlungsempfehlungen in Zusammenarbeit mit Agenturen/Marktforschungsinstituten
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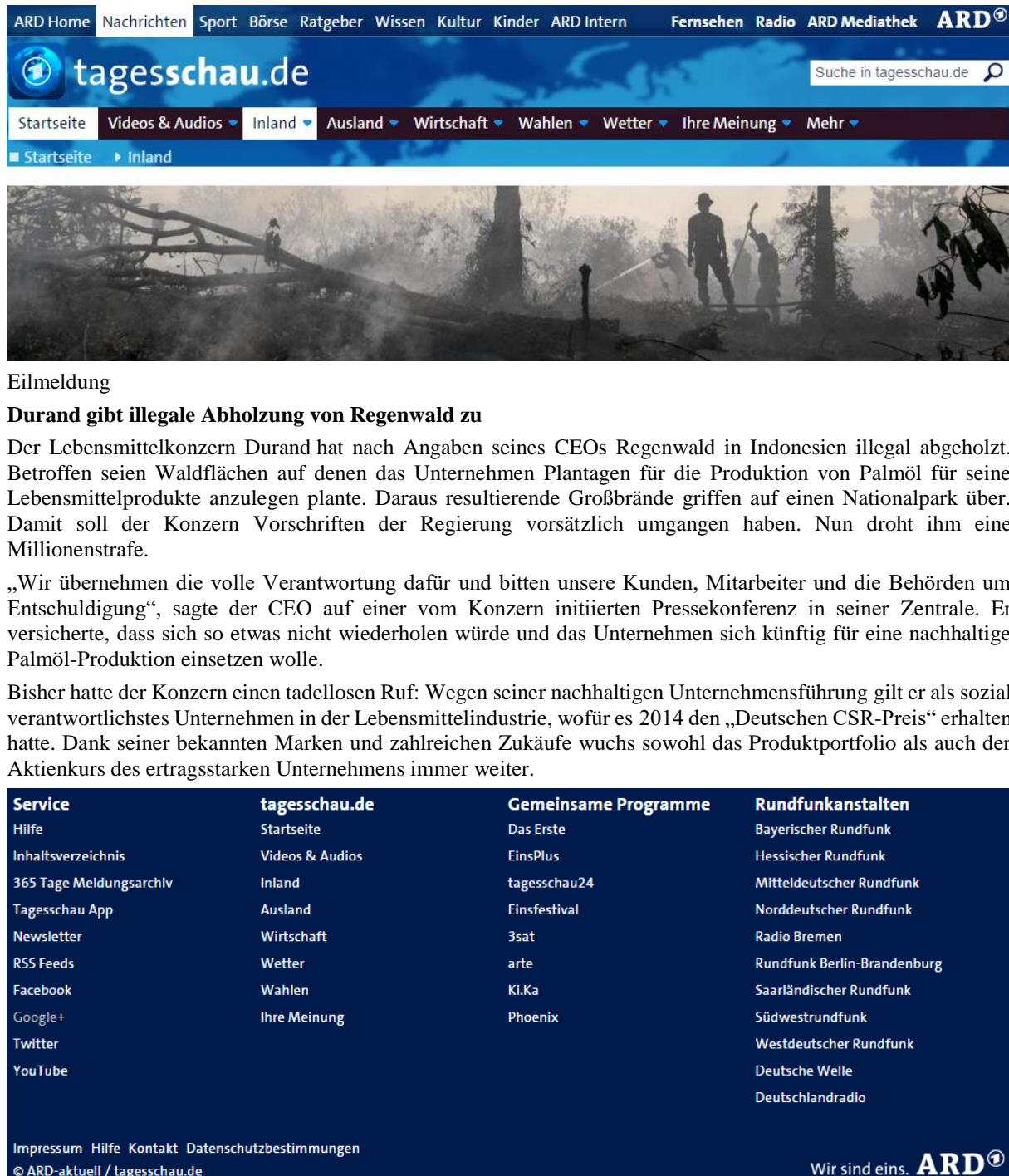
Beschäftigungsart: Vollzeit

Referenznummer: 1500048Y

Veröffentlichung: 27.04.2016

Figure 2. Fictitious Job Advertisement in German

The layout and banner of the job advertisement (see Figure 2) was designed in accordance with the those from an existing food and beverage company to design it as realistic and appealing as possible to the target group of job seeking students and graduates. However, a fictitious company name that was not used by another food company was inserted into the banner to control for prior judgements that might be attributed to this existing company, distort the assessments of the outcome variables and threaten the internal validity of the results (Grunwald & Hempelmann, 2010). Similar to well-known food companies, a blue logo and French surname, namely “Durand” that is often used for different kind of companies and sounds therefore familiar to many people but is not associated with a specific company, was chosen. The job of a junior market researcher described in the advertisement was tailored to the profile of the sample of economics, social science, communication science and psychology students and graduates. The structure and content was taken from real job advertisements for (junior) market researchers found on the internet, containing the description of the company, job title, offered tasks, and responsibilities. Further information was provided with regard to the required qualifications, benefits, and contact information.



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Eilmeldung

Durand gibt illegale Abholzung von Regenwald zu

Der Lebensmittelkonzern Durand hat nach Angaben seines CEOs Regenwald in Indonesien illegal abgeholzt. Betroffen seien Waldflächen auf denen das Unternehmen Plantagen für die Produktion von Palmöl für seine Lebensmittelprodukte anzulegen plante. Daraus resultierende Großbrände griffen auf einen Nationalpark über. Damit soll der Konzern Vorschriften der Regierung vorsätzlich umgangen haben. Nun droht ihm eine Millionenstrafe.

„Wir übernehmen die volle Verantwortung dafür und bitten unsere Kunden, Mitarbeiter und die Behörden um Entschuldigung“, sagte der CEO auf einer vom Konzern initiierten Pressekonferenz in seiner Zentrale. Er versicherte, dass sich so etwas nicht wiederholen würde und das Unternehmen sich künftig für eine nachhaltige Palmöl-Produktion einsetzen wolle.

Bisher hatte der Konzern einen tadellosen Ruf: Wegen seiner nachhaltigen Unternehmensführung gilt er als sozial verantwortlichstes Unternehmen in der Lebensmittelindustrie, wofür es 2014 den „Deutschen CSR-Preis“ erhalten hatte. Dank seiner bekannten Marken und zahlreichen Zukäufe wuchs sowohl das Produktportfolio als auch der Aktienkurs des ertragsstarken Unternehmens immer weiter.

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Figure 3. Example of a Fictitious Crisis News in German

The crisis information (see Figure 3) was presented to the respondents as breaking news published on the website of the German television news service Tagesschau offered by ARD, which is evaluated as the most trustworthy information source by Germans, compared to newspapers and the internet (Infratest dimap, 2015). For each research condition, a fictitious crisis scenario of Durand, combining the manipulation of the three predictor variables, was created to investigate the causality between the predictors and outcome variables without any confounding effects (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2015). The layout of the news resembled the typical structure of a news published on Tagesschau. Therefore, it was composed of a cover picture, a headline and three brief paragraphs of text, altogether framed with the header, navigation menu and footer of the original website. The wording, order and length of the text was kept as consistent as possible in all scenarios to ensure an equal effect across all conditions.

3.3 Experimental Manipulations

Crisis type. First, the two crisis scenarios chosen for this study were described as belonging to the intentional crisis cluster by stating that Durand was responsible for the incident because it is more likely to result in unfavourable reactions from stakeholders (Coombs, 2007). Both crisis cases were based on real events faced by existing companies in the food and beverage industry in the past and described in the news media such as Tagesschau of which the descriptions of the crises served as basis for the news articles' content. In the case of an environmental exploitation, the crisis involved the illegal deforestation of rainforest in Indonesia, whereas in the case of privacy violation at work, Durand illegally monitored its employees in Germany.

Crisis Timing Strategy. In the second paragraph, the crisis timing strategy of Durand was manipulated by emphasising whether its CEO or a third party disclosed the incident at a press conference. However, in both cases, apology was chosen as response strategy by stating that the company takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks for employees', customers' and the public's forgiveness. In the proactive crisis timing strategy condition, it was formulated as a statement given by the CEO, whereas in the thunder condition, the scenario indicated that the journalist learned about the incident at the press conference of a third party.

Pre-crisis reputation. The third paragraph gave information about the pre-crisis reputation of Durand that was either positive or negative in terms of its corporate ability (CA) and CSR. In the positive pre-crisis reputation condition, Durand was described as socially responsible for which it had received a CSR award as well as having a growing product portfolio and share price due to its well-known brands and numerous acquisitions. On the contrary, in the negative pre-crisis reputation condition, the company was known for its socially irresponsible behaviour for which it had received a negative publicity as well as for its shrinking product portfolio and share price, despite its well-known brands and numerous acquisitions.

Manipulation check. The effectiveness of the experimental manipulations of the independent variables described in the crisis news was checked by one question about each variable: First, with regard to the type of crisis, participants were asked to decide what kind of incident that was described in the news article: environmental exploitation or privacy violation at work. Second, the crisis timing strategy was checked by asking who first released the news about the incident: either the CEO of Durand or a third party. Third, participants had to indicate whether the pre-crisis reputation of Durand was described in a positive or in a negative way in the news article. To examine whether there is a significant difference between the two levels of the three crisis variables in terms of their impact on the outcome variables, only responses with correctly answered manipulation check questions were included in the subsequent analyses.

3.4 Measures

All research constructs were assessed with three or more items using existing scales from previous research, which are described in the following. In addition, an exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation was chosen to identify the underlying structure of the dependent variables and the covariates respectively (see Tables 1 and 4). Prior to this analysis, the suitability of data for a factor analysis was successfully assessed by the presence of coefficients above .3, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sample Adequacy ($KMO_{DVs} = .94$; $KMO_{Covariates} = .86$; Kaiser, 1970) and Barlett's Test of Sphericity ($p = .00$; Barlett, 1954). Afterwards, the internal consistency of the adjusted scales was examined using Cronbach's alpha. With scores ranging from .78 to .94 (see Tables 2 and 3), the reliability of the scales measurement model was supported. Except job attractiveness, all variables were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 representing "strongly disagree" to 5 representing "strongly agree."

3.4.1 Dependent Variables

The 16 initial items of the dependent variables, as presented in Table 2, were subjected to principal component analysis which revealed two components with eigenvalues above 1. Rotating one more component resulted in less cross-factor loadings and an explained variance of 72 %. Three items that were still loaded on more than one component with high values were removed from the scale to obtain a simple factor structure, i.e. a clear pattern of loadings, and distinctive scales that measure only one latent variable. Then, the analysis was repeated.

Employer brand trust ($\alpha = .84$) was measured on a four-item scale from Rampl and Kenning (2014) who used the brand trust scale from Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) and first implemented it in the context of employer branding. Consequently, an exemplary statement used in this study is: “I trust Durand as employer.” After the factor analysis, “Durand as an employer is safe” was excluded from further analyses.

Employer brand image. Although it is mostly defined as a multidimensional concept being composed of functional and symbolic dimensions, this study intended to measure how the concept as a whole is influenced by the crisis variables. Thus, the five items (e.g. “employees are probably proud to say they work at Durand”) of the unidimensional concept of *company prestige* from Highhouse et al. (2003) were used. Based on the factor analysis, “Durand is a reputable food and beverage company to work for” and “I would find Durand a prestigious place to work” were removed from the scale which subsequently had an alpha value of .85.

Employer attractiveness was originally assessed with four items such as “for me, Durand would be a good place to work”, adopted from Highhouse et al. (2003) who have focussed on preliminary attitudes about an organisation as potential employer. The statement “I am interested in learning more about this company” was not used because it was considered as assessing information search behaviour. Additionally, the three items (e.g. “I would make Durand one of my first choices as an employer”) that were initially supposed to measure participants’ *intention to apply* for a job at Durand but that also loaded on employer attractiveness in the factor analysis were added to the four items of employer attractiveness ($\alpha = .86$; see Table 2). In line with previous research (e.g. Baum & Kabst, 2013), the other two items from Highhouse et al.’s (2003) scale for *intention to pursue* were not included into the questionnaire as they focus on general intentions towards the company, in contrast to this research. While the statement “I would accept a job offer from this company” was regarded as less active behaviour, the item “I would recommend this company to a friend looking for a job” was considered as belonging to the concept of *word-of-mouth*.

Table 1

Scores of Cronbach’s Alpha of the Outcome Variables (N = 280)

Construct	Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach’s alpha	M (SD)
Employer Brand Trust	5 (strongly agree) – 1 (strongly disagree)	3	.84	2.13 (0.80)
Employer Brand Image	5 (strongly agree) – 1 (strongly disagree)	3	.85	2.38 (0.83)
Employer Attractiveness	5 (strongly agree) – 1 (strongly disagree)	7	.86	2.03 (0.78)

Table 2

Output of the Rotated Component Matrix of the Outcome Variables

Construct / Item	Code	Component		
		1	2	3
Employer Brand Trust (EBT) ^b				
I trust Durand as employer.	EBT1		.809	
I rely on Durand as employer.	EBT2		.743	
Durand as an employer is honest.	EBT3		.772	
Employer Brand Image (EBI) ^c				
Employees are probably proud to say they work at Durand.	EBI1			.620
Durand probably has a reputation as an excellent employer.	EBI2			.638
There are probably many who would like to work at Durand.	EBI3			.791
Employer Attractiveness (EA) ^d				
For me, Durand would be a good place to work.	EA1	.715		
I would not be interested in Durand except as a last resort.*	EA2	.650		
Durand is attractive to me as a place for employment.	EA3	.801		
A job at Durand is very appealing.	EA4	.731		
I would make Durand one of my first choices as an employer.	EA5	.856		
I would exert a great deal of effort to work for Durand.	EA6	.782		
I would be interested in pursuing a job application with this Durand.	EA7	.828		
Variance explained		35%	21%	16%

Note. Extraction method: Principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation. Rotation converged in 3 iterations. Small coefficients with an absolute value below .4 were suppressed.

*This item was recoded during the analysis.

^bOne item was removed due to cross loading: Durand as an employer is safe.

^cTwo items were removed due to cross loading: Durand is a reputable food and beverage company to work for; I would find Durand a prestigious place to work.

^dThe items EA5-7 originally belonged to application intention.

3.4.2 Covariates

To detect additional variables that could influence the extent to which participants' evaluation of the outcome variables were affected by the crisis news, three variables considered as particularly relevant in the context of this study were measured as covariates. Their items were subjected to principal component analysis which revealed the presence of three components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 30 %, 23 %, and 23 % of the variance respectively.

Job attractiveness was included because job seekers do not only rely on organisational but also job attributes such as salary, type of work and possibilities for advancement in order to evaluate the attractiveness of a job before responding to a job advertisement (Singh, 1975). Job attractiveness, in turn, influences job seekers' attraction to an organisation and intention to apply to the organisation (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). This was regarded as crucial for this study because one job advertisement served as stimulus for participants studying different subjects in order to create the same experimental conditions for all participants. If they did not perceive the job presented in the experiment as desirable, they were less likely to be attracted to the organisation as an employer and to apply to it in spite of a crisis, which could have a negative impact on the study's results. Thus, five five-point adjective pairs set such as "good-bad", ranging from -2 to +2, from Saks (1989) who measured the attractiveness of the job of a hotel clerk assessed the attractiveness of job of a market researcher in this study. After the pretest, the question "how attractive do you find the job of a market researcher" used in previous research (e.g. Pounder & Merrill, 2001) was added as sixth adjective pair "unattractive-attractive" but had to be removed within the factor analysis, together with "negative-positive". The reason is that both items were loaded on person-job fit. The coefficient alpha of the new scale was .86.

Person-job fit. The reason for including this variable was that person-job fit (P-J) fit, as opposed to person-organisation fit, describes job seeker's perceived match between the requirements of a job and their knowledge, skills, and abilities. In other words, it indicates whether they perceive themselves as the right person for a specific type of work instead of the organisation offering the job. Thus, person-job fit has a positive effect on job seekers' initial attraction to an organisation and decision to accept a job (Carless, 2005) and might have played a role in this study because participants consisted of undergraduate and graduate students who were exposed to the same job advertisement. If participants did not think that they have the skills and abilities necessary to do the job advertised in the experiment, they were less likely to evaluate the presented organisation as attractive and to apply to it, which would have negatively influenced the results of this study. To measure participants' person-job fit, three items ($\alpha = .88$) such as "being a junior market researcher is compatible with my personality and work preferences" from Kolenko and Aldag (1989) were adopted. The fourth item "my abilities and aptitudes match those required to sell insurance policies" was not adopted because it did not fit the job described in this study.

Source credibility was chosen because, in the recruitment context, the perceived credibility of an information source depends on the extent to which job seekers perceive a source as useful as well as trustworthy and is an important antecedent of job seekers' motivation to process information about an organisation (Cable & Turban, 2001; Fisher, Ilgen, & Hoyer, 1979). For this reason, previous studies have examined source credibility as a possible mediator influencing the effects of an information source on the attractiveness of an organisation (Van Hove & Lievens, 2005, 2007). Hence, it was considered as of interest in this study because if participants did not perceive the crisis news as credible, they were less likely take its content into account when evaluating the attractiveness of the organisation described in the news. This could have distorted the outcomes of this study. In addition, Fisher et al. (1979) have stated that the credibility of a source improves when it contains negative information about a job which, in turn, has a negative impact on the acceptance of a job offer. Hence, the source credibility of the crisis news published on Tagesschau was measured with a three-item scale ($\alpha = .94$) used for assessing brand credibility (van Rompay & Pryn, 2011). An exemplary statement used in this study is: "The news portal tagesschau.de makes a sincere impression."

Table 3

Output of the Rotated Component Matrix of the Covariates

Construct / Item	Code	Component		
		1	2	3
Job Attractiveness (JA) ^a				
Good-Bad*	JA1	.802		
Nice-Awful*	JA2	.792		
Unfavourable-Favourable	JA3	.701		
Pleasant-Unpleasant*	JA4	.749		
Person-Job Fit (PJF)				
Being a junior market researcher is compatible with my personality and work preferences.	PJF1		.830	
Being a junior market researcher gives me a chance to do the things I can do best.	PJF2		.859	
Overall I feel that I fit into the job of a junior market researcher.	PJF3		.869	
Source Credibility (SC)				
The news portal tagesschau.de makes a sincere impression.	SC1			.951
The news portal tagesschau.de makes a credible impression.	SC2			.949
The news portal tagesschau.de makes a trustworthy impression.	SC3			.944
Variance explained		30%	23%	23%

Note. Extraction method: Principal component analysis. Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser normalisation. Rotation converged in 3 iterations. Small coefficients with an absolute value below .4 were suppressed.

^aTwo items were removed due to cross loading: unattractive-attractive; negative-positive.

Table 4

Scores of Cronbach's Alpha of the Covariates (N = 280)

Construct	Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's alpha	M (SD)
Job Attractiveness	Adjective pairs ranging from -2 to 2	4	.86	3.43 (0.72)
Person-Job Fit	5 (strongly agree) – 1 (strongly disagree)	3	.88	2.75 (1.00)
Source Credibility	5 (strongly agree) – 1 (strongly disagree)	3	.94	3.92 (0.85)

3.5 Procedure

Having designed the questionnaire in the online survey tool Qualtrics and translated the scale items from English into German, the native language of the target group, a pretest ($N = 8$) was conducted to check the effectiveness of the manipulations and to ensure that the translated items were understood correctly. To further test whether the survey instrument operates well, participants had any associations with the fictitious company name “Durand” or guessed the real purpose of the study, the pretesters were exposed to the entire questionnaire, including one of the eight research conditions, and interviewed afterwards. Based on their feedback, similar items were reformulated and one item for application intention was deleted. In addition, the manipulations of the crisis variables in the news article were formulated slightly more clearly and the possibility to return to the news article was enabled.

The population of interest for the main study consisted of German undergraduate and graduate students who were searching for a job or will do so in the near future to enter the job market for the first time shortly after graduation because they are more likely to be interested in potential career opportunities (Lemmink et al., 2003). As the definition of the *right talent* (Parment, 2009) for a job depends on the characterisation of an organisation and the job, people studying for a Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor's degree, which are all recognised qualifications in Germany, were included in the sample. However, only German economics, social science, communication science and psychology students were selected as subjects because they are more likely to perceive the job advertisement for a junior market researcher chosen for this study as relevant and appealing.

Participants for the survey were primarily recruited via convenience sampling by posting the survey link leading to the online questionnaire in groups of universities in Germany on the social network Facebook which is highly used by the internet-affine *Generation Y* (Parment, 2009). In addition, people were asked to forward the link to other potential subjects in order to expand the sample size through snowball sampling, as a particular kind of convenience sampling (Bryman & Bell, 2015). To have a reasonable number of participants in this study, the intended sample size was 280 participants, containing 35 valid responses per research condition. The resultant data were quantitatively analysed using computerised statistical methods via the predictive analytics software SPSS.

3.6 Participants

Out of 611 people who completed the questionnaire, 280 (46 %) German participants served as a sample for this study, resulting in 35 participants per research condition which is regarded as a reasonable number to draw conclusions. Questionnaires of participants who did not belong to the target group or were first-year Bachelor students were excluded from the analysis as they have limited experience of employment in comparison with typical job seekers (Rynes et al., 1980). Subsequently, responses with incorrectly answered manipulation check questions but also correctly answered responses were omitted in order to equalise sample sizes across the eight conditions for the analysis. The remaining sample of 280 Germans consisted of 195 females (69 %) and 85 males (31 %) whose age ranged from 19 to 33 with a mean of 23.8 and a standard deviation of 2.89. Most of them were students in the second year (35 %) of their Bachelor's degree (63 %) in economics (62 %) who intended to search for a job in the next year (35 %) which seems to be representative for the population of students in Germany. A detailed overview of the participants is presented in Table 5:

Table 5

Demographic Characteristics of the Participants Across the Research Conditions (N = 280)

Variable	Condition 1	Condition 2	Condition 3	Condition 4
	<i>M (SD)</i>			
Age	24.63 (2.35)	23.43 (2.63)	23.40 (2.83)	24.40 (3.47)
	Frequency (Percentage)			
Gender				
Male	14 (40%)	16 (46%)	16 (46%)	4 (11%)
Female	21 (60%)	19 (54%)	19 (54%)	31 (89%)
Study Type				
Economics & Business Administration	20 (57%)	23 (66%)	24 (69%)	19 (54%)
Social & Behavioural Sciences	15 (43%)	12 (34%)	11 (31%)	16 (46%)
Job Search Intention				
Currently looking for a job	9 (25%)	12 (34%)	6 (17%)	9 (26%)
In the next year	10 (29%)	12 (34%)	9 (26%)	8 (23%)
In the next two years	6 (17%)	5 (15%)	11 (31%)	13 (37%)
In more than two years	10 (29%)	6 (17%)	9 (26%)	5 (14%)
Variable	Condition 5	Condition 6	Condition 7	Condition 8
	<i>M (SD)</i>			
Age	23.49 (2.84)	23.34 (3.07)	24.17 (2.73)	23.57 (2.82)
	Frequency (Percentage)			
Gender				
Male	6 (17%)	8 (23%)	21 (60%)	7 (20%)
Female	29 (83%)	27 (77%)	14 (40%)	28 (80%)
Study Type				
Economics & Business Administration	22 (63%)	24 (69%)	23 (66%)	19 (54%)
Social & Behavioural Sciences	13 (37%)	11 (31%)	12 (34%)	16 (46%)
Job Search Intention				
Currently looking for a job	8 (23%)	10 (29%)	6 (17%)	12 (34%)
In the next year	16 (46%)	17 (48%)	9 (26%)	16 (46%)
In the next two years	7 (20%)	6 (17%)	9 (26%)	5 (14%)
In more than two years	4 (11%)	2 (6%)	11 (31%)	2 (6%)

Note. Condition 1: Environmental crisis, positive pre-crisis reputation, and proactive crisis timing.

Condition 2: Environmental crisis, negative pre-crisis reputation, and proactive crisis timing.

Condition 3: Environmental crisis, positive pre-crisis reputation, and reactive crisis timing.

Condition 4: Environmental crisis, negative pre-crisis reputation, and reactive crisis timing.

Condition 5: Privacy crisis, positive pre-crisis reputation, and proactive crisis timing.

Condition 6: Privacy crisis, positive pre-crisis reputation, and reactive crisis timing.

Condition 7: Privacy crisis, negative pre-crisis reputation, and proactive crisis timing.

Condition 8: Privacy crisis, negative pre-crisis reputation, and reactive crisis timing.

Besides the obvious difference in the number of men ($n = 85$) and women ($n = 195$), a Chi-square for goodness of fit test revealed a significant difference in the number of men ($X^2(7) = 15.61, p = .03$) across the eight research conditions (see Table 5 for the proportions). Thus, gender was included as independent variable in the subsequent analyses in addition to crisis type, pre-crisis reputation and crisis timing strategy (see next chapter). By contrast, there was neither a significant difference in the number of women ($X^2(7) = 6.81, p = .45$) nor in the number of participants studying economics and business administration ($X^2(7) = 1.45, p = .98$) or social and behavioural sciences ($X^2(7) = 2.38, p = .94$).

Further, performing a Kruskal-Wallis test showed that there was a significant overall difference between the intention to search for a job of the participants across the different research conditions ($H(7) = 18.96, p = .01$). However, pairwise comparisons with adjusted p -values indicate that there was only a significant difference in the job search intention of participants in condition seven (privacy crisis, negative pre-crisis reputation, and proactive crisis timing) compared to condition eight (privacy crisis, negative pre-crisis reputation, and reactive crisis timing; $p = .49, r = .19$). An inspection of the mean ranks for all conditions suggest that participants in condition eight had the highest intention to search for a job, whereas participants in condition seven had the lowest job search intention. The reason is that nearly half of the participants (46 %) in condition eight intended to search for a job “in the next year”, whereas one third of the participants (31 %) in condition seven intended to search for a job “in more than 2 years” (see Table 5). This finding should be kept in mind when interpreting the results of this study but as the p -value is nearly equal to the significance level of .05 and participants in both conditions were exposed to a privacy crisis and negative pre-crisis reputation, it is not expected to have a severe effect on the results of this study.

4 Research Results

To examine differences between the effects of distinct crisis types, pre-crisis reputations, and crisis timing strategies on employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness, a factorial multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. This analysis was followed up by three independent factorial analyses of variance (ANOVAs), mainly to explore the relationship between the different interacting variables further. As the literature review revealed that job attractiveness, person-job fit and source credibility may have an impact on the outcome variables (see section 3.4.2. for a detailed description), a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), as well as three separate analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs), were performed to remove bias of these confounding variables.

As the results of both types of analyses, with or without the covariates, differed only slightly and resulted in the same conclusion, except for gender in two cases, the outcomes of the MANCOVA and ANCOVAs are presented in the following sections. Before having started these analyses, their underlying assumptions were tested first to check the variables for normality, linearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, homogeneity of regression slopes and of variance-covariance matrices, as well as for multicollinearity. Although, no serious violations of assumptions were discovered, the homogeneity of variance was violated for employer brand trust ($p_{MANCOVA} = .04$) and attractiveness ($p_{MANCOVA} = .00$) of which the results must therefore be interpreted with caution. Fortunately, the F-value is known to be fairly robust to the effect of inequality of variance which is mitigated by equal group sizes as it is the case in this study ($n = 35$; Field, 2013).

4.1 Combined Outcome Variables

Main effects. Using Wilks' lambda, the difference between an environmental crisis and a crisis related to privacy issues ($\lambda = .87$) was highly significant in terms of its effect on the combined outcome variables after adjusting for the covariates. Likewise, the difference between a positive and a negative pre-crisis reputation ($\lambda = .73$), as well as between a proactive and a reactive crisis timing strategy ($\lambda = .95$), was statistically significant. While crisis type had a large and pre-crisis reputation a very large overall main effect on employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness, crisis timing strategy had a medium main effect (see η^2 in Table 6). In addition, participants' gender showed a considerable main effect on the combined outcome variables ($F(3, 259) = 3.22, p = .02, \lambda = .96, \eta^2 = .04$) when controlling for the covariates but not without them ($F(3, 262) = 1.42, p = .24, \lambda = .98, \eta^2 = .02$).

Interaction effects. Having controlled for the covariates, there was no significant interaction effect between crisis type and pre-crisis reputation ($\lambda = .97$), crisis type and timing strategy ($\lambda = .98$) or pre-crisis reputation and crisis timing strategy ($\lambda = .99$) on the combined outcome variables. Further, the three-way interaction between the crisis type, pre-crisis reputation, and crisis timing strategy was not significant in terms of its effects on the outcome variables (see Table 6). Besides, none of these interactions became significant with gender as an additional independent variable. Therefore, the results of these analyses are not discussed further.

Covariates' effects. While job attractiveness ($F(3, 267) = 14.42, p = .00, \lambda = .86$) was significantly related to the combined outcome variables, with a large effect size ($\eta^2 = .14$), person-job fit ($F(3, 267) = 1.89, p = .13, \lambda = .98; \eta^2 = .02$) was not statistically significant in terms of its effects on the outcome variables. In contrast, the credibility of the news website, on which the manipulated crisis articles were shown to the participants, was significantly related to the combined outcome variables ($F(3, 267) = 2.97, p = .03, \lambda = .97, \eta^2 = .03$). However, except for gender, there were no significant differences between the results of the MANOVA

and the MANCOVA observed, indicating that the covariates do not exert a great influence on the outcome variables.

Table 6

Results of the MANOVA and MANCOVA for Main and Interaction Effects on the Combined Outcome Variables

Effects / Analysis	Independent Variables								
Main Effects	Crisis Type			Pre-crisis reputation			Crisis Timing Strategy		
	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2
MANOVA	13.43*	.00	.13	34.15*	.00	.28	5.15*	.00	.05
MANCOVA	13.53*	.00	.13	30.75*	.00	.26	5.20*	.00	.06
2-way Interaction Effects	Crisis Type x Pre-crisis reputation			Crisis Type x Crisis Timing Strategy			Pre-crisis reputation x Crisis Timing Strategy		
	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2
MANOVA	2.08	.10	.02	1.70	.17	.02	1.48	.22	.02
MANCOVA	3.32	.08	.03	1.56	.20	.02	0.38	.77	.00
3-way Interaction Effect	Crisis Type x Pre-crisis reputation x Crisis Timing Strategy								
	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2						
MANOVA	2.32	.08	.03						
MANCOVA	2.30	.08	.03						

Note. *Very significant main effects with a *p*-value below an alpha level of .05.

4.2 Employer Brand Trust

Main effects. Separate ANOVAs and ANCOVAs confirmed the highly significant main effects of crisis type, pre-crisis reputation, and crisis timing strategy on employer brand trust (see Table 7). Looking at these effects in detail (see Table 8), participants who were exposed to values-related crisis that involved privacy issues reported a slightly lower employer brand trust compared to those being exposed to a values-related crisis that occurred due to environmental issues. This leads to the acceptance of hypothesis *H1a*. Besides, participants in the condition of a negative pre-crisis reputation reported slightly lower levels of trust in the employer brand than those who were in the condition of a positive reputation prior to a values-related crisis (see Table 8). This confirms hypothesis *H2a*. Further, participants who were exposed to a scenario in which a third party discloses the values-related crisis of an organisation reported a slightly lower trust in the employer brand than those being exposed to a proactive crisis timing strategy (see Table 8), which supports hypothesis *H3a*. Finally, consistent with MANOVA's results but contrary to the MANCOVA's results, there was no significant difference between females' and males' mean rating of trust in an employer's brand ($F(1, 261) = 3.33, p = .07; \eta^2 = .01$).

Table 7

Results of ANOVA and ANCOVA for Main and Interaction Effects of Crisis Variables on Employer Brand Trust

Effects / Analysis	Independent Variables								
	Crisis Type			Pre-crisis reputation			Crisis Timing Strategy		
Main Effects	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
ANOVA	39.23*	.00	.13	76.46*	.00	.22	13.40*	.00	.05
ANCOVA	39.90*	.00	.13	67.57*	.00	.20	13.43*	.00	.05
2-way Interaction Effects	Crisis Type x Pre-crisis reputation			Crisis Type x Crisis Timing Strategy			Pre-crisis reputation x Crisis Timing Strategy		
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
ANOVA	4.11*	.040	.02	2.02	.16	.01	0.16	.69	.00
ANCOVA	3.97*	.047	.02	1.80	.18	.01	0.85	.36	.00
3-way Interaction Effect	Crisis Type x Pre-crisis reputation x Crisis Timing Strategy								
	<i>F</i>			<i>p</i>			η^2		
ANOVA	0.33			.57			.00		
ANCOVA	0.39			.54			.00		

Note. *Very significant main effects with a *p*-value below an alpha level of .05.

Table 8

Means and Standard Deviations of Significant Main and 2-way Interaction Effects of Crisis Variables on Employer Brand Trust ($p < .05$)

<i>M(SD)</i> of Independent Variables					
Crisis Type		Pre-crisis Reputation		Crisis Timing Strategy	
Environment-related	Privacy-related	Positive	Negative	Proactive	Reactive
2.38 (0.83)	1.88 (0.68)	2.47 (0.82)	1.79 (0.60)	2.27 (0.84)	1.99 (0.72)
Crisis Type x Pre-crisis reputation					
Environment-related*Positive	Environment-related*Negative	Privacy-related*Positive	Privacy-related*Negative		
2.80 (0.80)	1.95 (0.62)	2.15 (0.71)	1.62 (0.54)		

Note. $n = 35$ across all conditions. All variables were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 representing “strongly disagree” to 5 representing “strongly agree.”

Interaction effects. Similar to the results of the MANOVA and the MANCOVA, univariate ANOVAs and ANCOVAs on employer brand trust showed no significant interaction effect between crisis type and crisis timing strategy or between pre-crisis reputation and crisis timing strategy. These results indicate that the effect of an organisation’s crisis timing strategy on its employer brand trust does neither depend on the type of a crisis nor on the organisation’s pre-crisis reputation. However, the separate analyses revealed a small but important interaction effect between crisis type and pre-crisis reputation on employer brand trust (see Table 7), which implies that crisis type and pre-crisis reputation exert a simultaneous influence on employer brand trust. The mean scores (see Table 8) indicate that participants trusted an employer brand the most when the organisation had to deal with a values-related crisis involving environmental issues and a positive reputation prior to the crisis. In case of a values-related crisis that involves privacy issues and a negative reputation prior to this crisis, participants had the least trust in the employer brand (see Figure 4).

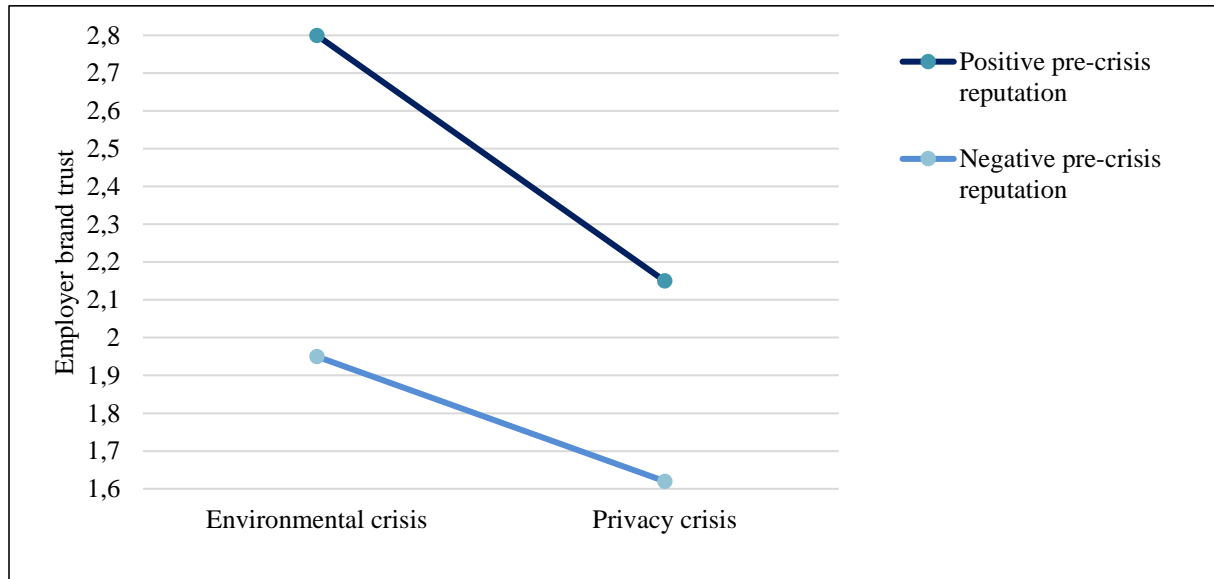


Figure 4. Interaction Effect Between Crisis Type and Pre-crisis Reputation on Employer Brand Trust.

Covariates' effects. In contrast to the results for the combined outcome variables, univariate ANCOVAs on employer brand trust revealed a non-significant effect of job attractiveness ($F(1, 269) = 3.85, p = .051; \eta^2 = .01$) and source credibility ($F(1, 269) = 0.47, p = .49; \eta^2 = .00$) after controlling for the independent variables. Confirming the MANCOVA's results, the ANCOVAs did not prove a significant relationship between person-job fit ($F(1, 269) = 0.31, p = .58; \eta^2 = .00$) and employer brand trust. Taken together, these results show that participants' trust in an employer brand was neither related to their perceived attractiveness of nor fit with the job nor the perceived credibility of an information source.

4.3 Employer Brand Image

Main effects. When the main effects of crisis type, pre-crisis reputation, and crisis timing strategy on employer brand image were considered separately in univariate ANOVAs and ANCOVAs, only the effects of crisis type and pre-crisis reputation reached statistical significance (see Table 10). An inspection of the mean scores (see Table 9) showed that participants who were exposed to a values-related crisis involving violation of privacy rights reported a slightly lower employer brand image than those who were exposed to a values-related crisis due to environmental exploitation. This leads to the acceptance of hypothesis *H1b*. Further, participants in the condition of a negative pre-crisis reputation had a slightly more negative image of the employer than a positive reputation prior to a values-related crisis (see Table 9), which confirms hypothesis *H2b*. Contrary to this, participants' employer brand image was not significantly influenced by an organisation's crisis timing strategy (see Table 9) which leads to the rejection of hypothesis *H3b*. Across all conditions, female participants had a slightly more negative image of an employer's brand in times of a values-related crisis ($M = 2.29, SD = 0.83$) than male participants ($M = 2.57, SD = 0.80; F(1, 261) = 4.06, p = .045; \eta^2 = .02$).

Table 9

Means and Standard Deviations of Main Effects of Crisis Variables on Employer Brand Image

<i>M(SD)</i> of Independent Variables					
Crisis Type		Pre-crisis Reputation		Crisis Timing Strategy	
Environment-related	Privacy-related	Positive	Negative	Proactive	Reactive
2.55 (0.84)*	2.20 (0.79)*	2.75 (0.80)*	2.00 (0.68)*	2.40 (0.83)	2.35 (0.83)

Note. $n = 35$ across all conditions. All variables were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 representing “strongly disagree” to 5 representing “strongly agree.”

*Very significant main effects with a p -value below an alpha level of .05.

Interaction effects. Neither with nor without the covariates was a statistically significant interaction effect revealed between crisis type, pre-crisis reputation, and crisis timing strategy on employer brand image (see Table 10). This means that the three independent variables did not interact with one another when having an impact on an organisation’s image as an employer. More specifically, it implies that crisis type and pre-crisis reputation do not have a simultaneous effect on employer brand image and the impact of a crisis timing strategy on employer brand image does not depend on the values-related crisis type or the pre-crisis reputation of an organisation.

Table 10

Results of ANOVA and ANCOVA for Main and Interaction Effects of Crisis Variables on Employer Brand Image

Effects / Analysis	Independent Variables								
Main Effects	Crisis Type			Pre-crisis reputation			Crisis Timing Strategy		
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
ANOVA	15.61*	.00	.05	73.28*	.00	.21	0.43	.51	.00
ANCOVA	15.86*	.00	.06	69.66*	.00	.21	0.39	.53	.00
2-way Interaction Effects	Crisis Type x Pre-crisis reputation			Crisis Type x Crisis Timing Strategy			Pre-crisis reputation x Crisis Timing Strategy		
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
ANOVA	0.05 ^a	.83	.00	0.02	.91	.00	0.05	.83	.00
ANCOVA	0.30	.86	.00	0.29	.87	.00	0.00 ^a	.97	.00
3-way Interaction Effect	Crisis Type x Pre-crisis reputation x Crisis Timing Strategy								
	<i>F</i>			<i>P</i>			η^2		
ANOVA	3.08						.08		
ANCOVA	2.89						.09		

Note. ^aExact value: 0.002.

*Very significant main effects with a p -value below an alpha level of .05.

Covariates’ effects. Having controlled for the effects of the independent variables, there was no significant relationship proven between employer brand image and job attractiveness ($F(1, 269) = 0.18, p = .67; \eta^2 = .00$), person-job fit ($F(1, 269) = 0.03, p = .87; \eta^2 = .00$) or source credibility ($F(1, 269) = 2.52, p = .11; \eta^2 = .01$). This indicates that participants’ image of an employer’s brand in crisis does not base on their perceptions of the job attractiveness, fit with the job or of the information source credibility.

4.4 Employer Attractiveness

Main effects. The univariate ANOVAs and ANCOVAs on employer attractiveness showed that crisis type and pre-crisis reputation had a statistically significant effect on employer attractiveness, unlike crisis timing strategy (see Table 12). Participants in the condition of a values-related crisis involving privacy issues perceived the organisation in crisis as a slightly less attractive employer than those in the condition of a values-related crisis that occurred because of environmental exploitation (see Table 11). Thus, hypothesis *H1c* is accepted. Further, participants who were exposed to an organisation with a negative pre-crisis reputation rated it as slightly less attractive than those being exposed to an organisation having a positive pre-crisis reputation (see Table 11). This confirms hypothesis *H2c*. However, participants' attraction to an employer in crisis of which the CEO proactively communicated the values-related crisis did not differ from the scenario in which a third party disclosed the crisis first (see Table 11). Hence, hypothesis *H3c* is rejected. Finally, women were slightly less attracted to an organisation facing a values-related crisis ($M = 1.96$, $SD = 0.75$) than men ($M = 2.19$, $SD = 0.82$; $F(1, 261) = 9.39$, $p = .00$; $\eta^2 = .04$).

Table 11

Means and Standard Deviations of Main and 2-way Interaction Effects of Crisis Variables on Employer Attractiveness

<i>M (SD) of Independent Variables</i>					
Crisis Type		Pre-crisis Reputation		Crisis Timing Strategy	
Environment-related	Privacy-related	Positive	Negative	Proactive	Reactive
2.14 (0.84)*	1.92 (0.69)*	2.34 (0.83)*	1.73 (0.58)*	2.10 (0.80)	1.97 (0.75)

Note. $n = 35$ across all conditions. All variables were assessed using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 representing "strongly disagree" to 5 representing "strongly agree."

*Very significant main effects with a p -value below an alpha level of .05.

Interaction effects. When performing an ANOVA and ANCOVA on employer attractiveness separately no interaction effect between crisis type, pre-crisis reputation, and crisis timing strategy was proven (see Table 12). This demonstrates that the three crisis variables did not interact with one another when influencing employer attractiveness. More precisely, this implies that an organisation's crisis type and pre-crisis reputation do not have a simultaneous impact on its attractiveness. Further, it implies that the effect of its crisis timing strategy on participants' attraction does not depend on its values-related crisis type or its reputation prior to this crisis.

Table 12

Results of ANOVA and ANCOVA for Main and Interaction Effects of Crisis Variables on Employer Attractiveness

Effects / Analysis	Independent Variables								
Main Effects	Crisis Type			Pre-crisis reputation			Crisis Timing Strategy		
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>P</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
ANOVA	6.80*	.01	.02	53.81*	.00	.17	2.50	.12	.01
ANCOVA	8.67*	.00	.03	46.57*	.00	.15	2.35	.13	.01
2-way Interaction Effects	Crisis Type x Pre-crisis reputation			Crisis Type x Crisis Timing Strategy			Pre-crisis reputation x Crisis Timing Strategy		
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2
ANOVA	2.82	.10	.01	3.42	.07	.01	2.57	.11	.01
ANCOVA	3.54	.06	.01	3.54	.06	.01	0.04	.85	.00
3-way Interaction Effect	Crisis Type x Pre-crisis reputation x Crisis Timing Strategy								
	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	η^2						
ANOVA	1.18	.28	.00						
ANCOVA	1.32	.25	.01						

Note. *Very significant main effects with a *p*-value below an alpha level of .05.

Covariates' effects. In opposition to employer brand trust and image, employer attractiveness was related to job attractiveness ($F(10, 269) = 34.91, p = .00; \eta^2 = .12$) and source credibility ($F(1, 269) = 7.94, p = .01; \eta^2 = .03$) when controlling for the effects of the independent variables. This indicates that participants' attraction to an employer was influenced by their perceived attractiveness of the job and credibility of the information source. However, as the other outcome variables, employer attractiveness had no significant relation with person-job fit ($F(1, 269) = 2.94, p = .09; \eta^2 = .01$). This showed that the perception of fit with the job has not only no effect on organisational attractiveness from the perspective of participants but in general no effect on any outcome variable.

In conclusion, it can be noted that all crisis variables show a significant main effect on at least one of the outcome variables so that most of the hypothesised statements can be confirmed (see Table 13). However, only one statistically significant interaction effect between the three crisis variables was found in this study.

Table 13

Confirmed and Not Confirmed Research Hypotheses

Hypothesis	Statement	(Not) Confirmed
H1.	A values-related crisis involving privacy issues leads to a lower:	
H1a.	Employer Brand Trust	Confirmed
H1b.	Employer Brand Image	Confirmed
H1c.	Employer Attractiveness	Confirmed
H2.	A negative reputation prior to a values-related crisis leads to a lower:	
H2a.	Employer Brand Trust	Confirmed
H2b.	Employer Brand Image	Confirmed
H2c.	Employer Attractiveness	Confirmed
H3.	In a values-related crisis, a reactive crisis timing strategy leads to a lower:	
H3a.	Employer Brand Trust	Confirmed
H3b.	Employer Brand Image	Not confirmed
H3c.	Employer Attractiveness	Not confirmed

5 Discussion

5.1 Discussion of the Results

This study investigated the extent to which crisis type, pre-crisis reputation, and crisis timing strategy have an effect on employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness. It was hypothesised that a positive pre-crisis reputation, environmental crisis, and proactive crisis timing strategy have a less negative impact on the outcome variables than a negative prior reputation, a privacy-related crisis, and a reactive crisis timing strategy. In addition, it was explored whether the effects of these crisis variables interact to determine an organisation's employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness. Finally, it was examined whether the covariates job attractiveness, person-job fit, and source credibility have an influence.

5.1.1 Overall Summary of the Results

Main effects. All crisis variables showed a highly significant main effect on the combined outcome variables and influenced at least one them when analysed separately. Consequently, most of the hypothesised statements are confirmed. However, when analysing the outcome variables separately, only employer brand trust was significantly influenced by the three crisis variables, whereas employer brand image and attractiveness were not considerably influenced by crisis timing strategy. Thus, hypothesis *H1* on the main effect of values-related crisis type and *H2* on the main effect of pre-crisis reputation are entirely confirmed, whereas hypothesis *H3* on the main effect of crisis timing strategy is partly confirmed.

Comparing the three crisis variables in terms of their effect size, pre-crisis reputation has a larger effect on the combined outcome variables than crisis type which, in turn, has a larger impact on them compared to crisis timing strategy. This indicates that prospective applicants' evaluation of an employer's brand depends more on whether their potential employer exploits the environment or violates the privacy of its employees and what reputation it had prior this incident than on when the employer decides to communicate the incident. While the crisis type determines the extent to which an organisation's stakeholders are physical, emotionally and/or financially affected by the crisis (Coombs, 2007), the crisis timing strategy has an effect only on applicants' perceptions of an organisation's intangible assets. That is, credibility (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005), trust (Fennis & Stroebe, 2014), and reputation (Spence et al., 2014). Another reason could be that values-related crises residing in the intentional cluster are regarded as purposeful, because the organisation deliberately violated regulations, and have consequently very strong attributions of crisis responsibility. These attributions evoke anger and represent a severe threat to the reputation of an organisation (Coombs, 2007) which can probably not be changed simply with an organisation's crisis timing strategy.

Further, when controlling for the effect of the covariates, gender had a partial effect on the combined variables as well as on employer brand image and attractiveness, when analysed separately, but not on employer brand trust.

Interaction effects. Considering the lack of evidence of links between the three crisis variables in previous research, it is not surprising that only one statistically significant interaction effect was found in this study. In addition, the fact that only between crisis type and pre-crisis was a weak interaction effect on employer brand trust simplifies the interpretation of the above-mentioned main effects and implies that they apply in almost all combinations. Thus, prospective applicants regard a crisis related to privacy issues always as more negative than a crisis related to environmental issues, regardless of an employer's pre-crisis reputation or crisis timing strategy. Further, a favourable pre-crisis reputation always protects an employer brand better from the damaging effects of crisis than an unfavourable reputation, in spite of the crisis

type and timing strategy. Finally, proactively communicating a crisis event always mitigates the damage caused by a crisis in comparison to reactively responding to third party's accusations, irrespective of the crisis type and pre-crisis reputation. This corresponds to the majority of the literature on crisis timing strategies that recommends the self-disclosure strategy because it allows an organisation to positively frame the negative news and downplay the significance of a values-related crisis (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005).

The similar main and interaction effects on employer brand image and attractiveness could be explained by previous research which has often linked the two variables with one another in the context of employer branding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Covariates' effects. Confirming previous studies, job attractiveness and source credibility showed a significant effect on the combined outcome variables and on employer attractiveness, when analysed separately. In contrast, person-job fit had no significant effect on employer attractiveness, i.e. on any outcome variable. This is not in line with prior recruitment research which has supported the proposition that prospective applicants' perceived fit with a job positively influences their initial attraction to an employer (Carless, 2005). This implies that prospective applicants do not need to regard themselves as being able to do a job offered by an employer in order to perceive the employer in times of a values-related crisis as attractive.

5.1.2 Employer Brand Trust

Crisis type. The effect of values-related crisis type on employer brand trust could be explained by Singh et al.'s (2012) argument that consumers' perceived ethicality influences their trust in an organisation's products. Applying this to the context of this study, the consequence of a values-related crisis is that prospective applicants perceive an employer brand as less ethical, which obviously has a negative effect on their trust in the employer brand of an organisation. More precisely, their trust was more negatively influenced by a crisis related to a violation of employees' privacy at work than by a crisis due to environmental exploitation, which is particularly crucial to ecologically conscious job seekers (Greening & Turban, 2000).

However, an infringement into employee's privacy through illegal surveillance, for instance, might in general represent a more severe incident to German job seekers who are known to be particularly concerned about their privacy (Krasnova & Velti, 2010). A conceivable explanation is that prospective applicants perceive a risk of becoming personally affected (Xu et al., 2008) in the future when being employed by an organisation that monitors its employees without their knowledge. By contrast, an environmental issue, especially in another country, does probably not affect them personally. Further, when job applicants interpret the crisis information as contradicting their previously formed expectations of a potential employer and perceive it as trust violation, their initial trust in the recruiting organisation can be impaired (Klotz et al., 2013).

Pre-crisis reputation. As hypothesised, pre-crisis reputation had a strong impact on an employer's brand trust, which was more positively evaluated by participants when the organisation had a favourable reputation prior to the crisis, compared to a negative reputation. Hence, the positive reputation obviously served as a buffer against the damaging effects typically caused by a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2006) on trust in an organisation (Kim et al., 2007), instead of intensifying it, as Sohn and Larsicy (2012) have assumed. Alternatively, this intensifying influence, called *velco effect*, was found for the scenario in which the employer had an initially negative reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2002, 2006). However, even though these findings strongly support the results of previous crisis communication research, they should be interpreted with caution because participants were exposed to a fictitious organisation that was unknown to them, which might have appeared less realistic.

Crisis timing strategy. As expected, crisis timing strategy had a significant impact on employer brand trust, which was less negatively influenced when the employer's CEO proactively communicated the crisis compared to a reactive response to the accusations of a third party who disclosed the employer's crisis. This result is in line with Fennis and Stroebe (2014) who have shown that stealing thunder mitigates the damaging effects of negative information about an organisation in crisis on its trustworthiness from the consumers' perspective. Further, proactively disclosing a values-related crisis and thereby taking full responsibility for it has a positive effect on an organisation's credibility (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005), which represents a component of employer brand trust, according to Jiang and Iles' (2011) definition of it. Conversely, waiting for a third party to disclose a values-related crisis and reactively responding to its inquiries has a damaging effect on an organisation's credibility (Arpan & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2005) and job seekers' trust in its employer brand.

Crisis type and pre-crisis reputation. There was evidence of a weak but significant interaction effect between crisis type and pre-crisis reputation on employer brand trust. To be precise, prospective applicants appear to trust an employer's brand the most when the employer has a favourable pre-crisis reputation and faces an environmental crisis. Conversely, when an employer has an unfavourable reputation prior to the crisis which involves the violation of its employees' privacy, prospective applicants least trust its employer brand. Further, prospective applicants' trust in an employer's brand tends to be higher in case of a privacy-related crisis and a positive pre-crisis reputation than in the case of an environmental crisis and a negative pre-crisis reputation, which highlights the importance of a positive reputation prior to a values-related crisis. These results support the buffering effect of a favourable reputation as well as the intensifying crisis effects of unfavourable reputation proven in prior research. Thereby, they contradict with Sohn and Lariscy's (2012) finding of a boomerang effect of a favourable reputation, which might result in an even greater damage to an organisation than an unfavourable pre-existing reputation.

5.1.3 Employer Brand Image

Crisis type. First, the results proved an effect of crisis type on employer brand image, which was significantly more negatively when an employer faced a values-related crisis because it violated the privacy rights of its employees compared to being involved in environmental exploitation. Particularly the violation of employee privacy might negatively influence the employment-related image that prospective applicants typically develop based on signals of organisational values and functional job attributes such as working conditions (Greening & Turban, 1997). The evidence of crisis type's effect on employer brand image is congruent with studies having demonstrated the threatening impact of negative publicity generated through a crisis on an organisation's image (Turban & Greening, 1997; Dean, 2004). Consequently, following the social identity theory, prospective applicants probably do not want to identify themselves or to be associated with an employer having a negative image (Highhouse et al., 2007).

Pre-crisis reputation. Second, an organisation's reputation prior to a values-related crisis proved to considerably influence participants' image of its employer brand, which was perceived as more positive when the reputation was positive instead of negative. This result corresponds with Cable and Turban's (2001) statement that an employer's reputation helps prospective applicants to make inferences about its employer image. While a favourable pre-crisis reputation has been found to protect the reputational assets of an organisation during a values-related crisis (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2015), the imagination of working for an organisation having an unfavourable reputation can lead to feelings of shame or embarrassment (Dutton et al., 1994).

Gender. In interpreting the above-mentioned results for employer brand image, it has to be noted that there were gender differences in participants' evaluations of it: Females scored significantly lower on employer brand image than males. The resultant indication that women react more sensitive to a values-related crisis than men can be explained by Laufer and Gillespie's (2004) finding that females blame an organisation more than males for a product-harm crisis as they feel more personally vulnerable to a crisis. Although this takes place in the consumer context, studies on gender differences in risk perception have similarly concluded that females are more fearful than males which influences their evaluations of and responses to potentially dangerous situations (Harris & Miller, 2000) such as a crisis situation.

5.1.4 Employer Attractiveness

Crisis Type. As for employer brand trust and image, the results found support for the main effect of crisis type on employer attractiveness, which was more negatively influenced by a crisis related to a violation of employee's privacy at work than to environmental exploitation. Hence, job seekers seem to be less attracted to an employer that does not support employee welfare and benefits (Albinger & Freeman, 2000) than to an employer that is not ecologically concerned (Bauer & Aiman-Smith, 1996). However, in both types of crisis that are related to values, job seekers probably doubt an employer's ability to deliver symbolic and psychological benefits (Dutta & Pullig, 2011) such as prestige or an enhanced self-concept from working at a socially responsible organisation (Turban & Greening, 1997). Consequently, they are less interested.

Pre-crisis reputation. Further, its pre-crisis reputation had a strong significant impact on an employer's brand attractiveness, which was more positively evaluated by participants when the organisation had a favourable reputation prior to a values-related crisis compared to a negative reputation. Cable and Turban (2001, 2003) explain this result by having argued reputation serves as a signal of an organisation's attributes and behaviour to job seekers who have to decide whether to apply for a job based on scarce information resulting from their job search. By signalling positive organisational and job attributes such as pride and pay, a favourable reputation positively influences job seekers' attraction to an employer.

Job attractiveness was significantly related to employer attractiveness, which is in line with evidence of the influence of candidates' perceptions of job attributes on their attraction to an organisation (Pounder & Merrill, 2001). Presumably, organisational attractiveness is particularly important to prospective applicants who are willing to exert a great deal of effort to work for an attractive employer (Highhouse et al., 2003) and to accept a lower salary in favour of an employer with a favourable reputation. This, in turn, affects job seekers' evaluation of job attributes and pride they expect from being a member of such an employer (Cable & Turban, 2003).

Source credibility. Further, it was found that the credibility of the news website tagesschau.de, which served as an information source in this study, had a significant effect on job seekers' evaluation of the employer attractiveness. This is congruent with several studies in the recruitment context and means that the participants perceived the crisis news as a useful as well as a trustworthy information source in order to evaluate the attractiveness of the employer described in the news (Cable & Turban, 2001; Fisher et al., 1979). However, the significance levels for the main and interaction effects of the crisis variables on employer attractiveness were similar, with or without the covariates, which demonstrates that none of them is a strong predictor of employer attractiveness. Only gender's impact on employer attractiveness was strengthened when including the covariates.

5.2 Research Implications

5.2.1 Theoretical Implications

As the first study that explored the extent to which an organizational crisis influences an organization's employer brand, a number of theoretical implications for crisis communication and human resources (HR) research can be drawn from its findings. First, prospective applicants' reaction to an organizational crisis and subsequent evaluation of an employer's brand trust, image, and attractiveness is determined by the type of a crisis, which relates to values in this study. Thus, more research on values-related crisis types is recommended because the congruence of organizational and applicants' values is essential for the attraction of prospective applicants to an employer (Cable & Judge, 1996; Judge & Cable, 1997).

Second, pre-crisis reputation is the strongest predictor of employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness which highlights the importance of a positive reputation prior to an organisational crisis because it buffers the damaging effects posed by the crisis on an employer brand. To validate this result and rule out possible priming effects of a reputational valence at the moment in time during the experiment, additional research on the effects of pre-crisis reputation on the employer brand using existing organisations are necessary (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2015).

Third, it became evident that a proactive crisis timing strategy is effective only with regard to prospective applicants' trust in an employer's brand, which turned out to be affected the most by a values-related crisis. To elaborate on the study of Rampl and Kenning (2014), who have initially introduced this variable in an employment context, more studies on crisis communication and employer branding should examine it. Finally, only crisis type and pre-crisis reputation showed an interaction effect in this study. Future research could therefore focus on other strategical elements such as message framing or crisis response strategy that have been investigated only with consumers, yet.

Nevertheless, this study contributed to crisis communication and HR research by integrating related variables from two different research fields to develop an entirely new research model. The latter facilitates understanding of the effects of a values-related crisis on the employer brand, from the perspective of prospective applicants as another stakeholder group that is affected by such a crisis, besides customers. To test the model, this study methodologically combined a recruitment source, represented by a job advertisement, and negative publicity, in the form of a crisis news, to present a realistic stimulus material to participants. As a result, previous findings on the effects of crisis type, pre-crisis reputation, and crisis timing strategy were confirmed but in another context, which extends their fields of applications and supports the emerging statement among recruiting practitioners that prospective applicants need to be regarded as customers. To conclude, having developed a new research field, this study laid the foundation for numerous possibilities for future research that could be beneficial for external communication and employer branding practitioners.

5.2.2 Practical Implications

From a practical perspective, the results of this study imply that organisations are well advised to prevent a values-related crisis with regard to their talent attraction because it can cause damage to its employer brand. More specifically, exploitation of the environment but especially violation of employees' privacy at work can have a devastating effect on its employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness. However, when an organisation has to face such a crisis, an organisation should proactively communicate the crisis to the public before a third party such as the government or the media disclose and frame it in an accusatory way, which generates more negative publicity. This is likely to occur when an organisation decides to remain silent

and wait for the media before reactively disclosing information about the crisis event to the public (Wigley, 2011). However, the findings evidenced that a strategic timing of communicating a crisis event influences only employer brand trust significantly but not employer brand image or attractiveness. Thus, it is not recommended to rely solely on crisis timing strategies but also on literature about strategies to restore the image and protect the employer brand from the negative effects of a values-related crisis.

In addition, it is highly beneficial to an organisation to have a favourable reputation prior to the crisis because it can serve as a protective shield against severe damage (Coombs & Holladay, 2006), particularly when facing an environmental crisis. In contrast, a negative pre-crisis reputation was shown to intensify the damaging effects of a crisis, especially in combination with a privacy-related crisis. Consequently, employer brand managers should always actively manage their employers' image and reputation. By ensuring that job seekers are constantly exposed to positive information about an employer, managers might compensate for the negative information in crisis times. Further, to be able to continue attracting talents, they should build a trustworthy employer brand (Rampl & Kenning, 2014) and trusting relationships with prospective applicants, as Hegner, Beldad, and op Heghuis (2014) have recommended it for consumers in view of product recalls. Thereby, organisations maintain applicants' level of trust which can serve as a protective shield in times of crises and is fundamental to preserve brand equity after an organisational crisis (Hegner et al., 2014).

Finally, considering the gender differences in perceptions of and reactions to values-related crises, organisations attracting mainly female talents (e.g. in the beauty industry) need to take these implications carefully into account. To conclude, this study provided insights into the effects of a values-related crisis on an employer brand that enable organisations to anticipate the extent of these effects on the trust, image, and attractiveness of its employer brand in order to manage it most effectively with regard to another stakeholder group than customers.

5.3 Research Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results but offer also a possibility to recommend improvements and directions for future research. First, due to the experimental design of this study, it was possible to manipulate the crisis variables in a news article in order to examine their influence on the outcome variables but the results are consequently not generalizable. However, there does not seem to be an existing organisation in Germany that has experienced two different values-related crises similar to the two scenarios of this study, which base on existing cases of two different organisations within the same industry. Thus, as in most crisis studies, the organisation and crisis scenarios were fictitious because it is more suited to examine the effect of pre-crisis reputation but makes it less realistic and might have influenced participants' evaluation of the outcome variables. It is possible that participants had difficulties in assessing the fictitious pre-crisis reputation because reputation usually develops over time (Helm & Tolsdorf, 2013). To avoid this, future research could use two similar, existing organisations that are facing the same type of crisis to measure especially application intention in a more realistic setting. Volkswagen and Mitsubishi, for instance, both manipulated a software in its cars but while VW had a favourable reputation and reacted to media's disclosure of its crisis, Mitsubishi communicated its crisis proactively and is not one of Germany's top employers.

Second, although participants' intention to apply was measured with items from Highhouse et al.'s (2003) scale which has been applied in other previous studies, its items loaded on the same component as employer attractiveness in the factor analysis of this study. Consequently, these items were added to employer attractiveness and application intention was not studied further. A possible explanation could be translation errors but it generally appears that there is

still room for improvement with regard to an accurate scale to measure job seekers' application intention. However, it is recommended to future studies to include application intention and measure it in a more precise way as it represents a key variable in the recruitment context because it relates to actual application decisions, which indicate the choice of applicants to apply (Highhouse et al., 2003). Compared to this, employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness are rather passive perceptions or beliefs. Further, contrary to this study, future studies are advised to measure the outcome variables before and after the crisis news in order to examine participants' evaluations of them after being exposed to two different information sources: the job advertisement and the crisis news. Thereby, it could be determined whether the crisis news lowered participants' employer brand trust, image, attractiveness, and intention to apply or whether they evaluate them as low in spite of the crisis news about the organisation, which remains unclear in this study.

Another limitation of this study is that the participants were restricted to German, job seeking students, and graduates that represent a highly educated sample so that their responses cannot be generalised to job seekers of other nationalities or education levels. A reason is that the latter reflect cognitive abilities and skills that might influence participants' processing of information from different stimuli (Wiersema & Bantel, 1992) such as the job advertisement and crisis news in this study. Hence, future research could replicate this study by sampling participants with a lower education and other nationalities or include culture as a moderator in order to provide directly comparable results from different cultures. In the case of Volkswagen, for instance, it might be interesting to explore whether German job seekers, who live in the company's country of origin, or US-American job seekers, whose government has accused VW of manipulation, are more affected by its emission's scandal. In addition, even though first-year Bachelor students were excluded from the analysis, the sample of this study comprises Bachelor's, Master's, and Doctor's degree students in order to achieve a reasonable sample size for the analysis. Future studies should narrow down the sample to final-year Master's degree students, for instance, which are not as few as students at the Doctor's level but more likely to search for a job than undergraduate students who might aim for internships or a Master's degree before looking for a job. Therefore, Master's degree students best represent the target population of job seekers entering the jobs market.

Fourth, although the sample of this study consists of participants from a wide range of universities which improves the generalisability of their responses, the convenience and snowball sampling strategy probably lead to an underrepresentation of men (31 %) and overrepresentation of women (69 %). As women scored significantly lower on some outcome variables in the analyses, their scores might have caused more significant results in the analyses than with an equal distribution of males and females. To prevent such a biased sample and improve the external validity of results, future research can randomly sample its participants and would be useful to confirm the results of this study.

Another weakness of this study is the use of an incentive, i.e. an Amazon voucher, that could have motivated otherwise indifferent students or people who did not belong to the target population to take part in the survey of this study without reading the instructions or material carefully. A longitudinal study exposing participants to more than two and different information sources representing the recruitment context in a more realistic way provides an opportunity to investigate the topic of this study more in-depth, which was not possible within a set time frame. In practice, job seekers also consult multiple information sources to form an opinion about it as a potential employer (Van Hove & Lievens, 2005, 2007). Next, the findings in terms of employer brand trust and attractiveness need to be interpreted with caution due to the violated assumption of equal variance among the research groups, which could mean that hypotheses were confirmed incorrectly (Field, 2013).

Based on the finding that crisis timing strategy influences only employer brand trust significantly, additional research on the impact of other crisis variables that can be actively managed by organisations on an employer brand is recommended. Past research on crisis timing and response strategies (Cleays & Cauberghe, 2012) or message framings (Cleays et al., 2013), for example, have highlighted the importance of interaction effects between different strategies. Additionally, Cleays and Cauberghe (2014) have found a significant, moderating effect of crisis involvement on the efficacy of message framing. Even though this study assessed concern for environmental issues (Troy, 1993) and value of privacy (Xu, Dinev, Smith, & Hart, 2008) as covariates, they had to be excluded from the analysis because they were measured with differently formulated items so that they could not be compared. However, using only three covariates reduced the error variance and increased the probability of discovering significant differences between the research groups (Stevens, 1996).

Future research could extend the scope of this study by considering other types of crises, crises scenarios and organisations from other industries or by distinguishing between a negative CA and CSR reputation, following Brown & Dacin's (1997) approach. Thereby, participants could be asked about their work experience (e.g. through internships) as it influences job seekers' reaction to negative information: the more experience they have, the less importance they attach to such information (Bretz & Judge, 1998). Finally, research taking up the findings of this study by investigating how to restore employer brand trust, image, and attractiveness after an organisational crisis by applying principles of Benoit's (1997) image restoration theory, for instance, would be useful for organisations in crisis.

6 Conclusion

Values-related crises due to management failure such as Volkswagen's emissions scandal have become increasingly frequent and are typically highly publicised, which is potentially disastrous to organisations and their employer brand. The latter determines organisational success in attracting skilled employees, particularly in view of the war for talent that currently prevails the job market. To enable organisations in crisis to anticipate the extent of the damage to the trust, image, and attractiveness of its employer brand and to develop an effective crisis communication strategy, this study experimentally explored the effects of crisis type, pre-crisis reputation, and crisis timing strategy on prospective applicants. As expected, the results indicate that they react, similarly to customers, with a lower trust in, more negative image of and less attraction to the employer in crisis. To specify, crisis type as well as pre-crisis reputation had a negative effect on all outcome variables but crisis timing strategy influences only applicants' trust in the employer brand, which leads to the recommendation on additional research on effective image restoration strategies. Crisis effects on job seekers' intention to apply could not be elaborated and should therefore receive special attention in future research as it relates to behaviour compared to the rather passive perceptions of an employer examined in this study. Nevertheless, by drawing on important concepts from two different research fields, namely on crisis and recruitment, and developing a model of crisis effects on an employer brand, this study offered several starting-points for additional research on an issue that increasingly gains importance in practice.

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Isabelle von Kirch

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Appendix A

German Questionnaire

Willkommen zu einer Umfrage über Arbeitgeber

Liebe/r Teilnehmer/in,

vielen Dank für Deine Unterstützung bei dieser Umfrage, die Teil meiner Master-Thesis an der University of Twente ist und in der es um die individuelle **Wahrnehmung von Arbeitgebern** geht. Zu diesem Zweck bekommst Du Fragen zu einer kurzen Job-Anzeige und Hintergrundinformation eines Lebensmittelkonzerns. Bitte antworte ehrlich, denn ich bin **an Deiner Meinung interessiert**, d.h. es gibt kein Richtig oder Falsch.

Die Umfrage dauert ca. 10 min., also bitte beantworte sie in einer Sitzung. Du kannst sie jederzeit abbrechen, allerdings ist **Deine Meinung entscheidend für den Erfolg dieser Studie**. Deine Antworten sind anonym und werden vertraulich behandelt. Nachdem Du alle Fragen erfolgreich beantwortet hast, kannst du an einem Losverfahren teilnehmen, um **einen 29 €-Gutschein von Amazon gewinnen**.

Bitte klicke auf die Einverständniserklärung unten und weiter, um die Umfrage zu starten. Falls Du Fragen oder Anmerkungen zur Umfrage hast, kannst Du mir e-mailen: [Email address]

Viele Grüße,
Isabelle

Achtung: Nur deutsche Studenten (außer im ersten Bachelor-Jahr) und/oder Jobsuchende sind gesucht. Vielen Dank an alle anderen, die gerne teilzunehmen würden, aber leider kann ich Eure Daten nicht auswerten.

- ☐ Ich bestätige hiermit, dass ich die obigen Informationen gelesen sowie verstanden habe und freiwillig an dieser Umfrage teilnehme.

Die folgenden Fragen sind über Dich und Deine Ausbildung.

Bitte klicke für jede Frage auf den Kreis neben der Antwort Deiner Wahl.

Falls Du aus Versehen ungewollt auf eine andere Antwort geklickt hast, kannst du sie immer noch ändern.

Q1: Was ist Deine Nationalität?

- ☐ Deutsch
☐ Sonstige _____

Q2: Was ist Dein Geschlecht?

- ☐ Männlich
☐ Weiblich

Q3: Bitte gib Dein Alter in Jahren an: _____

Q4: Welche der folgenden Kategorien beschreibt Deine primäre Studienrichtung am besten?

- ☐ Wirtschaftswissenschaften (inkl. VWL, BWL, Marketing, Marktforschung, HR, usw.)
- ☐ Sozialwissenschaften
- ☐ Kommunikationswissenschaften
- ☐ Psychologie
- ☐ Sonstige (z.B. Technisches, Recht oder Medizin)
- ☐ Sonstige _____

Q5: Für welchen Abschluss studierst Du gerade?

- ☐ Bachelor
- ☐ Pre-master
- ☐ Master
- ☐ Doktor
- ☐ Ich habe kürzlich einen Abschluss gemacht.
- ☐ Sonstiges _____

Q6: In welchem Studienjahr bist Du gerade?

- ☐ Erstes Jahr
- ☐ Zweites Jahr
- ☐ Drittes Jahr
- ☐ Viertes Jahr
- ☐ Ich habe kürzlich einen Abschluss gemacht.

Q7: Wann hast du vor, dir einen Job zu suchen?

- ☐ Ich suche zurzeit nach einem Job.
- ☐ Im nächsten Jahr
- ☐ In den nächsten 2 Jahren
- ☐ In über 2 Jahren
- ☐ Ich habe bereits einen Job.

Im Folgenden siehst Du die Job-Anzeige des Lebensmittelkonzerns Durand.

Bitte lies sie Dir sorgfältig durch, denn Du wirst danach Fragen dazu gestellt bekommen. Falls Du (noch) nicht auf der Suche nach einem Job wie im Folgenden beschrieben bist, stelle Dir bitte vor, Du seist es.

Job advertisement (see Appendix B).

Q8-13: Wie findest Du den Job als Junior-Marktforscher?

	1	2	3	4	5	
Unattraktiv	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Attraktiv
Gut	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Schlecht
Unvorteilhaft	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Vorteilhaft
Schön	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Schrecklich
Angenehm	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Unangenehm
Negativ	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	Positiv

Q14-18: Bitte gib an, inwieweit Du den folgenden Aussagen zustimmst und wähle die Antwort aus, die Deiner Ansicht am nächsten kommt, indem du den entsprechenden Kreis anklickst.

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher zu	Stimme voll und ganz zu
Ein Junior-Marktforscher zu sein passt zu meiner Persönlichkeit und meinen Arbeitspräferenzen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich mache mir Gedanken um die Erschöpfung natürlicher Ressourcen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich mache mir Gedanken um Wasser-/Luftverschmutzung.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ein Junior-Marktforscher zu sein gibt mir die Chance, Dinge zu tun, die ich am besten kann.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Für mich ist es das Wichtigste, meine persönliche Privatsphäre zu wahren.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q19-22: Bitte gib an, inwieweit Du den folgenden Aussagen zustimmst und wähle die Antwort aus, die Deiner Ansicht am nächsten kommt, indem du den entsprechenden Kreis anklickst.

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher zu	Stimme voll und ganz zu
Im Vergleich zu anderen reagiere ich empfindlicher auf die Art und Weise, wie mit meinen persönlichen Informationen umgegangen wird.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Insgesamt habe ich das Gefühl, dass ich in den Job eines Junior-Marktforschers hineinpasse.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Im Vergleich zu anderen, tendiere ich dazu, mir mehr Gedanken über Gefahren für meine persönliche Privatsphäre zu machen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich mache mir Gedanken um Schäden in der Natur.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q23-25: Bitte gib an, inwieweit Du den folgenden Aussagen zustimmst:

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher zu	Stimme voll und ganz zu
Das Nachrichtenportal tagesschau.de macht einen ehrlichen Eindruck.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Das Nachrichtenportal tagesschau.de macht einen glaubwürdigen Eindruck.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Das Nachrichtenportal tagesschau.de macht einen vertrauenswürdigen Eindruck.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Im Folgenden siehst Du eine kurze Hintergrundinformation über den Lebensmittelkonzern Durand, von dem auch die Job-Anzeige stammt. Bitte lies sie Dir sorgfältig durch, denn Du wirst danach Fragen dazu gestellt bekommen.

Crisis news (see Appendices C to J).

Q26: Um welche Art von Ereignis handelte es sich in dem Artikel?

- ☐ Ausbeutung der Umwelt
- ☐ Verletzung der Privatsphäre

If an environmental crisis was shown, the following question was displayed:]

Q27: Wer hatte zuerst über das Ereignis berichtet?

- ☐ Die Umweltorganisation Greenpeace
- ☐ Der CEO des Lebensmittelkonzerns Durand

[If a privacy crisis was shown, the following question was displayed instead:]

Q27: Wer hatte zuerst über das Ereignis berichtet?

- ☐ Die Arbeitsorganisation ILO
- ☐ Der CEO des Lebensmittelkonzerns Durand

Q28: Wie wurde in dem Artikel der Ruf des Lebensmittelkonzerns Durand vor dem Ereignis beschrieben?

- ☐ Auf eine positive Art und Weise
- ☐ Auf eine negative Art und Weise

Q29-32: Bitte gib an, inwieweit Du den folgenden Aussagen zustimmst:

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher zu	Stimme voll und ganz zu
Ich vertraue Durand als Arbeitgeber.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich verlasse mich auf Durand als Arbeitgeber.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Durand ist ein ehrlicher Arbeitgeber.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Durand ist ein sicherer Arbeitgeber.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q33-37: Bitte gib an, inwieweit Du den folgenden Aussagen zustimmst:

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher zu	Stimme voll und ganz zu
Die Mitarbeiter sind wahrscheinlich stolz, sagen zu können, dass sie bei Durand arbeiten.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Durand ist ein seriöser Lebensmittelkonzern zum Arbeiten.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Durand hat wahrscheinlich einen Ruf als ausgezeichneter Arbeitgeber.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich würde Durand als einen angesehenen Arbeitsplatz empfinden.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Es gibt wahrscheinlich viele, die für Durand arbeiten möchten.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q38-41: Bitte gib an, inwieweit Du den folgenden Aussagen zustimmst:

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher zu	Stimme voll und ganz zu
Für mich wäre Durand ein guter Arbeitsplatz.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich wäre nicht an Durand interessiert, außer als letzte Option.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Durand ist für mich als Arbeitsplatz attraktiv.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ein Job bei Durand ist sehr reizvoll.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q42-44: Bitte gib an, inwieweit Du den folgenden Aussagen zustimmst:

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme eher nicht zu	Weder noch	Stimme eher zu	Stimme voll und ganz zu
Ich würde diesen Lebensmittelkonzern in die engere Wahl als Arbeitgeber nehmen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich würde mich besonders anstrengen, um für Durand arbeiten zu dürfen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich wäre an einer Bewerbung um einen Job bei Durand interessiert.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Bitte klicke weiter, um die Umfrage abzuschließen und Deine Antworten zu speichern.

Vielen Dank für Deine Teilnahme.

Bitte sei dir bewusst, dass der beschriebene Lebensmittelkonzern Durand, seine Job-Anzeige und der Artikel über das Ereignis fiktiv waren, um die Auswirkungen einer Unternehmenskrise auf Deine Wahrnehmung eines Unternehmens als Arbeitgeber zu untersuchen.

Wenn Du andere Studenten und/oder Jobsuchende kennst, die zum Erfolg dieser Studie beitragen können, würdest du mir sehr helfen, wenn Du ihnen diesen Fragebogen weiterleitest.

☐ Ich bestätige hiermit, dass ich die obigen Informationen gelesen und verstanden habe.

Bitte gib Deine E-Mail-Adresse an, falls du am Losverfahren teilnehmen möchtest, um eine Chance zu bekommen, den Gutschein zu gewinnen: _____

Appendix B

Fictitious Crisis News of the First Research Condition

Environmental issues-related crisis, proactive crisis timing and positive pre-crisis reputation.



Eilmeldung

Durand gibt illegale Abholzung von Regenwald zu

Der Lebensmittelkonzern Durand hat nach Angaben seines CEOs Regenwald in Indonesien illegal abgeholzt. Betroffen seien Waldflächen auf denen das Unternehmen Plantagen für die Produktion von Palmöl für seine Lebensmittelprodukte anzulegen plante. Daraus resultierende Großbrände griffen auf einen Nationalpark über. Damit soll der Konzern Vorschriften der Regierung vorsätzlich umgangen haben. Nun droht ihm eine Millionenstrafe.

„Wir übernehmen die volle Verantwortung dafür und bitten unsere Kunden, Mitarbeiter und die Behörden um Entschuldigung“, sagte der CEO auf einer vom Konzern initiierten Pressekonferenz in seiner Zentrale. Er versicherte, dass sich so etwas nicht wiederholen würde und das Unternehmen sich künftig für eine nachhaltige Palmöl-Produktion einsetzen wolle.

Bisher hatte der Konzern einen tadellosen Ruf: Wegen seiner nachhaltigen Unternehmensführung gilt er als sozial verantwortlichstes Unternehmen in der Lebensmittelindustrie, wofür es 2014 den „Deutschen CSR-Preis“ erhalten hatte. Dank seiner bekannten Marken und zahlreichen Zukäufe wuchs sowohl das Produktportfolio als auch der Aktienkurs des ertragsstarken Unternehmens immer weiter.

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Tagesschau App	Ausland	Einsfestival	Norddeutscher Rundfunk
Newsletter	Wirtschaft	3sat	Radio Bremen
RSS Feeds	Wetter	arte	Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg
Facebook	Wahlen	Ki.Ka	Saarländischer Rundfunk
Google+	Ihre Meinung	Phoenix	Südwestrundfunk
Twitter			Westdeutscher Rundfunk
YouTube			Deutsche Welle
			Deutschlandradio

Appendix C

Fictitious Crisis News of the Second Research Condition

Environmental issues-related crisis, proactive crisis timing and positive pre-crisis reputation.



Eilmeldung

Illegale Abholzung von Regenwald durch Durand

Der Lebensmittelkonzern Durand hat nach Angaben der Umweltorganisation Greenpeace Regenwald in Indonesien illegal abgeholzt. Betroffen seien Waldflächen auf denen das Unternehmen Plantagen für die Produktion von Palmöl für seine Lebensmittelprodukte anzulegen plante. Daraus resultierende Großbrände griffen auf einen Nationalpark über. Damit soll der Konzern Vorschriften der Regierung vorsätzlich umgangen haben. Nun droht ihm eine Millionenstrafe.

Nach Bekanntwerden der Abholzung auf einer Pressekonferenz von Greenpeace, übernimmt der Konzern die volle Verantwortung dafür und bittet seine Kunden, Mitarbeiter und die Behörden um Entschuldigung. Er versicherte, dass sich so etwas nicht wiederholen würde und das Unternehmen sich künftig für eine nachhaltige Palmöl-Produktion einsetzen wolle.

Bisher hatte der Konzern einen tadellosen Ruf: Wegen seiner nachhaltigen Unternehmensführung gilt er als sozial verantwortlichstes Unternehmen in der Lebensmittelindustrie, wofür es 2014 den „Deutschen CSR-Preis“ erhalten hatte. Dank seiner bekannten Marken und zahlreichen Zukäufe wuchs sowohl das Produktportfolio als auch der Aktienkurs des ertragsstarken Unternehmens immer weiter.

Service	tagesschau.de	Gemeinsame Programme	Rundfunkanstalten
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RSS Feeds	Wetter	arte	Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg
Facebook	Wahlen	Ki.Ka	Saarländischer Rundfunk
Google+	Ihre Meinung	Phoenix	Südwestrundfunk
Twitter			Westdeutscher Rundfunk
YouTube			Deutsche Welle
			Deutschlandradio

Appendix D

Fictitious Crisis News of the Third Research Condition

Environmental issues-related crisis, proactive crisis timing and positive pre-crisis reputation.



Eilmeldung

Durand gibt illegale Abholzung von Regenwald zu

Der Lebensmittelkonzern Durand hat nach Angaben seines CEOs Regenwald in Indonesien illegal abgeholzt. Betroffen seien Waldflächen auf denen das Unternehmen Plantagen für die Produktion von Palmöl für seine Lebensmittelprodukte anzulegen plante. Daraus resultierende Großbrände griffen auf einen Nationalpark über. Damit soll der Konzern Vorschriften der Regierung vorsätzlich umgangen haben. Nun droht ihm eine Millionenstrafe.

„Wir übernehmen die volle Verantwortung dafür und bitten unsere Kunden, Mitarbeiter und die Behörden um Entschuldigung“, sagte der CEO auf einer vom Konzern initiierten Pressekonferenz in seiner Zentrale. Er versicherte, dass sich so etwas nicht wiederholen würde und das Unternehmen sich künftig für eine nachhaltige Palmöl-Produktion einsetzen wolle.

Bisher hatte der Konzern einen zweifelhaften Ruf: Wegen seiner fragwürdigen Unternehmensführung gilt er als sozial unverantwortlichstes Unternehmen in der Lebensmittelindustrie, wofür es 2014 den Negativpreis „Public Eye Award“ erhalten hatte. Trotz seiner bekannten Marken und zahlreichen Zukäufe schrumpfte sowohl das Produktportfolio als auch der Aktienkurs des ertragsschwachen Unternehmens immer weiter.

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Newsletter	Wirtschaft	3sat	Radio Bremen
RSS Feeds	Wetter	arte	Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg
Facebook	Wahlen	Ki.Ka	Saarländischer Rundfunk
Google+	Ihre Meinung	Phoenix	Südwestrundfunk
Twitter			Westdeutscher Rundfunk
YouTube			Deutsche Welle
			Deutschlandradio

Appendix E

Fictitious Crisis News of the Fourth Research Condition

Environmental issues-related crisis, proactive crisis timing and positive pre-crisis reputation.



Eilmeldung

Illegale Abholzung von Regenwald durch Durand

Der Lebensmittelkonzern Durand hat nach Angaben der Umweltorganisation Greenpeace Regenwald in Indonesien illegal abgeholzt. Betroffen seien Waldflächen auf denen das Unternehmen Plantagen für die Produktion von Palmöl für seine Lebensmittelprodukte anzulegen plante. Daraus resultierende Großbrände griffen auf einen Nationalpark über. Damit soll der Konzern Vorschriften der Regierung vorsätzlich umgangen haben. Nun droht ihm eine Millionenstrafe.

Nach Bekanntwerden der Abholzung auf einer Pressekonferenz von Greenpeace, übernimmt der Konzern die volle Verantwortung dafür und bittet seine Kunden, Mitarbeiter und die Behörden um Entschuldigung. Er versicherte, dass sich so etwas nicht wiederholen würde und das Unternehmen sich künftig für eine nachhaltige Palmöl-Produktion einsetzen wolle.

Bisher hatte der Konzern einen zweifelhaften Ruf: Wegen seiner fragwürdigen Unternehmensführung gilt er als sozial unverantwortlichstes Unternehmen in der Lebensmittelindustrie, wofür es 2014 den Negativpreis „Public Eye Award“ erhalten hatte. Trotz seiner bekannten Marken und zahlreichen Zukäufe schrumpfte sowohl das Produktportfolio als auch der Aktienkurs des ertragsschwachen Unternehmens immer weiter.

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RSS Feeds	Wetter	arte	Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg
Facebook	Wahlen	Ki.Ka	Saarländischer Rundfunk
Google+	Ihre Meinung	Phoenix	Südwestrundfunk
Twitter			Westdeutscher Rundfunk
YouTube			Deutsche Welle
			Deutschlandradio

Appendix F

Fictitious Crisis News of the Fifth Research Condition

Privacy issues-related crisis, proactive crisis timing and positive pre-crisis reputation.



Eilmeldung

Durand gibt illegale Überwachung von Mitarbeitern zu

Der Lebensmittelkonzern Durand hat nach Angaben seines CEOs seine Mitarbeiter illegal überwacht. Betroffen seien Pausen- und WC-Räume, in denen das Unternehmen über deren Arbeitsweise hinaus deren Verhaltensweise und Details aus dem Privatleben heimlich mithilfe von verdeckten Kameras aufzeichnete. Damit soll der Konzern gegen die Persönlichkeitsrechte seiner Mitarbeiter vorsätzlich verstoßen haben. Nun droht ihm eine Millionenstrafe.

„Wir übernehmen die volle Verantwortung dafür und bitten unsere Mitarbeiter, Kunden und die Behörden um Entschuldigung“, sagte der CEO auf einer vom Konzern initiierten Pressekonferenz in seiner Zentrale. Er versicherte, dass sich so etwas nicht wiederholen würde und das Unternehmen künftig nur noch sichtbare Kameras einsetzen wolle.

Bisher hatte der Konzern einen tadellosen Ruf: Wegen seiner nachhaltigen Unternehmensführung gilt er als sozial verantwortlichstes Unternehmen in der Lebensmittelindustrie, wofür es 2014 den „Deutschen CSR-Preis“ erhalten hatte. Dank seiner bekannten Marken und zahlreichen Zukäufe wuchs sowohl das Produktportfolio als auch der Aktienkurs des ertragsstarken Unternehmens immer weiter.

Service	tagesschau.de	Gemeinsame Programme	Rundfunkanstalten
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Facebook	Wahlen	Ki.Ka	Saarländischer Rundfunk
Google+	Ihre Meinung	Phoenix	Südwestrundfunk
Twitter			Westdeutscher Rundfunk
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			Deutschlandradio

Appendix G

Fictitious Crisis News of the Sixth Research Condition

Privacy issues-related crisis, proactive crisis timing and positive pre-crisis reputation.



Eilmeldung

Illegale Überwachung von Mitarbeitern bei Durand

Der Lebensmittelkonzern Durand hat nach Angaben der Arbeitsorganisation ILO seine Mitarbeiter in Deutschland illegal überwacht. Betroffen seien Pausen- und WC-Räume, in denen das Unternehmen über deren Arbeitsweise hinaus deren Verhaltensweise und Details aus dem Privatleben heimlich mithilfe von verdeckten Kameras aufzeichnete. Damit soll der Konzern gegen die Persönlichkeitsrechte seiner Mitarbeiter vorsätzlich verstoßen haben. Nun droht ihm eine Millionenstrafe.

Nach Bekanntwerden der Überwachung auf einer Pressekonferenz von ILO, übernimmt der Konzern die volle Verantwortung dafür und bittet seine Mitarbeiter, Kunden und die Behörden um Entschuldigung. Er versicherte, dass sich so etwas nicht wiederholen würde und das Unternehmen künftig nur noch sichtbare Kameras einsetzen wolle.

Bisher hatte der Konzern einen tadellosen Ruf: Wegen seiner nachhaltigen Unternehmensführung gilt er als sozial verantwortlichstes Unternehmen in der Lebensmittelindustrie, wofür es 2014 den „Deutschen CSR-Preis“ erhalten hatte. Dank seiner bekannten Marken und zahlreichen Zukäufe wuchs sowohl das Produktportfolio als auch der Aktienkurs des ertragsstarken Unternehmens immer weiter.

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Appendix H

Fictitious Crisis News of the Seventh Research Condition

Privacy issues-related crisis, proactive crisis timing and positive pre-crisis reputation.



Eilmeldung

Durand gibt illegale Überwachung von Mitarbeitern zu

Der Lebensmittelkonzern Durand hat nach Angaben seines CEOs seine Mitarbeiter illegal überwacht. Betroffen seien Pausen- und WC-Räume, in denen das Unternehmen über deren Arbeitsweise hinaus deren Verhaltensweise und Details aus dem Privatleben heimlich mithilfe von verdeckten Kameras aufzeichnete. Damit soll der Konzern gegen die Persönlichkeitsrechte seiner Mitarbeiter vorsätzlich verstoßen haben. Nun droht ihm eine Millionenstrafe.

„Wir übernehmen die volle Verantwortung dafür und bitten unsere Mitarbeiter, Kunden und die Behörden um Entschuldigung“, sagte der CEO auf einer vom Konzern initiierten Pressekonferenz in seiner Zentrale. Er versicherte, dass sich so etwas nicht wiederholen würde und das Unternehmen künftig nur noch sichtbare Kameras einsetzen wolle.

Bisher hatte der Konzern einen zweifelhaften Ruf: Wegen seiner fragwürdigen Unternehmensführung gilt er als sozial unverantwortlichstes Unternehmen in der Lebensmittelindustrie, wofür es 2014 den Negativpreis „Public Eye Award“ erhalten hatte. Trotz seiner bekannten Marken und zahlreichen Zukäufe schrumpfte sowohl das Produktportfolio als auch der Aktienkurs des ertragsschwachen Unternehmens immer weiter.

Service	tagesschau.de	Gemeinsame Programme	Rundfunkanstalten
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Appendix I

Fictitious Crisis News of the Eighth Research Condition

Privacy issues-related crisis, proactive crisis timing and positive pre-crisis reputation.



Eilmeldung

Illegale Überwachung von Mitarbeitern bei Durand

Der Lebensmittelkonzern Durand hat nach Angaben der Arbeitsorganisation ILO seine Mitarbeiter in Deutschland illegal überwacht. Betroffen seien Pausen- und WC-Räume, in denen das Unternehmen über deren Arbeitsweise hinaus deren Verhaltensweise und Details aus dem Privatleben heimlich mithilfe von verdeckten Kameras aufzeichnete. Damit soll der Konzern gegen die Persönlichkeitsrechte seiner Mitarbeiter vorsätzlich verstoßen haben. Nun droht ihm eine Millionenstrafe.

Nach Bekanntwerden der Überwachung auf einer Pressekonferenz von ILO, übernimmt der Konzern die volle Verantwortung dafür und bittet seine Mitarbeiter, Kunden und die Behörden um Entschuldigung. Er versicherte, dass sich so etwas nicht wiederholen würde und das Unternehmen künftig nur noch sichtbare Kameras einsetzen wolle.

Bisher hatte der Konzern einen zweifelhaften Ruf: Wegen seiner fragwürdigen Unternehmensführung gilt er als sozial unverantwortlichstes Unternehmen in der Lebensmittelindustrie, wofür es 2014 den Negativpreis „Public Eye Award“ erhalten hatte. Trotz seiner bekannten Marken und zahlreichen Zukäufe schrumpfte sowohl das Produktportfolio als auch der Aktienkurs des ertragsschwachen Unternehmens immer weiter.

Service	tagesschau.de	Gemeinsame Programme	Rundfunkanstalten
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Inhaltsverzeichnis	Videos & Audios	EinsPlus	Hessischer Rundfunk
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Tagesschau App	Ausland	Einsfestival	Norddeutscher Rundfunk
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RSS Feeds	Wetter	arte	Rundfunk Berlin-Brandenburg
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