

UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE

# Master Thesis

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**Linking leadership and crisis management**

**The role of leadership in organisational crises  
in relation to communication technology and crisis type,  
and its effects on consumer's trust, attitude, emotions and  
intention to boycott an organisation**

Lara Carolina von Rosenstiel

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## **The role of leadership in organisational crises in relation to communication technology and crisis type, and its effects on consumer's trust, attitude, emotions and intention to boycott an organisation**

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## ABSTRACT

This study focusses on the appropriate adjustment of crisis communication tools and the importance of leadership in times of crisis. As prior research shows that the use of different communication technologies in product- or value-harm crisis may have an effect on consumers' reactions, this study sheds additional light on the message source in an organisational crisis. The primary goal of this study was therefore to experimentally investigate to what extent the role and presence of a leader in relation to communication technology and crisis type have effects on consumer's trust in an organisation, attitude, emotions and behavioural intentions. A scenario- based 2 (message source: CEO vs. general spokesperson) x 2 (crisis type: product-harm vs. value-harm) x 2 (communication technology: video vs. text) between-subject experiment incorporating two additional mediating roles, namely emotion and trust was implemented with 207 German participants. Statistical analyses reveal that a video message makes customers more likely to trust a company and engage in future purchases compared to a text message. In addition, a CEO as spokesperson is a useful tactic to increase levels of trustworthiness and purchase intention. A combination of both, a CEO using a video message, influence attitude positively. Furthermore, this study shows that trust is significantly lower in a product-harm crisis and that using only text messages may result in higher levels of anger than adjusting a video. Based on these insights, practical and theoretical implications are presented.

*Key words: Crisis leadership, crisis communication, message source, communication technology, crisis type, emotions, trust in an organisation*

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## 1 | INTRODUCTION

People talk about leaders, especially in times of crises – like when Mark Zuckerberg has come under the microscope by the the social network during the Facebook Cambridge Analytica data scandal in 2018. A CEO's performance then determines the fates of corporations, which influences a brand's reputation significantly (Boin, Kuipers, & Overdijk, 2013). Thus, organisations should not only be ready with a clear view of their crisis communication, but especially being prepared to determining the role of leaders in times of crisis. Consequently, this paper argues that CEO leadership in times of crisis should be viewed as a research subject apart as it is unique in scope and of incomparable importance.

Crisis leadership refers to the capability to lead under extreme pressure and engage in a continuous process that involves developing a mindset of reflecting, adapting and learning from a crisis and its aftermath. Crisis leadership is assumed to be more than managing public relations during a crisis as it goes beyond the parameters of risk management and legal responsibilities. It matters so much because, despite the damage that is caused by a crisis, effective leadership has the potential for an organisation and its stakeholders to rebuild confidence and trust (James & Wooten, 2011). Ineffective crisis management, for example any behaviour that deviates from acknowledged standards (e.g., ethical leadership behaviour), increases public unease and is likely to elicit strong criticism. The role of public leaders and their responsibility seem important and have a fulfilling symbolic need for direction and guidance. Leaders are expected to provide authentic hope and confidence (Boin, Kuipers, & Overdijk, 2013).

In particular, modern communication and information technologies have created a challenging environment for organisations and their leaders because it causes people to be increasingly aware of issues and risk associated with organisations (Cornelissen, 2014). Also, stakeholders expect public leaders to be present and prepared when a crisis emerges (Boin, Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005). An organisation's failure to handle a crisis can have catastrophic consequences for its legitimacy and reputation (Booth, 2000). This in turn can affect how stakeholders interact with organisations (Coombs, 2007).

Among most previous studies in the field of crisis communication, there is a gap of fundamental knowledge about the role leaders play in the course of a crisis (Wonink, 2017; Hegner, Beldad, & Krasegenberg, 2016; Stephens & Malone, 2010). The source of a message during a crisis may have an effect on how consumers perceive an organization when the crisis response is delivered by the CEO or a general spokesperson. In a previous study, for example,

it was found that stakeholders react more positive to organizations with a visible CEO during the crisis (Turk, Jin, Stewart, Kim, & Hipple, 2012). However, there is only little literature about the difference in the effects of a human spokesperson (i.e. CEO) and a general spokesperson (i.e. PR manager) in crisis communication. Furthermore, hardly any studies incorporate the influence of the type of crisis in their studies meanwhile the difference between a product-harm and value-harm crisis can be of important relevance in crisis managing. A specific type of crisis may require a different set of communication strategies during a crisis. One might also think about the overall impact of a type of crisis on brand reputation. For example, the impact of crisis type may have an impact on crisis leadership, knowing that people respond differently to either a product- or moral harm crisis (Hegner, Beldad, & Krasegenberg, 2016). Based on these limitations, the purpose of this study is to investigate how crisis leadership affects stakeholder's trust in the organisation, attitude towards an organisation, consumers' emotions and behavioural intentions such as purchase or boycott intentions by uniquely combining the variables message source, communication technology, and crisis type. This leads to the first research question of this study:

**RQ1:** *To what extent do message source, communication technology, and crisis type in crisis leadership have effects on consumer's trust in an organisation, attitude towards an organisation, emotions and behavioural intentions?*

Additionally, most studies only investigated the direct effects of crisis communication variables such as message source or communication technology, as no one has yet investigated how such variables interact with each other (Pfau & Wan, 2006; Stavrositu & Sundar, 2008; Beldad, Laar, & Hegner, 2018). Hence, studying the interaction between different forms of crisis communication is essential to deliver a holistic approach towards recommendations in times of a crisis. For instance, the use of either a text or video message might depend on the message source as well. Considering that the three manipulations communication technology, crisis type and message source may interact, the following second research question is as follows:

**RQ2:** *To what extent do communication technology (video or text), crisis type (product-harm or value-harm) and message source (CEO or PR manager) interact and influence consumers' trust in an organization, attitude towards an organisation, emotions and behavioural intentions?*

Another limitation of previous literature is the lack of including mediating roles, such as emotions and trust which have a crucial influence on stakeholders' behavioural intentions. For

instance, it may be expected that higher levels of anger as an effect of communication technology, message source or crisis type may act as a predictor for boycott participation. In summary, the third research question formulated for the research is:

**RQ3:** *To what extent are the effects of communication technology (video or text), crisis type (product-harm or value-harm) and message source (CEO or PR manager) on purchase intention mediated by trust and emotions?*

To get insight into the role of the leader in a crisis situation and which tasks leaders need to accomplish the restoration of the image of the company, this paper takes a theoretical approach reviewing theoretical-oriented literature on crisis management, crisis leadership and reputational damage. In particular, Attribution Theory plays a crucial role as leaders are often attributed to emotions such as anger or sympathy which may influence the overall brand reputation of an organisation. Additionally, Media Richness Theory will build up the theoretical basis for the adjustment of rich communication technologies such as video messages.

Finally, a 2 x 2 x 2 experiment was conducted for this study, testing for the variables message source (CEO vs. PR-manager), crisis type (product-harm vs. value-harm), and communication technology (video vs. text). Due to the specific combination of interactive variables and the incorporation of the mediating roles, findings from this study will underline the importance of effective crisis leadership as well as gaining insight into the role of crisis leaders and how their communication can result in less negative responses by stakeholders. Certain differences in communication, such as who delivers the message or which communication channel is used within a particular crisis setting, might affect the extent of stakeholders' negative reactions and post-crisis reputation. Therefore, this study will strengthen the theoretical basis for other researchers studying crisis leadership. Finally, these insights will help to draw practical implications for crisis leaders and their influence on the company's reputation. Consequently, crisis management effectiveness can be optimised and increased.



## 2 | THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.1 | Crisis as reputational threat: impact on trust and behavioural intention

A crisis is a critical situation that can inflict serious damage to an organisation (Beldad, van Laar, & Hegner, 2018). A crisis presents a reputational threat, considering that crisis situations can harm reputational assets that can drive back customers, decrease financial performance, discourage employees, weaken a competitive advantage and gain negative word-of-mouth (Carmeli & Tishler, 2005; Davies, Chun, da Silva, & Roper, 2003; Fombrun & Gardberg, 2000; Fombrun & van Riel, 2004). Therefore, crisis management must be managed wisely. Crisis management is generally defined as the sum of activities aimed at minimizing the negative impacts of a crisis, such as losing trust in an organisation (Boin, Kuipers, & Overdijk, 2013). While pointing out that strategical crisis management has become a profession, scholars highlight the importance of crisis leadership nowadays (Boin, Hart, Stern, & Sundelius, 2005). Its goal is to limit the depth and the duration of a crisis and its negative effects such as anger, which is an often-attributed emotion during crises. Typical illustrations of crisis leadership include: initiating a crisis response, mitigating the harm, expressing sympathy to victims and reconnecting with stakeholders. Ultimately, communicating core values and paying symbolic attention to the crisis are most essential leadership qualities (Seeger et al., 2003, p. 250).

In line with the Attribution Theory, people always search for causes of events (Weiner, 1985) and often leading positions such as a CEO are becoming the main focus of clearing up a crisis (Boin, Kuipers, & Overdijk, 2013; Wonink, 2017). For example, during the General Motor's ignition switch crisis in 2014, CEO Marry Barra became one of the most discussed persons within the entire scandal. As Barra was in first instance accused of overseeing the ignition switch scandal, later she has been able to win back stakeholders trust through well-organized and effective crisis leadership communication (Feloni, 2018). Especially, the rush to judgement presumes that crisis leadership, as previously defined, matters (Boin, Kuipers, & Overdijk, 2013). Often, a crisis leader's behaviour can make a crisis worse, for instance by ignoring impending threats, making non-rational decisions, or by acting in ways that suggest they do not care, a crisis can intensify and increase reputational damage (Boin & t' Hart, 2010).

The reputational damage harms consumers directly and indirectly by impacting their trust and emotions negatively. Consumers might then adjust their behavioural intentions towards the company by denying to buy their products or boycotting the company. To prevent those negative consequences, crisis communication is crucial. In short, crisis communication is defined as 'the collection, processing, and dissemination of information required to address a

crisis situation' (Coombs, 2012, p. 20). Considering the wide variety of factors that play a role in crisis communication, scholars highlight the importance of message source in a crisis as well as the influence of different communication technologies, such as video or text messages. The outlined risks and damages of a crisis create the need for companies to engage in thought-through crisis communication to eventually regain consumer's trust and influence their behavioural intentions in a positive manner.

### **2.2.1 | The impact of communication technology**

The options available for crisis communication have expanded considerably in the last decade (Stephens & Malone, 2010). The use of social networking tools such as YouTube or Facebook are increasingly used to communicate with and to inform stakeholders. As there are so many new media options available for crisis communication, it is even more important for scholars to examine how and in which situations various communication technologies are being used. Whereas Coombs and Holladay (2009) did not find significant differences between the use of video versus text, Pfau and Wan (2006) consider text and video to differ significantly in their effectiveness. Whereas videos messages can deliver relational, nonverbal, and verbal cues as well as to create a 'face' for the message, a text message does not include those additional cues and social presence provided by the organisational spokesperson (Pfau & Wan, 2006). This finding is also in accordance with the Media Richness Theory, which states that different communication media (e.g. video or text) used in organisational communication possess different levels or richness of information, and the level of richness affects how communication is perceived (Lengel & Draft, 1988).

Therefore, the benefits of rich media such as videos needs to be accentuated when communicating complex and value-laden messages within a crisis setting (Du & Vierira, 2012). This is also in line with what Kaplan and Haenlein (2012) found in their study, stating that videos (e.g., via YouTube) are more effective resolving ambiguity and thus in creating patterns of influence on stakeholders as they increase the amount of information while adding additional cues. In line with that, other studies showed that the visual cues provided by spokespeople in a video can offer additional framing functions for viewers and may reinforce the organisation's concern for stakeholders (Entman, 1993; Hallahan, 1999). This might also indicate that trust in the organisation is higher and stakeholders feel more positive about crisis responses. Thus, it may be assumed that if a visual presentation of a crisis response sent by a leader produces more positive reactions, leaders should make more use of this medium (Coombs & Holladay, 2009).

Furthermore, research suggests that emotions can act as predictors of boycott intentions (Zhao, Wang, Wei, & Liang, 2013, Lindenmeier, Schleer, & Pricl, 2012). The more positive the emotions towards a crisis response is, the less is the intention to boycott a company. Therefore, it is assumed that when crisis responses shared via a video on social media, and additional non-verbal cues create more positive emotions, then the intention to boycott a company will be lower than shared via a text message (Zhao, Wang, Wei, & Liang, 2013). In accordance with Media Richness Theory and the assumption that richer communication technologies influence trust, sympathy and purchase intention positively in a crisis situation, the first set of hypotheses is advanced.

*Hypothesis 1: Customers will have higher levels of a) trust b) sympathy c) purchase intentions d) positive attitude and lower levels of e) anger and f) intention to boycott the company when videos are used as a crisis communication technology compared to text messages.*

### **2.2.2 | The impact of message source**

The way consumers feel about an organisation's reputation may be affected by the message source, for example whether the crisis response is delivered by the CEO or general spokesperson. In previous studies, it was generally found that the message source impacts consumers' trust and behavioural intentions (Kiousis & Dimitrova, 2006; Sohn & Larscy, 2012; Stavrositu & Sundar, 2008).

For instance, a study by Kim and Park (2017) found that for organisational crisis responses to be acceptable, the messages should have credibility because the public is then more likely to overlook them if it does not trust the information from its sources (Stavrositu & Sundar, 2008). Moreover, this study showed that CEOs as the primary source of a message were rated as most trustworthy and credible source, resulting in the importance of CEO visibility in organisational crisis messages.

In addition, using a CEO in crisis responses may be a useful tactic for improving credibility and more positive reactions of stakeholders towards an organisation. This may be due to increased levels of trustworthiness through fulfilling human attributions (Turk, Jin, Stewart, Kim, & Hipple, 2012). This is in line with what Sohn and Larscy (2012) found as they emphasized that the presence and active role of a CEO as a spokesperson can add more leverage to a company's crisis communication. Particularly, the researchers highlighted that a CEO's

positive reputation can be a strategic asset in protecting a company's reputation during and after a crisis. On the contrary, it was found that an unfavourable reputation may be associated with poor crisis management (Sohn & Lariscy, 2012). Despite that, Park and Berger (2004) argued that CEOs in particular can have strong impact on the corporate image of a company since they represent the company. Moreover, findings suggest that a CEO is perceived to be more interesting, informative and persuasive by consumers than general spokespersons (Straughan, Bleske, & Zhao, 1996; Cameron, 1994; Straughan et al., 1994). For example, Cameron (1994) found higher recognition for a CEO compared to another, general spokesperson. In addition, Straughan et al. (1994) showed that the use of a CEO had indirect effects on attitudes and behavioural intentions because messages were perceived as more credible when communicated by a CEO.

As documented earlier regarding the Attribution Theory, people attribute emotions such as anger or sympathy to crisis situations. In line with that, Arpan (2002) found that the source's credibility strongly affects acceptability of a message and arising emotions. When a message is accepted, more positive emotions might be felt, which in turn indicates that the more credible the source is perceived by consumers, the more positive emotions these consumers feel (Wonink, 2017). On the contrary, the stronger people feel the organisation to be responsible for a crisis, the more negative emotions arise. Stakeholders are likely to have more negative images of the crisis and the organisation, which may lead to increased negative reputation as well boycott intentions in a crisis situation (Coombs, 1995).

Additionally, studies investigated that the source of information may also affect the extent to which the organisation is held responsible for a crisis (Coombs, 1995; Coombs, 2007). This in turn might influence the extent to which positive or negative emotions are felt by stakeholders when receiving a message. It is likely that the more responsible the organisation is held to be for a crisis, the higher the boycott intentions of the stakeholders.

It is often assumed that using a CEO as message source creates more positive reactions than using a general spokesperson (Wonink, 2017). However, using a CEO as message source does not directly mean the message is perceived more positively by consumers (Reidenbach & Pitts, 1986). For example, the source needs to possess the right characteristics in order to be credible (e.g. trustworthiness and likeability) (Reidenbach & Pitts, 1986). On the contrary, when a CEO is able to create positive emotions and less responsibility for the crisis in his crisis communication, it may be assumed that stakeholders show less boycott intentions. In summary, these findings lead to the following hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 2: Customers will have higher levels of a) trust b) sympathy c) purchase intentions d) positive attitude and lower levels of e) anger and f) intention to boycott the company when a CEO is the message source in a crisis compared to a general spokesperson.*

### **2.2.3 | The impact of crisis type**

There are two types of crisis that have been identified in the crisis communication literature, namely product-harm crisis and value-harm crisis. A product-harm crisis is also known as a performance-related crisis referring to a situation when products have been found to be defective, unsafe, or dangerous to be used (Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Dutta & Pullig, 2011). A value-harm crisis does not involve faulty products but is about social or ethical issues surrounding the values espoused by the brand (Dutta & Pullig, 2011, p. 1282).

Literature suggests that both types of crisis influence a company's reputation and trustworthiness deleteriously (Beldad, Laar, & Hegner, 2018; Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Dutta & Pullig, 2011). For example, when cry for help messages were discovered in Primark clothes in 2014, the company faced a value-harm crisis that needed carefully considered crisis communication (Rustin, 2014). Another example is the faulty ignition switches from General Motors causing more than 1385 death and injury cases which in consequence led to a severe product-harm crisis of the company (Kasperkevic, 2016).

However, people may react differently when confronted with one of the two crises (Beldad, Laar, & Hegner, 2018). In particular, research suggests that customers may have more negative emotions and attitudes in product-harm crises as those crises could directly harm customers compared to value-harm crises (Beldad, Laar, & Hegner, 2018). Hence, it was also found that moral crises particularly affect the trustworthiness of a company. Considering the importance of emotions and their effects on consumer behaviour in the field of marketing, more research seems necessary to explore the role of emotions and intentions to boycott a company. Affect, especially negative emotions such as anger, is a predictor for boycott participation as it functions as an "emotional expression of consumer's attitude" (Farah & Newman, 2010, p. 349; Hoffmann & Müller, 2009). Contradicting to what was stated earlier, Lindemeier et al. (2012) pointed out that consumers judge brands harsher, if a crisis is related to values and ethical misconduct compared to when it is related to product failure or product harm. Consequently, the third set of hypotheses is proposed by the following:

*Hypothesis 3: A product-harm crisis will lead to higher levels of a) trust b) sympathy c) purchase intentions d) positive attitude and lower levels of e) anger and f) intention to boycott the company than a value harm crisis.*

### **2.3.1 | Message source and communication technology**

As mentioned earlier, previous studies showed that the message source in a crisis may impact the consumers' attitudinal trust and behavioural intentions (Stavrositu & Sundar, 2008; Sohn & Larscy, 2012; Kiouisis & Dimitrova, 2006; Turk, Jin, Stewart, Kim, & Hipple, 2012). For example, Turk et al. (2012) found that stakeholders react more positively to crisis responses with a visible CEO than with a general spokesperson. Besides, a CEO as the source of a message was rated as a more trustworthy and credible source, resulting in the importance of CEO visibility in organisational crisis messages. In contrast, a study by Reidenbach and Pitts (1986) pointed out that having a CEO as a source does not directly mean the message is perceived more positively by consumers. The effectiveness is also supposed to depend on the adjusted communication technology.

Hence, CEOs and spokespeople can choose between different communication technologies, such as video- or text- messages. Whereas some studies did not find meaningful differences between the use of video and text (Coombs & Holladay, 2009), others consider text and video to differ significantly in their effectiveness (Pfau & Wan, 2006). On the one hand, videos messages can deliver relational, nonverbal, and verbal cues as well as to create a 'face' for the message. On the other hand, text messages do not include those additional cues and social presence provided by the organisational spokesperson.

Liu, Austin and Yan Jin (2011) studied the interplay of information form (e.g., communication technology) and source on the emotions and intentions of the public. The findings clearly indicate the importance of strategically matching communication technology and source when organisations respond to a crisis. The study found that the source of the crisis response moderates publics' acceptance of crisis messages distributed via traditional media, such as text messages, or social media, such as video messages. Thus, the selected form and source of information should be considered in tandem with the crisis response strategy as distributing information either via text or video messages might not as effective for different messages sources, such as a CEO or spokesperson. Another interesting finding of this study is that the selection of the communication form and source affects attribution of emotions, which

is in line with the Attribution Theory. As documented earlier regarding the Attribution Theory, people attribute emotions such as anger or sympathy to crisis situations.

As most studies focus exclusively on the increasing role of new media communication, it is not specifically looked at their use by leadership and its effect. Moreover, it is not much known about the differences in effects between a CEO and a general spokesperson in crisis communication when adopting different communication technologies. One might also ask whether a video message sent by a CEO has the same effect as when a spokesperson uses a video as communication form. Thus far, nothing is still known about the extent to which the impact of message source on consumers' trust and behavioural intention would depend on communication technology. These points prompted the following research hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 4: A CEO using a video message as crisis communication technology will result in higher levels of a) trust b) sympathy c) purchase intentions d) positive attitude and in lower levels of e) anger and f) intention to boycott the company than when a general spokesperson uses a video message in a crisis response.*

### **2.3.2 | Crisis type and message source**

People may react differently when confronted with either a value-harm or product-harm crisis (Beldad, Laar, & Hegner, 2018). Especially considering that a product-harm crisis may involve serious problems that could result in severe physical injuries if compared to a moral-harm crisis, external stakeholders would most likely expect a response from a credible and trustworthy person representing the company. Thus, it might play a role whether a CEO or a general spokesperson steps up in different types of crises (Beldad, Laar, & Hegner, 2018).

There are only a few studies that report on the interplay between crisis type and message source. A study by Jin, Fisher, Liu and Austin (2011) initialized that the type of crisis theoretically affects how organisations should respond to crisis. This is in line with the revised social-mediated crisis communication model (SMCC) encouraging organisations to carefully consider how crisis type affects the acceptance of crisis responses by the public (Coombs, 2011).

Another study examined in which crisis situations a CEO should step up and how that impacts crisis communication (Lucero, Tang Teng Kwang, & Pang, 2009). The findings showed that in situations in which the organisation is perceived to have caused or has the potential of causing widespread harm to the society (e.g. in a product-harm crisis), a CEO should

step up. Also, when a crisis becomes unbearable in such a way that the organisation's reputation becomes of paramount importance, the CEO should function as the sender of messages.

Yet, there is not much known about the significance of a CEO in a value-harm crisis. It remains unclear whether there is a difference in success when either a CEO or a spokesperson communicates in a value-harm crisis. However, as far as literature suggests, a value-harm crisis can be perceived as having less impact on stakeholders which might create less need to communicate via the most important source of a company, namely the CEO.

Based on these insights, one might expect that message source would depend on crisis type, in such a way that a CEO as message source might be more appropriate when the crisis could directly harm customers than when customers are not directly exposed to the possibly damaging effects of the crisis. As thus far, nothing is still known about the extent to which the impact of message source on consumers' trust in the organisation and behavioural intention would depend on crisis type, the next hypothesis is:

*Hypothesis 5: In a product-harm crisis, a CEO as message source will lead to higher levels of a) trust b) sympathy c) purchase intentions d) positive attitude and lower levels of e) anger and f) intention to boycott the company than a general spokesperson.*

*Hypothesis 6: In a value-harm crisis, a CEO or general spokesperson as message source will equivalently lead to higher levels of a) trust b) sympathy c) purchase intentions d) positive attitude and lower levels of e) anger and f) intention to boycott the company than when using text messages.*

### **2.3.3 | Crisis type and communication technology**

In previous research, it has been suggested that using videos as communication technology is more beneficial than using text messages (Pfau & Wan, 2006; Lengel & Draft, 1988). Also, as documented earlier, both types of crises may influence a company's reputation and trustworthiness deleteriously (Beldad, Laar, & Hegner, 2018; Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Dutta & Pullig, 2011). However, product-related crises seem to create higher crisis communication expectations by external stakeholders as product-harm crisis involves serious problems that could result in severe physical injuries (Laufer, Gillespie, McBride, & Gonyales, 2005).

Scholars such as Schultz, Utz and Göritz (2011) have suggested that the communication medium might be more important than the message itself. One might think about whether this



is the case for both types of crises, as Jin et al. (2011) found that consumers have different expectations how an organisation responds to a crisis dependent on the type of crisis. In particular, research suggests that consumers may have more negative emotions and attitudes in product-harm crises which may result in the need for a rich communication (e.g., video). This is in line with Avery's findings (2011) that the public's involvement in a crisis also affects the crisis information forms they seek out. This leads to the assumption that a text-based message can be successful in a value-harm crisis but may not be sufficient in a product-harm crisis.

Knowing that people respond differently to either a product- or moral-harm crisis (Hegner, Beldad, & Kraesgenberg, 2016), one might also expect that people's reaction to communication technology would depend on crisis type. However, in accordance with Media Richness Theory, stating that richer communication messages influence stakeholder's reactions more positively, it is assumed that a video message is more appropriate and successful in both types of crisis. This leads to the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 7: Using video messages in a product-harm crisis will lead to higher levels of a) trust b) sympathy c) purchase intentions d) positive attitude and in lower levels of e) anger and f) intention to boycott the company than when using text messages.*

*Hypothesis 8: Using video messages in a value-harm crisis will lead to higher levels of a) trust b) sympathy c) purchase intentions d) positive attitude and in lower levels of e) of anger and f) intention to boycott the company than when using text messages.*

#### **2.4.1 | Mediating role of trust**

To understand the consequences that a crisis can have on consumers' behavioural intentions, trust in an organisation and emotions attributed toward an organisation must be considered. Trust is an essential element of corporate success as it builds and supports long-term relationships between an organisation and its stakeholders. Consequently, trust generates supportive behaviour such as increased purchase intention and prevents unsupportive behaviour like boycotting an organisation (Huang, 2001; Ki & Hon, 2007). Thus, organisations should strive for being seen as trustworthy by consumers to minimize negative effects, especially during times of crises (Wonink, 2017). This is in line with Ute, Schultz and Glocka (2012, p.41) who state that "the foremost goal of crisis communication is to restore the reputation of the organisation and the trust of consumers or other stakeholders", which emphasizes how a crisis

can damage people's trust in an organisation embroiled in a specific crisis (Wonink, 2017). More specifically, attitudinal trust can be defined as an individual's belief-based assessment about the trustworthiness of other people or organisations. Moreover, it has been found that attitudinal trust can predict behaviour and influences behaviour accordingly (Yamagishi, Akutsu, Cho, Inoue, Li, & Matsumoto, 2015). Regarding this finding, several studies have shown that higher trust results in increased purchase intention (e.g. Gefen & Straub, 2004; McCole & Palmer, 2001). Trust also involves that the public believes that the source can be trusted to provide objective and honest information (Martin-Santana, Reinares-Lara, & Muela-Molina, 2015). Considering these points, the following hypotheses are:

*Hypothesis 9: The more trust people have in the organisation after being confronted with a crisis response, the higher their purchase intentions will be afterwards.*

*Hypothesis 10: The less trust people have in the organisation after being confronted with a crisis response, the higher their intention to boycott the organisation afterwards.*

## **2.4.2 | Mediating role of emotions**

Research has shown that the attributions stakeholders make about a crisis (e.g., sympathy or anger) not only influence an organisation's reputation itself, but also generate emotions about an organisation. With regard to Coombs' SCCT- model (Coombs, 2007), it was shown that increased attributions of crisis responsibility cause negative feelings such as anger towards an organisation. According to Dunn and Schweitzer (2005), there is an interplay between emotions and trust. For example, positive emotions (e.g., sympathy) are shown to increase trust, whereas negative emotions (e.g., anger) decrease trust. When consumers develop feelings of empathy for the organisation, this influences the process of forgiving the company and trust it again (Worthington, 1998). In line with that, Enright and Coyle (1998) showed that consumers felt significantly more negative and angrier when they were unforgiving than when they were in the process of forgiving the organisation (Wonink, 2017). In addition, angry people are more motivated to act within a crisis as they believe that they can influence the situation (Lerner & Tiedens, 2006). In the context of purchasing behavior, anger has been found to predict negative purchase intentions (Wetzer, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2007). Another classic consequence of negative emotions is to actively and openly boycotting the organisation while using negative word-of-mouth. As emotions may have a significant influence on attitude and behavioral

intentions towards an organisation (Kim & Cameron, 2011), this aspect will be investigated in this study as well. In the light of those findings, the following hypotheses arise:

*Hypothesis 11: The more sympathy and less anger participants feel after being confronted with a crisis response message, the higher their purchase intention is.*

*Hypothesis 12: The more anger and less sympathy participants feel after being confronted with a crisis response, the lower their purchase intention is.*

## 2.5 | CONCEPTUAL RESEARCH MODEL

Based on the formulation of the hypotheses in the literature, the following conceptual research model (see Figure 1) was derived.

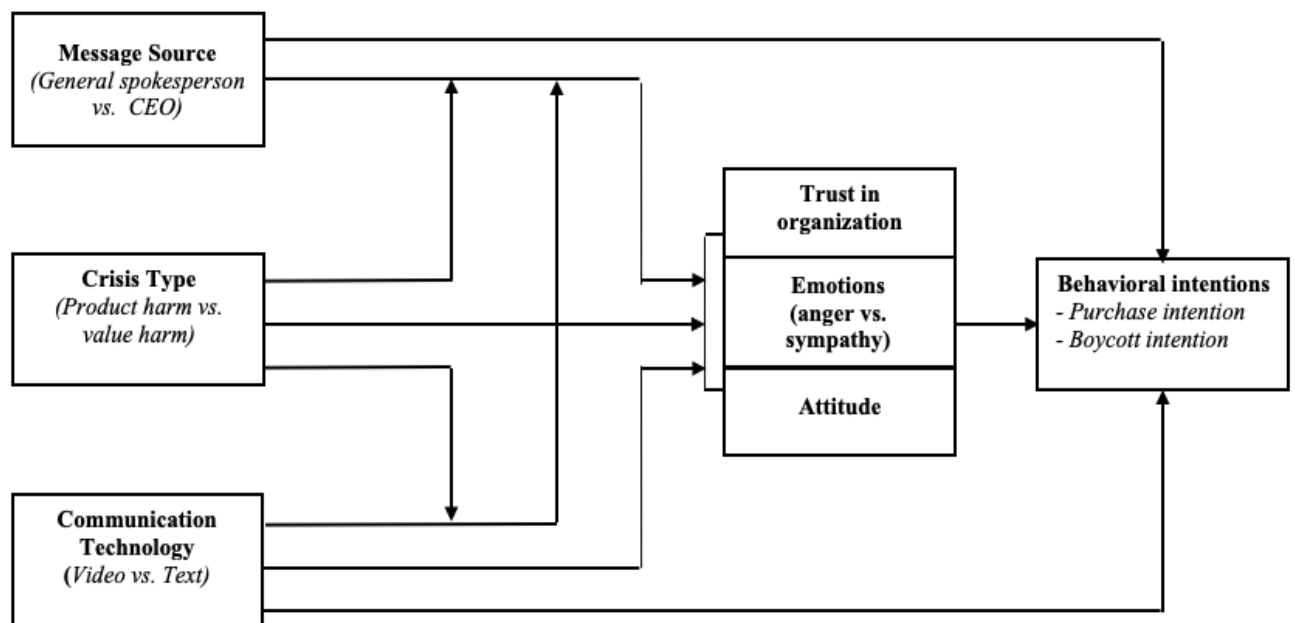


Figure 1: Research Model

### 3 | METHOD

#### 3.1 | Design

A scenario-based experiment with a between-respondent design was chosen for this study. Scenario-based experiments have generally been adopted for research on crisis responses as this technique seeks to understand how and why people form their judgements and preference that base their decisions with complex issues (Rungtusanatham, Wallin, & Eckerd, 2011). To test the hypotheses discussed above, a 2 (message source: CEO vs. general spokesperson) x 2 (crisis type: product-harm vs. value-harm) x 2 (communication technology: video vs. text) design was implemented. A visualization of the eight different scenarios of this study can be found in Figure 2.

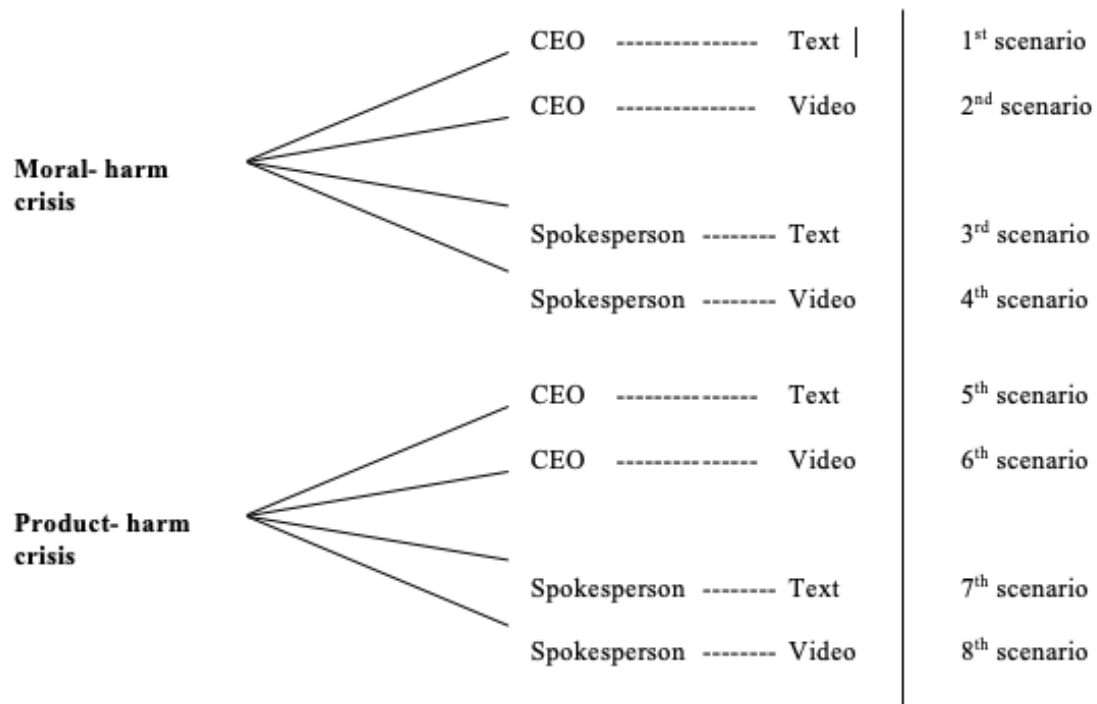


Figure 2: Research Design

#### 3.2 | Pre- test

To find out which gender of a CEO is considered as trustworthy and capable of leading an organisation, a pretest was conducted. The pre-test also investigated which age range participants consider serious, experienced, and trustworthy for a CEO. A total of N=10 people, fives females and five males, participated in the pre-test. Participants' age ranged from 24 to

60 with a mean age of 39. The respondents were randomly chosen and were asked to fill in a short questionnaire containing five questions about the preferred age range of a CEO as well as the preferred gender of a CEO. It was found that most participants consider a CEO aged between 50 to 60 as most trustworthy and capable of leading an organisation. Moreover, eight participants indicated that a male CEO is more capable of leading an organisation. Based on these insights, it was chosen to use a male CEO aged between 50 to 60 for this study.

A second pre-test was conducted to check the complete questionnaire to make sure that questions and propositions were clearly formulated, and that the manipulations were measured correctly. Following the pre-test, also spelling mistakes were corrected as well as some questions were adjusted.

### **3.3 | Stimulus materials**

For this study, a fictional German company named “Puria+” was used in order to eliminate possible effects of pre-crisis reputation (Siomkos, 1999). The crisis context itself was intentional or preventable, as this crisis type is shown to most likely generate negative responses from stakeholders (Hegner, Beldad, & Kamphuis op Heghuis, 2014).

The elements that were manipulated for this study were presented in either a written article or a video on the company’s own website. The website for the fictional company has been set up beforehand by using the tool “Wix”. Testing the differences between a written and a spoken message confirmed the manipulation of the variable communication technology.

Second, to manipulate the variable message source, the message was delivered by either the CEO or a general spokesperson. To prevent disturbing factors, the message was the same in all eight scenarios. Only headings, titles and subtitles were adjusted (e.g. ‘CEO of Puria+’ vs. ‘Spokesperson of Puria+’).

Lastly, crisis type was also a two-level manipulation, as respondents were confronted with either a product-harm crisis or a value harm crisis. In the product crisis, the bacterium *Escherichia coli* has been detected in a milk product. These bacteria are known to cause illness such as diarrhea, abdominal pain, fever and vomiting. In the value-harm crisis, the company was being accused of social and ethical criticism as racial voice recording between employees discriminating refugees were published. In the example in Figure 3, a value-harm crisis with a PR manager as message source and text as communication technology is shown. The manipulations for the crisis type are marked in yellow; the manipulations for message source are highlighted in green.

## Bacteria E.coli in Milchprodukten gefunden

Auf der gestrigen Pressekonferenz gab Pressesprecher Dirk Martsen bekannt, dass in Puria+ 1,5% Milchprodukten Escherichia- coli- Keime nachgewiesen worden sind. Im Folgenden nimmt das Unternehmen Stellung:

„Ich bin Dirk Martsen, Pressesprecher von Puria+. Qualität und Frische haben bei uns oberste Priorität. Leider sind wir bei einigen Produkten unseren hohen Standards nicht gerecht geworden. So haben wir während unserer intensiven Kontrollen Bakterien E.coli festgestellt. Diese gelten als Lebensmittelinfektionserreger und können bereits in geringen Mengen Erkrankungen und Entzündungen verursachen. Die Produkte führten bei zahlreichen Kunden zu Beschwerden wie Durchfall und Erbrechen, sowie Darmentzündungen und einem nachgewiesenen Kindestodesfall.

Wir, Puria+, bedauern zutiefst das Vertrauen unserer Kunden enttäuscht zu haben und werden alles in Bewegung setzen, um den Fall aufzuklären. Infizierte Produkte wurden umgänglich aus dem Verkauf genommen. Bei Puria+ stehen eine einwandfreie Qualität der Produkte und die Sicherheit der Verbraucher an erster Stelle. Um dies zu gewährleisten und unter Berücksichtigung größtmöglicher Transparenz, hat Puria+ den Rückruf umgesetzt.

Sollten Sie unter Symptomen wie Durchfall, Übelkeit und Erbrechen leiden, wird empfohlen unmittelbar einen Arzt aufzusuchen. Ferner werden Sie gebeten, das Unternehmen Puria+ zu informieren. Sie sollten keinesfalls die Milch trinken und können Produkte zurück in den Markt bringen. Das Geld wird Ihnen ohne Kassenbeleg zurückerstattet.

Für die Zukunft wird versichert, dass die Kontrollverfahren der Produkte nochmals verstärkt und verschärft werden. Hierfür wird auch ab heute Marie Burg die Verantwortung übernehmen und intensive Kontrollen innovativ verbessern.“

*D. Martsen*

Figure 3: Example of a scenario: PR x product-harm crisis x text message

### 3.4 | Procedure

Participants were approached via social media, face-to-face contact, and e-mail. Online surveys were distributed via snowball sampling in which every respondent was randomly assigned to one of the eight conditions. In the beginning of the experiment, respondents were informed about the purpose of the study. In the second step, participants were asked for their highest educational level, nationality, age, gender as well as the province they live in. In addition, they were required to answer questions about their lifestyle to measure product involvement. Example questions were “Milk is an important part of my diet” or “I believe that any form of discrimination should be avoided”. Furthermore, a set of 12 manipulation check questions were asked which will be outlined in the next section.

In the last part of the survey, respondents were confronted with one of the eight crisis scenarios. After having read or seen the assigned crisis responses, respondents were then instructed to indicate their responses to the items measuring the dependent variables (trust, emotions, and behavioral intentions). All answers were given on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 'strongly disagree' to 5 'strongly agree'.

### 3.5 | Manipulation check

The three manipulations for the main study were checked by raising a total of 12 questions. The manipulations were measured on a 5-point Likert scale with on each side an opposing option. To check the communication technology (text vs. video), participants were asked to identify the communication channel (textual message; printed channel vs. oral message; video channel). Participants were for example asked “The message is given through a video channel” or “The message is given through a printed channel”. From a total of 264 participants, nine respondents (3,4 %) erroneously answered the question whether the message was communicated via video or text.

For the message source, respondents had to indicate whether the message response was delivered by the CEO or a spokesperson of the company. Therefore, the questions “The crisis response comes from the company’s CEO” or “The crisis response comes from the company’s PR manager” were asked. Of all respondents, eleven respondents (4,2 %) failed to give a correct answer.

Lastly, respondents had to choose the type of the crisis (infected milk product vs. discriminative voice recordings) described in the given scenario. For this manipulation, the questions “The crisis concerns an infected milk product” or “The crisis concerns violation of human dignity” were posed (based on Beldad, Laar, & Hegner, 2018). Twelve respondents (4,6 %) failed to correctly identify the crisis type. In total, data from 32 respondents who incorrectly answered one or all manipulation check questions were excluded from the analysis.

As each manipulation was measured using two levels with each two items, Cronbach’s alphas were calculated. For example, for the manipulation message source CEO, respondents were asked “The crisis response comes from the company’s CEO” and “The CEO gave a statement about the crisis” with the opposing options from 1= totally disagree to 5= totally agree. The results of this analysis can be found in Table 1.

Table 1

*Cronbach's alpha of the manipulations*

<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>Cronbach's alpha</b>
<b>Communication technology</b>	
Text	.99
Video	.98
<b>Message source</b>	
CEO	.99
PR	.99
<b>Crisis type</b>	
Product-harm	.99
Value-harm	.98

Finally, the manipulations were checked by conducting an independent T-test. First, regarding the manipulation communication technology (video vs. text), an independent T-test showed a significant difference concerning the video manipulation ( $t(167) = 90.03, p < .001$ ). The test revealed, that those who were assigned to a video, also indicated that they saw a video ( $M = 4.95, SD = 0.22$ ) and not a text message ( $M = 1.1, SD = 0.38$ ). In contrast, an independent T-test for the text manipulation showed that the manipulation loaded correctly ( $t(105) = 68.72, p < .001$ ) as those who were assigned to a text message confirmed seeing a text message ( $M = 4.81, SD = 0.56$ ).

Second, for the manipulation message source (CEO vs. PR), an independent T-test revealed a significant difference regarding the CEO manipulation ( $t(205) = 906.30, p < .001$ ). This test confirmed that those who were assigned to a message communicated by a PR manager, were aware of his position ( $M = 4.95, SD = 0.17$ ) compared to a CEO position ( $M = 1.07, SD = 0.37$ ). On the opposite, an independent T-test for the CEO manipulation showed that the manipulation loaded correctly too ( $t(204) = 116.18, p < .001$ ) as those who were assigned to a message communicated by the CEO of the company, indicated seeing a CEO ( $M = 4.03, SD = 0.27$ ) rather than a PR manager ( $M = 1.1, SD = 0.20$ ).

For the third manipulation crisis type (product-harm vs. value-harm), an independent T-test indicated a significant difference regarding the crisis type product-harm ( $t(162) = 110.41, p < .001$ ). Thus, those respondents who were assigned to a product-harm crisis identified the crisis as such ( $M = 4.92, SD = 0.24$ ) compared to a value-harm crisis ( $M = 1.00, SD = 0.05$ ). On the other hand, an independent T-test for the manipulation value-harm crisis showed that the manipulation was loaded correctly ( $t(205) = 93.40, p < .001$ ) as those



who were confronted with a value-harm crisis correctly identified the crisis as such ( $M= 4.88$ ,  $SD= .33$ ).

### **3.6 | Participants**

In total, 264 German citizens were recruited for the experiment. After the removal of 32 respondents, who answered the manipulation checks questions incorrectly, 25 other participants were excluded from the data because they answered the questionnaire too fast (< 5 minutes) or too slow (> 60 minutes) for the results to be trustworthy. In consequence, a total of 207 participants were included into this study and subjected to statistical analyses.

The age of the respondents ranged from 18 to 85 with a mean age of 34.2 years ( $SD = 14.18$ ). The gender distribution was relatively comparable with 57% females and 43% males taking part in the experiment. The most representative province of residence was North Rhine- Westphalia (56 %), followed by Bremen (8.7 %) and Baden- Württemberg (7.2 %). Overall, respondents were highly educated. A complete overview of the participants' demographic information can be found in Table 2.

Participants could carry out the experiment online which had the benefit that they could answer the questions in their personal environment rather than using an experimental research environment with the known restraints. The participants were roughly evenly divided into eight different conditions, with at least 22 and maximum 30 participants as shown in Table 3.

Table 2

*Demographic information of respondents*

<b>Demographics</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>%</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Age</b>			34.20	14.18
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	118	57.0		
Male	89	43.0		
<b>Education</b>				
Low	6	2.9		
Medium	67	32.4		
High	134	64.7		
<b>Province</b>				
Baden-Württemberg	15	7.2		
Bavaria	9	4.3		
Berlin	4	1.9		
Brandenburg	2	1.0		
Bremen	18	8.7		
Hamburg	7	3.4		
Hesse	7	3.4		
Mecklenburg-Vorpommern	6	2.9		
Lower Saxony	10	4.8		
North Rhine-Westphalia	116	56.0		
Rhineland-Palatinate	2	1.0		
Saarland	4	1.9		
Saxony	1	0.5		
Schleswig-Holstein	4	1.9		
Thuringia	2	1.0		
<b>Total</b>	207	100		

Table 3

*Division into scenarios*

Scenario	Gender	Age(M)	Education	N	%
<b>1</b>	8 male	35.0	15 high	25	12.08
	17 female	30.24	10 medium		
			0 low		
<b>2</b>	13 male	32.77	23 high	28	13.53
	15 female	37.93	5 middle		
			0 low		
<b>3</b>	8 male	44.75	16 high	26	12.56
	18 female	37.94	9 medium		
			1 low		
<b>4</b>	15 male	37.8	23 high	24	11.59
	9 female	34.56	1 medium		
			0 low		
<b>5</b>	9 male	31.56	12 high	25	12.08
	16 female	33.00	12 medium		
			1 low		
<b>6</b>	13 male	30.00	12 high	22	10.63
	9 female	39.22	10 medium		
			0 low		
<b>7</b>	10 male	37.00	16 high	25	12.08
	15 female	39.8	7 medium		
			2 low		
<b>8</b>	13 male	32.77	14 high	25	12.08
	12 female	32.25	10 medium		
			1 low		
<b>Total</b>				207	100

\*Scenario 1= Text, CEO, product-harm

Scenario 2= Video, CEO, product-harm

Scenario 3= Text, CEO, value-harm

Scenario 4= Video, CEO, value-harm

Scenario 5= Text, PR, product-harm

Scenario 6= Video, PR, product-harm

Scenario 7= Text, PR, value-harm

Scenario 8= Video, PR, value-harm

### **3.7 | Product involvement**

Participants were highly interested and involved in both crisis issues. In particular, the involvement in the value-harm scenario was a bit higher ( $M = 4.56$ ) than for the product-harm scenario ( $M = 4.15$ ).

### **3.8 | Validity**

Prior to conducting further analyses, a factor analysis was run to check if the items from the dependent variables loaded on different factors. As presented in Table 5, all items for trust loaded on the same factor. Besides, the dividing items for the emotion anger and sympathy loaded correctly on two factors. Regarding the items measuring attitude, six items loaded on other factors. In consequence, they were removed. In summary, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.907, which is good.

Table 5

*Factor analysis of the dependent variables*

Item	Rotated factor loading				
	1	2	3	4	5
Puria+ is able to handle the crisis		.75			
Puria+ knows what they need to do.		.74			
I am confident that Puria+ will act right in the crisis		.77			
The management of Puria+ is well qualified.		.71			
The company is trustworthy.		.68			
The company cares about their customers.		.59			
I am angry.				.83	
I am upset.				.81	
I am outraged.				.67	
I feel sympathy.					.83
I am sad.					.69
I feel compassion.					.88
In future, I will buy Puria+ products.			.74		
I would buy Puria+ products, if I have the chance to.			.74		
I am expecting to buy Puria+ products in future.			.76		
The possibility of buying products from Puria+ is high.			.70		
Puria+ knows a lot about their products.	.66				
Puria + has expertise that ensures that the work is done properly.	.66				
My needs are important to Puria+.	.78				
Puria+ does everything to not cause any harm to me.	.69				
Puria+ is really paying attention to what's important to me.	.76				
I am sure that Puria+ lives up to its words.	.62				
I am sure that Puria+'s actions are guided by important values.	.76				

KMO= .907; Minimum factor loading= .59

### 3.9 | Measures

The dependent variables (i.e., trust, attitude, emotions and behavioral intentions) were measured with a 5- point Likert scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”. To measure trust, six question items from Mayer and Davis (1999) and Klein and Dawar (2004) were adopted. An example of a statement that was used to measure trust was: “The organisation is very capable of performing its job.”

Attitude was measured with seven items derived from MacKenzie and Lutz (1989). Statements measuring attitude were for instance “My needs are important to Puria+” or “I am sure that Puria+’s actions are guided by important values”.

The emotions anger and sympathy were measured with six items based on a study by McDonald, Glendon, and Sparks (2011). Examples of such statements are: „I am annoyed” or „I feel sympathy”.

Behavioral intention was measured by using two scales. One to measure boycott intention and another one to evaluate for purchase intention. To measure boycott intention, five items from Klein et al. (2004) was adopted. For example, “I am willing to avoid making purchases from Puria+”. Purchase intention was measured with items by Kim and Cameron (2011). “The likelihood of me buying this product again is high” is an example of an item used to measure the construct. Finally, general brand attitude was measured by using a scale by McKenzie and Lutz (1989), which included the statement “My thoughts about Puria+ are negative”.

To check the validity of the dependent variables that loaded correctly, Cronbach’s alphas were calculated. One item for the dependent variable “attitude” had to be removed to increase Cronbach’s alpha. As all alpha’s were above 0.7, the dependent variables are all valid. Table 4 presents the alpha values per dependent variable.

Table 4  
*Cronbach’s alpha of the dependent variables*

<b>Dependent variable</b>	<b>Cronbach’s alpha</b>
Trust	.88
Emotion (anger)	.80
Emotion (sympathy)	.75
Purchase intention	.93
Attitude*	.73

\*after removing the item “Puria+ is not trying its best to treat others fairly”

## 4 | RESULTS

### 4.1 | Correlation analysis

Before examining specific hypothesized relationships, a correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationships between the dependent variables. The results showed that all correlations were significant, as shown in Table 6.

In detail, the analysis revealed negative relationships between anger and attitude as well as trust. It may be assumed that if anger is high, attitude and trust will be low. This also accounts for purchase intention, with two negative relationships with anger and sympathy. However, in this case, the correlations need to be specified narrowly.

Table 6

*Pearson's Correlation between variables*

	<b>Attitude</b>	<b>Trust</b>	<b>Emotion Anger</b>	<b>Emotion sympathy</b>	<b>Purchase Intention</b>
<b>Attitude</b>	1				
<b>Trust</b>	.61	1			
<b>Emotion anger</b>	-.45	-.46	1		
<b>Emotion sympathy</b>	-.001	.05	.22	1	
<b>Purchase intention</b>	.66	.68	-.48	-.67	1

Significant effect  $p < 0.01$

### 4.2 | Hypotheses pertaining to the main effects of communication technology, message source and crisis type

#### 4.2.1 | Communication technology

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) results show a multivariate effect of communication technology ( $F(5,191) = 9.23, p < .001$ ). The different use of communication technology has a significant effect on the four dependent variables trust, purchase intention, the emotion anger and attitude. Those who were confronted with a video message had higher levels of trust ( $M = 3.5, SD = .60$ ) and were more likely to purchase a product in future ( $M = 3.3, SD = .08$ )

than those who were confronted with a text message (trust:  $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = .06$ ; purchase intention:  $M = 2.67$ ,  $SD = .82$ ). Furthermore, anger was significantly lower for those respondents who were subjected to a video message ( $M = 2.79$ ,  $SD = .81$ ) than for those seeing a text message ( $M = 3.08$ ,  $SD = .82$ ). Finally, the attitude towards the company was more positive in the video condition ( $M = 3.52$ ,  $SD = .64$ ) than in the text condition ( $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = .07$ ). An overview of these results are presented in Table 7 and Table 8. There was no significant effect of communication technology on sympathy. Thus, hypothesis 1a, 1c, 1d, 1e and 1f are supported.

Table 7

*Means & standard deviations – Communication technology*

Dependent measures	Video			Text		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Attitude	103	3.52	.064	100	3.21	.065
Trust	103	3.53	.055	100	3.06	.056
Emotions anger	103	2.79	.081	100	3.08	.082
Emotions sympathy	103	2.82	.079	100	2.74	.080
Purchase intention	103	3.32	.081	100	2.67	.082

Table 8

*MANOVA effects – Communication technology*

Dependent measures	Sum of sq.	df	Mean sq.	F	Sig.
Attitude	4.96	1	4.96	11.69	.001
Trust	10.77	1	10.77	34.36	.000
Emotions anger	4.29	1	4.29	6.46	.012
Emotions sympathy	0.27	1	0.27	0.44	.506
Purchase intention	20.95	1	20.55	31.55	.000

#### 4.2.2 | Message source

ANOVA also reveal a multivariate effect of message source on almost all dependent variables ( $F(5,191) = 36.87$ ,  $p < .001$ ). The test shows that participants have higher levels of trust in a



company when the CEO communicates the crisis message ( $M = 3.81$ ,  $SD = .06$ ) than when a PR manager presents a crisis response ( $M = 2.78$ ,  $SD = .06$ ). Additionally, respondents tend to rate their intention to purchase from a company with a CEO as spokesperson ( $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .08$ ) higher than respondents assigned to a company with a PR manager as spokesperson ( $M = 2.55$ ,  $SD = .08$ ). The test also reveal that levels of anger are higher when only a PR manager communicates ( $M = 3.27$ ,  $SD = .08$ ) compared to a CEO ( $M = 2.56$ ,  $SD = .08$ ). Finally, respondent's attitude towards the company scored higher in a crisis in which a CEO addresses the crisis ( $M = 3.63$ ,  $SD = .06$ ) instead of a PR manager ( $M = 3.10$ ,  $SD = .07$ ). An overview of these results are shown in Table 9 and Table 10. Based on these results, hypothesis 2a, 2c, 2d, 2e and 2f are supported. As sympathy did not show any significant differences, hypothesis 2b is not strictly supported.

Table 9

*Means & standard deviations – message source*

<b>Dependent measures</b>	<b>CEO</b>			<b>PR</b>		
	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
<b>Attitude</b>	103	3.63	.064	100	3.10	.065
<b>Trust</b>	103	3.81	.055	100	2.78	.056
<b>Emotions anger</b>	103	2.56	.081	100	3.27	.082
<b>Emotions sympathy</b>	103	2.76	.079	100	2.81	.080
<b>Purchase intention</b>	103	3.40	.081	100	2.55	.082

Table 10

*MANOVA effects – Message source*

<b>Dependent measures</b>	<b>Sum of sq.</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Mean sq.</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
<b>Attitude</b>	14.64	1	14.64	34.50	.000
<b>Trust</b>	54.04	1	54.04	172.45	.000
<b>Emotions anger</b>	23.76	1	23.76	35.77	.000
<b>Emotions sympathy</b>	0.22	1	0.22	0.23	.560
<b>Purchase intention</b>	40.46	1	40.46	60.91	.000

### 4.2.3 | Crisis type

ANOVA results further indicate that the type of crisis has significant effects on three dependent variables ( $F(5,191) = 7.20, p < .001$ ). Regarding the variable trust, respondents have higher levels of trust in a situation when the company was facing a value-harm crisis ( $M = 3.42, SD = .06$ ) than those assigned to a scenario in which the company was involved in a product-harm crisis ( $M = 3.18, SD = .06$ ). Furthermore, participants had higher levels of emotional sympathy when the company was involved in a value-harm crisis ( $M = 3.06, SD = .08$ ) rather than a product-harm crisis ( $M = 2.5, SD = .08$ ). Finally, the score for purchase intention was significantly higher for those respondents who were assigned to a value-harm crisis ( $M = 3.13, SD = .08$ ) than those assigned to a product-harm crisis ( $M = 2.86, SD = .08$ ). The statistical results are shown in Table 11 and Table 12. Consequently, hypothesis 3 is not supported.

Table 11

*Means & standard deviations – Crisis type*

Dependent measures	Product-harm			Value-harm		
	N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Attitude	103	3.29	.064	100	3.44	.065
Trust	103	3.18	.055	100	3.42	.056
Emotions anger	103	2.96	.081	100	2.90	.082
Emotions sympathy	103	2.50	.079	100	3.06	.080
Purchase intention	103	2.86	.081	100	3.13	.082

Table 12

*MANOVA effects – Crisis type*

Dependent measures	Sum of sq.	df	Mean sq.	F	Sig.
Attitude	1.26	1	1.26	2.96	.087
Trust	2.91	1	2.91	9.30	.003
Emotions anger	0.17	1	0.17	0.26	.610
Emotions sympathy	16.21	1	16.21	25.16	.000
Purchase intention	3.80	1	3.80	5.72	.018

### 4.3 | Hypotheses pertaining to the interaction effects of communication technology, message source and crisis type

#### 4.3.1 | Message source X communication technology

ANOVA show significant interaction effects for message source and communication technology on trust ( $F(7,195) = 8.86, p < .01$ ), purchase intention ( $F(7,195) = 8.71, p < .01$ ) and attitude ( $F(7,195) = 10.62, p < .001$ ). Specifically, trust was higher when a CEO communicates using video message ( $M = 4.16, SD = .08$ ) compared to a text message ( $M = 3.47, SD = .08$ ). This is reflected in Figure 4.

Moreover, in both the video and text conditions, trust scores were significantly higher when the CEO communicates (video:  $M = 6.16, SD = .08$ ; text:  $M = 3.47, SD = .08$ ) compared to the PR manager (video:  $M = 2.89, SD = .08$ ;  $M = 2.67, SD = .08$ ). However, as a PR manager, results did not show any significant difference between the use of text or video and its effect on trust (text:  $M = 2.67, SD = .08$ ; video:  $M = 2.89, SD = .08$ ).

The score for purchase intention also appeared to be higher when a video is used as communication technology with a CEO communicating the message ( $M = 3.93, SD = .11$ ) compared to a video message in which the PR manager of the company delivers the message ( $M = 2.70, SD = .12$ ). This also applied for the textual condition, in which purchase intention was higher for those who were assigned to a press release in the name from the CEO ( $M = 2.95, SD = .12$ ) compared to a PR manager ( $M = 2.39, SD = .11$ ). These results are visualised in Figure 5.

Finally, ANOVA show a significant effect of message source and communication technology on attitude. As shown in Figure 6, within the video scenario, a CEO scored significantly higher on attitude ( $M = 3.94, SD = .09$ ) than a PR manager ( $M = 3.10, SD = .09$ ). Furthermore, a CEO using a video message ( $M = 3.94, SD = .09$ ) scores significantly higher on attitude than a CEO adjusting a text message ( $M = 3.33, SD = .09$ ). For the text scenario, a CEO created only a slightly higher attitude towards the company ( $M = 3.33, SD = .09$ ) compared to a PR manager delivering the written message ( $M = 3.09, SD = .09$ ). An overview of the results is presented in Table 13 and Table 14.

In consequence, hypothesis 4a, 4c, 4d and 4f are supported. As the interaction of communication technology and message source did not have an effect on the emotions anger and sympathy, hypothesis 4b and 4e are rejected.

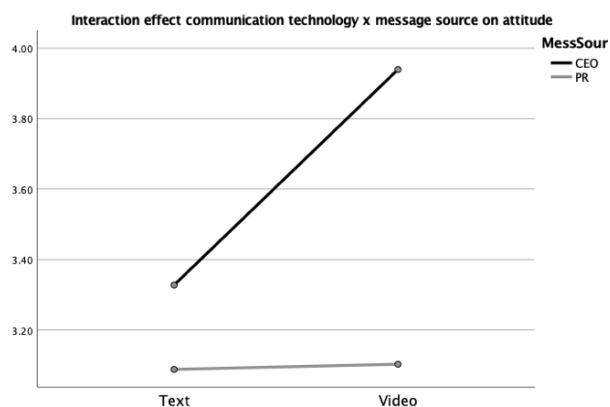


Figure 4: Interaction effect communication technology and message source on trust

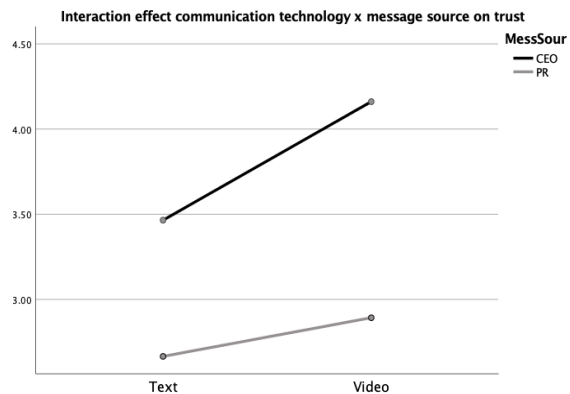


Figure 5: Interaction effect communication technology and message source on purchase intention

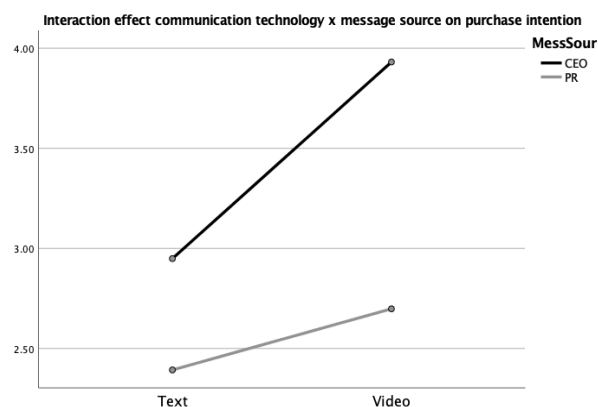


Figure 6: Interaction effect communication technology and message source on attitude

Table 13

Means & standard deviations – Message source and communication technology

Dependent measures		N	Text		N	Video	
			M	SD		M	SD
Attitude	CEO	100	3.33	.093	103	3.94	.089
	PR	100	3.09	.091	103	3.10	.093
Trust	CEO	100	3.47	.080	103	4.16	.076
	PR	100	2.67	.078	103	3.17	.080
Emotions anger	CEO	100	2.77	.116	103	2.40	.111
	PR	100	3.38	.114	103	3.17	.117
Emotions sympathy	CEO	100	2.67	.115	103	2.83	.110
	PR	100	2.82	.112	103	2.80	.115
Purchase	CEO	100	2.95	.116	103	3.93	.111
Intention	PR	100	2.34	.114	103	2.70	.117

Table 14:

MANOVA effects – Message source and communication technology

Dependent measures	Sum of sq.	df	Mean sq.	F	Sig.
<b>Attitude</b>	4.51	1	4.51	10.62	.001
<b>Trust</b>	2.78	1	2.78	8.86	.003
<b>Emotions anger</b>	0.32	1	0.32	0.49	.486
<b>Emotions sympathy</b>	0.43	1	0.43	0.63	.430
<b>Purchase Intention</b>	5.79	1	5.79	8.71	.004

#### 4.3.2 | Communication technology X crisis type

There was one significant interaction effect found for communication technology and crisis type on anger ( $F(7, 195) = 7.14, p < .01$ ). In particular, the score for the anger among the respondents was significantly higher in a value-harm crisis when a text is used ( $M = 3.2, SD = .12$ ) compared to a situation in which a video is used as communication technology ( $M = 2.6, SD = .11$ ). Contrary, there is no significant difference between a video ( $M = 2.97, SD = .11$ ) or text ( $M = 2.95, SD = .11$ ) being used in a product-harm crisis, as shown in Figure 4. An overview of the statistical results is shown in Table 15 and Table 16. Based on these results, hypothesis 7 is rejected. However, hypothesis 8e is supported.

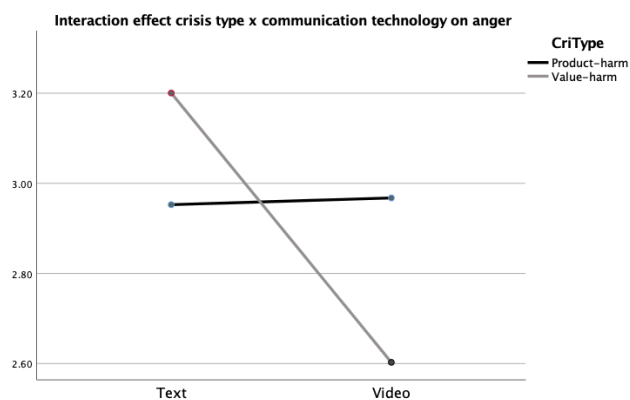


Figure 7: Interaction effect of crisis type and communication technology on anger

Table 15

*Means & standard deviations – Crisis type and communication technology*

Dependent measures		Product-harm			Value-harm		
		N	M	SD	N	M	SD
Attitude	Video	100	3.42	.091	103	3.62	.091
	Text	100	3.15	.091	103	3.27	.093
Trust	Video	100	3.40	.078	103	3.66	.078
	Text	100	2.96	.078	103	3.18	.080
Emotions anger	Video	100	2.97	.114	103	2.60	.114
	Text	100	32.96	.114	103	3.20	.116
Emotions sympathy	Video	100	2.55	.112	103	3.09	.112
	Text	100	2.45	.112	103	3.04	.115
Purchase	Video	100	3.18	.114	103	3.45	.114
Intention	Text	100	2.53	.114	103	2.81	.116

Table 16

*MANOVA effects – crisis type and communication technology*

Dependent measures	Sum of sq.	df	Mean sq.	F	Sig.
<b>Attitude</b>	0.74	1	0.074	0.17	.677
<b>Trust</b>	0.21	1	0.21	0.07	.795
<b>Emotions anger</b>	4.74	1	4.74	7.14	.008
<b>Emotions sympathy</b>	0.33	1	0.33	0.05	.822
<b>Purchase</b>	0.00	1	0.00	0.00	.986
<b>intention</b>					

#### 4.3.3 | Message source X crisis type

Furthermore, ANOVA results indicate that message source and crisis type have an interaction effect on trust ( $F(7, 195) = 32.57, p < .001$ ), sympathy ( $F(7, 195) = 6.87, p < .01$ ) and purchase intention ( $F(7, 195) = 5.40, p = .021$ ). Specifically, in a product-harm crisis, the trust score was significantly higher when a CEO delivers a message ( $M = 3.92, SD = .08$ ) compared to a PR manager ( $M = 2.43, SD = .08$ ). Within a value-harm crisis, the effect CEO versus PR was less significant, hence participants who were assigned to the CEO condition scored higher on trust

than those who were assigned to the PR condition (CEO:  $M = 3.71$ ,  $SD = .08$ ; PR:  $M = 3.1$ ,  $SD = .08$ ).

Moreover, ANOVA reveal that respondents tend to rate their intention to purchase products in future higher if a CEO delivers the message in both types of crisis (product-harm:  $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .11$ , value-harm:  $M = 3.44$ ,  $SD = .12$ ) rather than the PR manager of the company (product-harm:  $M = 2.28$ ,  $SD = .12$ ; value-harm:  $M = 2.82$ ,  $SD = .11$ ). Figure 8 and Figure 9 display these results.

Regarding the interaction effect on sympathy, ANOVA indicate that sympathy is higher in a value-harm crisis if the CEO communicates ( $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = .12$ ) compared to the PR spokesperson ( $M = 2.95$ ,  $SD = .12$ ). Figure 10 illustrates this finding. However, in a product related crisis, a PR manager creates a significantly stronger sense of sympathy among respondents ( $M = 2.68$ ,  $SD = .12$ ) compared to the CEO of the company ( $M = 2.32$ ,  $SD = .11$ ). A complete overview of the results is shown in Table 17 and Table 18. Based on these results, hypothesis 5 is partly supported, as hypotheses 5a and 5c are confirmed. Hypothesis 5b is rejected as a PR manager is creating significantly higher levels of sympathy in a product-harm crisis than a CEO. In consequence, hypothesis 6 is partly rejected, as a CEO does not create significant (positive) effects in both crisis types.

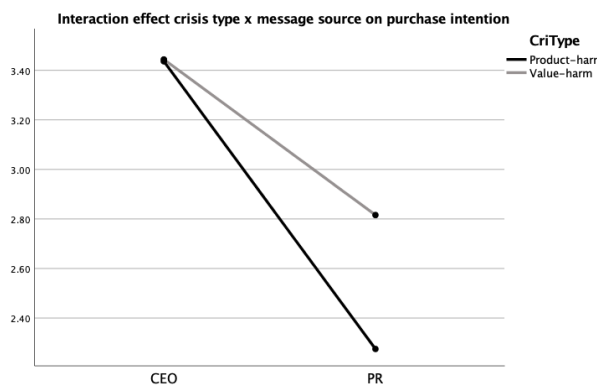


Figure 8: Interaction effect crisis type and message source on purchase intention

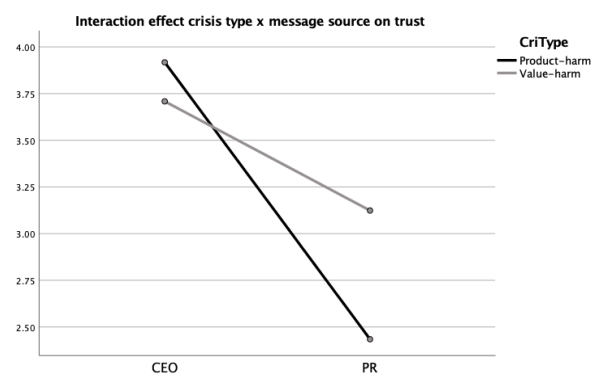


Figure 9: Interaction effect crisis type and message source on trust

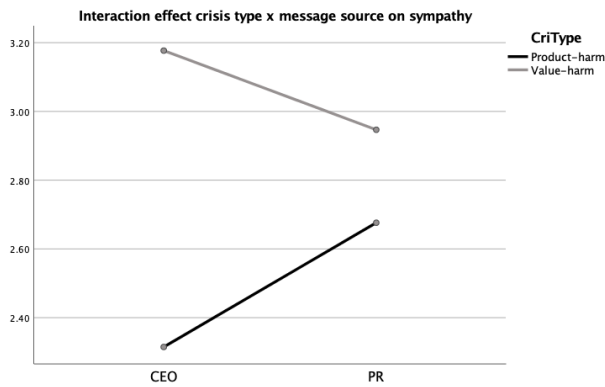


Figure 10: Interaction effect crisis type and message source on sympathy

Table 17

*Means & standard deviations – Message source and crisis type*

Dependent measures	Product-harm				Value-harm		
		N	M	SD	N	M	SD
<b>Attitude</b>	CEO	100	3.55	.089	103	3.72	.093
	PR	100	3.02	.093	103	3.17	.091
<b>Trust</b>	CEO	100	3.92	.076	103	3.71	.080
	PR	100	2.43	.080	103	3.12	.078
<b>Emotions anger</b>	CEO	100	2.50	.111	103	2.67	.116
	PR	100	3.42	.117	103	3.13	.114
<b>Emotions sympathy</b>	CEO	100	2.32	.110	103	3.18	.115
	PR	100	2.68	.115	103	2.95	.112
<b>Purchase</b>	CEO	100	3.44	.111	103	3.44	.116
<b>Intention</b>	PR	100	2.28	.117	103	2.82	.114

Table 18

*MANOVA effects – Message source and crisis type*

Dependent measures	Sum of sq.	df	Mean sq.	F	Sig.
<b>Attitude</b>	0.03	1	0.03	0.01	.935
<b>Trust</b>	10.21	1	10.21	35.72	.000
<b>Emotions anger</b>	2.67	1	2.67	4.02	.046
<b>Emotions sympathy</b>	4.42	1	4.42	6.87	.009
<b>Purchase</b>	3.59	1	3.59	5.40	.021
<b>intention</b>					



#### 4.3.4 | Communication technology X crisis type X message source

ANOVA results did not reveal any significant interaction effects for communication technology, crisis type and message source ( $F(1,195) = 1.08, p = .372$ ).

### 4.4 | Mediation analysis

#### 4.4.1 | Mediating role of trust

A mediation analysis was conducted using the Baron-Kenny approach, explaining mediational hypotheses as a causal model. All conditions were met, as this study showed a significant zero-order effect of the independent variable on the dependent variables. Through achieving this so-called “effect to be mediated”, a mediation analysis could be done (Preacher & Hayes, 2004, p. 719).

A multiple regression analysis for the relationship between trust and purchase intention, explained 46% of the variance in purchase intention ( $F(1, 202) = 175.57, p < .001$ ). Trust in the company was shown to be a significant predictor of purchase intention ( $\beta = .68, p < .001$ ). Based on these results, hypotheses 9 and 10 are supported.

Table 19

*Regression analysis for trust as predictor of purchase intention*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Intercept	.32	.21	
Trust	.81	.06	.06**
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.46		
<i>F</i>	175.57**		

\*dependent variable: purchase intention

\*\*  $p < .001$

#### 4.4.2 | Mediating role of emotions

A multiple regression analysis was conducted for both emotions anger and sympathy separately. Regarding the relationship sympathy and purchase intention, a multiple regression analysis did not show any significant predictor of purchase intention ( $F(1,205) = .91, p = .34$ ). Based on these findings, presented in Table 19, hypothesis 11 is not supported.

Table 20:

*Regression analysis for sympathy as predictor of purchase intention*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Intercept	3.23	.24	
Emotion sympathy	-.08	.08	-.07
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.004		
<i>F</i>	.91		

\*dependent variable: purchase intention

For the relationship anger and purchase intention, a multiple regression analysis show that anger explained 23% of the variance in purchase intention ( $F(1,204) = 61.42, p < .001$ ). Thus, the emotion anger indicated a significant negative relationship with purchase intention ( $\beta = -.48, p < .001$ ), as shown in Table 20. Consequently, hypothesis 12 is supported as a higher level of angers predicts a lower level of purchase intention.

Table 21

*Regression analysis for anger as negative predictor of purchase intention*

Variable	<i>B</i>	<i>SE B</i>	$\beta$
Intercept	4.57	.21	
Emotion anger	-.53	.07	-.48**
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>	.23		
<i>F</i>	61.42**		

\*dependent variable: purchase intention

\*\*  $p < .001$

## **5 | DISCUSSION OF RESULTS, IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **5.1 | Discussion of theoretical implications**

Organisations may face product- or value-related crises in which they have the option of adjusting different tools with the aim to reduce reputational damage. As effective leadership has the potential for an organisation and its stakeholders to rebuild trust, this study attached special focus on the role of leadership.

Therefore, the overall purpose of this study was to experimentally investigate to what extent message source, communication technology, and crisis type in crisis leadership have effects on consumer's trust in an organisation, emotions and behavioral intentions.

#### **5.1.1 | Communication technology**

The current study showed that the use of either a video or text message influences consumers' trust, attitude, purchase intention, and emotions. It was shown that using a video to deliver a crisis message makes customers more likely to trust a company and engage in future purchases. This finding is in line with previous studies (Lengel & Draft, 1988; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012; Entman, 1993; Hallahan, 1999; Coombs & Holladay, 2009). In contrast, the results from this study confirm that using a text message leads to higher levels of anger among respondents which lowers their purchase intention accordingly. Moreover, attitude towards a company has been shown to be more positive when a video was used compared to a text message. Thus, a company that communicates using innovative video messages, is deemed more trustworthy than when using purely text messages. This may be due to the fact that videos can deliver relational, nonverbal, and verbal cues as well as to create a 'face' to the message.

Additionally, it may also be possible that due to the young mean age of the participants enrolled in this study, respondents accepted video messages as more innovative and appropriate nowadays compared to standard text messages. The visual effect of the video message may then positively affect communicating complex and value-laden message within a crisis setting.

#### **5.1.2 | Message source**

This study also showed that the way consumers feel about an organisation's reputation is affected by the message source. An important implication is that using a CEO in crisis responses

serves as a useful tactic to increase levels of trustworthiness and positive attitude. Also, respondents are more likely to purchase products from a company that delivers its crisis message via the CEO rather than the PR manager. Those results confirm previous research findings in the field of message source effects, as those studies found that message source impacts consumer's trust and behavioural intentions (Stavrositu & Sundar, 2008; Sohn & Larscy, 2012; Kioussis & Dimitrova, 2006; Kim & Park, 2017). Specifically, previous studies have shown that CEOs are perceived as more trustworthy and credible than general PR managers. The results further strengthen the assumption by Straughan, Bleske and Zhao (1996) that a CEO is seen to be more interesting, informative and persuasive by consumers compared to a general spokesperson. This in turn might lead to persuasive behaviour change, such as a higher purchase intention.

Furthermore, this study supported Attribution Theory, stating that people attribute emotions such as anger to crisis situations (Arpan, 2002). It was shown that people strongly attribute anger to a PR manager communicating during a crisis. Consequently, also purchase intention has been proven to be lower when a PR manager functions as message source. This result could be set in line with the credibility of the message source. As the source's credibility strongly affects the acceptability of a message and arising emotions, it may be explained why a PR manager, seen as less trustworthy and credible, leads to stronger, negative emotions such as anger. This is also in line with a study by Boin, Hart, Stern and Sundelius (2005) who claim that effective leadership during a crisis may function to limit the depth and the duration of the crisis and negative effect such as anger which is an often-attributed emotion during crises.

### **5.1.3 | Crisis type**

It has been proven that people react differently when confronted with either a product-harm or value-harm crisis. For instance, trust in a company is significantly lower when the company is involved in a product-harm crisis than when it experiences a value-harm crisis. This is in line with what previous research has found, i.e. that customers have more negative emotions and attitudes in product-harm crisis as those crises could directly harm customers compared to moral-harm crises (Beldad, Laar, & Hegner, 2018). In contrast, participants have higher levels of sympathy when the company was involved in a value-harm crisis. This may be due to the fact that respondents perceived the company as ethically behaving correct and caring as the organisation reacted on the discriminative behavior of its employees.

In addition, this study measured a relatively high involvement in the value-laden crisis regarding discrimination. This makes people seem sensitive for discrimination and ethnicity issues. Consequently, a company that cares about avoiding discrimination on all organisational levels, creates more sympathy than a company facing and dealing with a product-harm crisis.

Interestingly, crisis type influences purchase intention in such a way that a product-harm crisis negatively impacts purchase intention. This finding is in line with the results of a study by Hegner et al. (2016). As previously noted, a product-harm directly places customers at risk and this might suffice to form customers' impression of the unsafe nature of the product, which would expectedly lower their inclination to purchase that product (Beldad, Laar, & Hegner, 2018). Furthermore, these results could be explained by the difference and severity of both crisis types, as a product-harm crisis often has more severe consequences compared to a value-harm crisis.

Summarised, the type of crisis a company is involved in seems important to consider as a product-harm crisis might require special attention and a different set of communication strategies (e.g., using video messages). As it has been proven in this study, negative emotions such as anger or lower levels of trust in a product-harm crisis might act as predictors for boycott participation which will damage an organisation's reputation drastically.

#### **5.1.4 | Interaction effect message source and communication technology**

By exploring the interaction effect between message source and communication technology, this study highlights that it matters which communication technologies are used, specifically by the CEO of an organisation. In particular, trust and purchase intention are higher when a CEO communicates using a video message compared to a text message. In addition, attitude has been shown to be more positive when a CEO delivers a message via a video than using a text message. These findings confirm results of previous studies. Liu, Austin and Yan Jin (2011) for example, emphasized the importance of strategically matching communication technologies and source when organisations respond to crises. As shown in this study, a video as well as a CEO may impact consumer's trust and behavioral intentions more positively than text messages or a PR spokesperson do. This may explain the effectivity of the tandem combination of CEO and video.

Furthermore, the results of this study cast a new light on the social presence of the CEO in a video which affect people's impression of a credible and trustworthy leader. This could draw a line to the fact that a CEO created only a slightly higher attitude towards the company compared to a PR manager in the textual message. Thus, the visible social presence given in a

video message results in a more favourable assessment of the organisation. This is in line with Coombs and Holladay's study (2009), claiming that the visual presentation of a crisis response by leaders produce more positive reactions and consequently leaders must make more use of that. On the contrary, as a PR manager, results did not show any difference between the use of text or video and its effect on the dependent variables. This could be due to the less significant role of a general spokesperson compared to the CEO of an organisation.

From these results it is clear that the significance of a well-chosen interaction of message source and communication technology seems important in successful crisis management as well as determining crisis communication strategies.

### **5.1.5 | Interaction effect communication technology and crisis type**

This study showed that only using a text message in a value-harm crisis resulted in higher levels of anger than adjusting a video. However, the interaction of communication technology and crisis type did not have any further effects on other dependent variables. Therefore, only the fact that using a video in a value-harm crisis can unload negative emotions like anger.

The importance of using a video in a value-harm crisis is, however, not in line with previous studies that pointed out that product-related crises seem to create higher crisis communication expectations by external stakeholders as product-harm crisis involves serious problems that could result in severe physical injuries (Laufer, Gillespie, McBride, & Gonyales, 2005). The difference in the results may be based on the assumption that the value-harm crisis could relate to current debates in Germany about discrimination of refugees. As the topic is still relevant in German society, people might be more sensitive about the discrimination of refugees. Therefore, it is discussable whether results would be different if the value-harm crisis would not relate to current issues being present in a society.

### **5.1.6 | Interaction effect message source and crisis type**

This analysis found evidence for seeing crisis communication as a tandem function, as the combination of message source and crisis type influences consumer's trust, sympathy and purchase intention. In both types of crisis, crisis communication by a CEO resulted in higher levels of public trust and purchase intention than when a PR manager delivered a respective crisis response message. However, in a value-harm crisis, the effect of a CEO or PR manager communicating is less strong. This may be reasoned by considering that a value-harm crisis can

be perceived as having less impact on stakeholders themselves which in turn might create less need to communicate via a remarkable source of a company such as the CEO.

The study further confirmed that the right combination of message source and crisis type can influence public sympathy positively. As was shown, especially in a value-harm crisis, a CEO as the crisis message source resulted in more public sympathy compared to a PR spokesperson communicating in a value-harm crisis. Interestingly, in a product related crisis, a PR manager creates a stronger sense of sympathy among respondents. The reason for this finding might be the less ethical or personal strength of the product crisis. Considering, that the value-harm crisis is more likely to touch consumer's feelings and emotions, the public would expect a CEO to step up who is able to use leadership communication tactics to increase sympathy for the organisation. On the other hand, a product-harm crisis might have more objective effects on consumers as they ask for more factual information. This could sufficiently be addressed by a PR manager and if well done, transferring sympathy to the entire organisation. However, as previous findings showed, a PR manager communicating in a product-harm crisis can result in very low scores for trust and purchase intention. This would imply that a CEO as spokesperson is generally more accepted by consumers than a PR manager in both types of crisis.

### **5.1.7 | Mediating role of trust**

Another notable finding from this study was that trust functions as a mediator for purchase intention. It was proven that higher scores of trust increase consumers' intention to purchase a product accordingly. This confirms findings from previous studies that showed that higher trust results in a higher degree of consumers' purchase intentions (e.g. Gefen & Straub, 2004; McCole & Palmer, 2001). Especially when a CEO of an organisation communicates, trust in the organisation has been shown to be high. In accordance, also purchase intention increased. Moreover, a video message makes customers more likely to trust a company and engage in future purchase consequently. This is an important finding for organisations as the interplay of the two variables trust and purchase intention influences the overall reputation and engagement with the company significantly. Support for these findings can be drawn from Huang (2001) and Ki and Hon (2007) who claim that trust generates supportive behavior such as purchase intention. This suggests that rebuilding trust among consumers should be acknowledged as a prioritised step in crisis communication by delivering crisis messages advantageously via a trustworthy CEO.

### **5.1.8 | Mediating role of emotions**

The results show that negative emotions like anger act a predictor for a lower purchase intention among consumers. As presented in this study, anger towards the organisation is higher when the organisation faces a value-harm crisis and adjusts text messages compared to video messages. Consequently, the negative emotions will mediate purchase intention in such a way that consumers are less likely to purchase products from the organisation in future. This lends support to a study by Wetzer, Zellenberg and Pieters (2007) who claim that anger predicts negative purchase intentions.

## **5.2 | Practical implications**

Based on the results of this study, companies should be very careful with communicating and formulating crisis responses. With regard to preventing reputational damage following a crisis, it is important to adjust appropriate communication techniques to different crisis situations while putting effort in trying to reduce anger among those affected.

Considering the innovative and technologically advanced media landscape, organisations should adjust their communication strategies towards the use of digital media. As was confirmed in this study, using video messages pays off in order to be seen as more trustworthy organisation.

In addition, organisations should acknowledge the importance of crisis leadership. As this study implies, in both types of crises a CEO as spokesperson is generally more accepted by consumers than a PR manager. In this way, trustworthiness and emotions can be influenced positively. However, using a CEO as message source is not always beneficial for companies. It strongly depends on the severity of the crisis. If the severity is not really significant, sending forward a PR manager may be the better option. This may be because a CEO has a more serious role and effect on consumers than a PR manager. For instance, if a CEO speaks up in a relatively harmless crisis, this could intensify and extend the severity of the crisis unnecessarily.

In addition, companies should be aware of the differences of crisis types and how to deal with the variety of consumers' emotions. As for example a text message intensifies feelings of anger in a value- harm crisis, organisations should choose media channels wisely. Organisations should then aim to strengthen feelings of sympathy by adjusting "richer" communication channels such as videos. In line with this finding, the current study showed that it matters which communication technology is adjusted by spokespeople, especially by the CEO



of an organisation. Based on the results, it is recommended that a CEO always uses a video to deliver a message. The strategic match of communication technology and message source shifted to a must-do in nowadays business communication environment as it can reduce the reputational threat that a company is facing in times of a crisis.

With regard to different crisis types, there is a difference in effects when using different communication channels. Like previously noted, negative emotions like anger can act as a predictor for lower purchase intention. Thus, organisations should continuously strive to reduce anger to prevent customers boycotting the organisation.

Based on the practical implications derived from the study's results, the importance and significance of visible leadership during times of crises is underlined. The role of a leading CEO has more positive influence on consumers compared to a general spokesperson. Combined with the visible and authentic presentation of a CEO in a video, organisations may benefit from less reputational damage and are more likely to rebuild trust, resulting in a higher chance for future purchases.

### **5.3 | Limitations and future research directions**

This study has strengthened the theoretical basis for crisis communication and provides more insight in how organisations effectively communicate in times of crises. Results of this research have significant implications for researchers but also some limitations that could serve as a starting point for future research endeavours.

As first limitation, including only German participants in this study potentially limits the generalizability of the findings. Therefore, subsequent research on the variables examined in this study should consider the collection of data from individuals from other cultural groups as well. It is important to note that culture affects responses due to different norms and values of people (Stephens, Malone & Bailey, 2005).

A second limitation refers to the high educational level of the participants. As educational level gives an indication of cognitive abilities and skills (Wiersema & Bantel, 1992), this might influence information processing. In addition, the mean age was relatively young. Thus, both the educational levels and ages of the participants leads to overrepresentation of certain characteristics within this study sample. Despite the fact that the variety of the age was chosen well, the overrepresentation of demographic attributes makes it difficult to generalize it as a representative sample of the population. A different sample method could therefore be useful for future research.

As a third limitation, the fact that this study used a fictional organisation and crisis scenario might have an influence on the participant's response. For example, it is possible that respondents had difficulties with rating the trustworthiness, purchase intention or emotions regarding the organisation as there was no real experience with the company. Hence, a fictional organisation has the advantage that results will not be biased by previous experiences (Wonink, 2017). Also, the low values for attitude might be indicative of the likelihood that participants knew of the non-existence of the organisation used for the scenarios. In consequence, future research should include other types of products or companies. Finally, as the severity of a crisis might influence the effects on the dependent variables this aspect should therefore be varied and looked upon in future research.

## **6 | CONCLUSION**

Linking leadership and crisis management is essential for organisations. The findings of this study substantially support that crisis leadership is crucial in managing a crisis of an organisation. This is because, despite the damage that is caused by a crisis, effective leadership with the correct adjustment of communication tools has the potential for an organisation and its stakeholder to rebuild trust and confidence. The role of public leaders and their responsibility seem important and have a fulfilling symbolic need for direction and guidance. Leaders are expected to provide an authentic hope and confidence, best practiced in a visible video message. Especially, in the context of a product-harm crisis, video messages would result in less reputational damage. This may strongly depend on the severity of a crisis. Therefore, crisis communication should always be considered in a holistic approach, in which different tools and strategies should individually be combined depending on the specific organisational situation. Finally, this paper identified that adjusting innovative video messages and using a CEO as spokesperson clearly benefits an organisation's reputation during a crisis and its aftermath.

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## 8| Appendix:

### Appendix 1

Stimulus material– scenario 1 (crisis type: value-harm; message source: CEO; communication technology: text)

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## Diskriminierende Sprachaufnahmen bei Puria+

Auf der gestrigen Pressekonferenz gab CEO Bruno Schmidt bekannt, dass in Puria+ 1,5% Milch Produkten Escherichia- coli- Keime nachgewiesen worden sind. Im Folgenden nimmt CEO Bruno Schmidt persönlich Stellung:

*„Ich bin Bruno Schmidt, Geschäftsführer von Puria+. Qualität und Frische haben bei uns oberste Priorität. Leider sind wir bei einigen Produkten unseren hohen Standards nicht gerecht geworden. So haben wir während unserer intensiven Kontrollen Bakterien E.coli festgestellt. Diese gelten als Lebensmittelinfektionserreger und können bereits in geringen Mengen Erkrankungen und Entzündungen verursachen. Die Produkte führten bei zahlreichen Kunden zu Beschwerden wie Durchfall und Erbrechen, sowie Darmentzündungen und einem nachgewiesenen Kindestodesfall.*

*Ich bedauere zutiefst, dass ich das Vertrauen meinen Kunden enttäuscht habe und werde alles in Bewegung setzen, um den Fall aufzuklären. Infizierte Produkte wurden umgänglich aus dem Verkauf genommen. Bei Puria+ stehen eine einwandfreie Qualität der Produkte und die Sicherheit der Verbraucher an erster Stelle. Um dies zu gewährleisten und unter Berücksichtigung größtmöglicher Transparenz, habe ich den Rückruf umgesetzt.*

*Sollten Sie unter Symptomen wie Durchfall, Übelkeit und Erbrechen leiden wird empfohlen unmittelbar einen Arzt aufzusuchen. Ferner bitte ich Sie das Unternehmen Puria+ zu informieren. Sie sollten keinesfalls die Milch trinken und können Produkte zurück in den Markt bringen. Das Geld wird Ihnen ohne Kassenbeleg zurückerstattet.*

*Für die Zukunft versichere ich, dass wir die Kontrollverfahren unserer Produkte nochmals verstärken und verschärfen werden. Hierfür wird auch ab heute Marie Burg die Verantwortung übernehmen und intensive Kontrollen innovativ verbessern.“*

*B. Schmidt*

Stimulus material – scenario 2 (crisis type: value-harm; message source: PR manager; communication technology: text)

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## Diskriminierende Sprachaufnahmen bei Puria+

Auf der gestrigen Pressekonferenz bekannte sich CEO Bruno Schmidt zu den rassistischen Sprachaufnahmen, die vergangene Woche über soziale Medien verbreitet wurden. Die Sprachaufnahmen wurden nach einer Versammlung im März aufgenommen und weisen klare Hinweise auf Diskriminierung auf. Ein Mitarbeiter bezeichnet dabei neue, syrische Arbeitskräfte mit massiven, rassistischen Anfeindungen. Ein weiterer Mitarbeiter machte klare Andeutungen, dass "Geflüchtete das Unternehmen in den Dreck ziehen".

*„Ich bin Bruno Schmidt, Geschäftsführer von Puria+. Soziale und ethische Werte haben bei uns oberste Priorität. Leider haben einige unserer Mitarbeiter diese Werte nicht so gelebt, wie ich persönlich und das Unternehmen die Werte streben zu leben. Dadurch sind rassistische Sprachaufnahmen entstanden, die vergangene Woche über soziale Medien verbreitet wurden. Diese Sprachaufnahmen wurden nach einer Versammlung im März aufgenommen und weisen klare Hinweise auf Diskriminierung auf. Ein Mitarbeiter bezeichnet dabei neue, syrische Arbeitskräfte mit massiven, rassistischen Anfeindungen. Ein weiterer Mitarbeiter machte klare Andeutungen, dass "Geflüchtete das Unternehmen in den Dreck ziehen".*

*Ich nehme diese Angelegenheit sehr ernst und habe bereits ein Untersuchungsverfahren in der besagten Produktionsstätte veranlasst. Ich möchte mich bei unseren Mitarbeiterinnen und Mitarbeitern, die zu Recht von diesen Aussagen verletzt wurden, entschuldigen... und bei den Menschen in ganz Deutschland und anderswo auf der ganzen Welt. Denn Diskriminierung wird in keiner Weise bei Puria+ geduldet und bringt Konsequenzen mit sich. So wurden die beiden Mitarbeiter fristlos gekündigt.*

*Als Geschäftsführer von Puria+ versichere ich, dass es in Zukunft eine Hotline geben wird, um rassistische Kommentare anonym melden zu können. Außerdem verspreche ich, dass Marie Burg zukünftig die Inklusions- und Fairness Politik des Unternehmens steuern und sich dabei intensiv auf interkulturelle Programme des Unternehmens fokussieren wird.“*

*B. Schmidt*

Stimulus material – scenario 3 (crisis type: product-harm; message source: PR manager; communication technology: text)

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## Bacteria E.coli in Milchprodukten gefunden

Auf der gestrigen Pressekonferenz gab Pressesprecher Dirk Martsen bekannt, dass in Puria+ 1,5% Milchprodukten Escherichia- coli- Keime nachgewiesen worden sind. Im Folgenden nimmt das Unternehmen Stellung:

*„Ich bin Dirk Martsen, Pressesprecher von Puria+. Qualität und Frische haben bei uns oberste Priorität. Leider sind wir bei einigen Produkten unseren hohen Standards nicht gerecht geworden. So haben wir während unserer intensiven Kontrollen Bakterien E.coli festgestellt. Diese gelten als Lebensmittelinfektionserreger und können bereits in geringen Mengen Erkrankungen und Entzündungen verursachen. Die Produkte führten bei zahlreichen Kunden zu Beschwerden wie Durchfall und Erbrechen, sowie Darmentzündungen und einem nachgewiesenen Kindestodesfall.*

*Wir, Puria+, bedauern zutiefst das Vertrauen unserer Kunden enttäuscht zu haben und werden alles in Bewegung setzen, um den Fall aufzuklären. Infizierte Produkte wurden umgänglich aus dem Verkauf genommen. Bei Puria+ stehen eine einwandfreie Qualität der Produkte und die Sicherheit der Verbraucher an erster Stelle. Um dies zu gewährleisten und unter Berücksichtigung größtmöglicher Transparenz, hat Puria+ den Rückruf umgesetzt.*

*Sollten Sie unter Symptomen wie Durchfall, Übelkeit und Erbrechen leiden, wird empfohlen unmittelbar einen Arzt aufzusuchen. Ferner werden Sie gebeten, das Unternehmen Puria+ zu informieren. Sie sollten keinesfalls die Milch trinken und können Produkte zurück in den Markt bringen. Das Geld wird Ihnen ohne Kassenbeleg zurückerstattet.*

*Für die Zukunft wird versichert, dass die Kontrollverfahren der Produkte nochmals verstärkt und verschärft werden. Hierfür wird auch ab heute Marie Burg die Verantwortung übernehmen und intensive Kontrollen innovativ verbessern.“*

*D. Martsen*

Stimulus material – scenario 4 (crisis type: product-harm; message source: CEO; communication technology: text)

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## Bacteria E.coli in Milchprodukten gefunden

Auf der gestrigen Pressekonferenz gab CEO Bruno Schmidt bekannt, dass in Puria+ 1,5% Milch Produkten Escherichia- coli- Keime nachgewiesen worden sind. Im Folgenden nimmt CEO Bruno Schmidt persönlich Stellung:

*„Ich bin Bruno Schmidt, Geschäftsführer von Puria+. Qualität und Frische haben bei uns oberste Priorität. Leider sind wir bei einigen Produkten unseren hohen Standards nicht gerecht geworden. So haben wir während unserer intensiven Kontrollen Bakterien E.coli festgestellt. Diese gelten als Lebensmittelinfektionserreger und können bereits in geringen Mengen Erkrankungen und Entzündungen verursachen. Die Produkte führten bei zahlreichen Kunden zu Beschwerden wie Durchfall und Erbrechen, sowie Darmentzündungen und einem nachgewiesenen Kindestodesfall.*

*Ich bedauere zutiefst, dass ich das Vertrauen meinen Kunden enttäuscht habe und werde alles in Bewegung setzten, um den Fall aufzuklären. Infizierte Produkte wurden umgänglich aus dem Verkauf genommen. Bei Puria+ stehen eine einwandfreie Qualität der Produkte und die Sicherheit der Verbraucher an erster Stelle. Um dies zu gewährleisten und unter Berücksichtigung größtmöglicher Transparenz, habe ich den Rückruf umgesetzt.*

*Sollten Sie unter Symptomen wie Durchfall, Übelkeit und Erbrechen leiden wird empfohlen unmittelbar einen Arzt aufzusuchen. Ferner bitte ich Sie das Unternehmen Puria+ zu informieren. Sie sollten keinesfalls die Milch trinken und können Produkte zurück in den Markt bringen. Das Geld wird Ihnen ohne Kassenbeleg zurückerstattet.*

*Für die Zukunft versichere ich, dass wir die Kontrollverfahren unserer Produkte nochmals verstärken und verschärfen werden. Hierfür wird auch ab heute Marie Burg die Verantwortung übernehmen und intensive Kontrollen innovativ verbessern.“*

*B. Schmidt*



*Stimulus material – videos*

*Note: The stimulus material for the videos can be found on the attached flash drive. However, the following two screenshots give an impression of the video material.*

Stimulus material - scenario: PR manager video



Stimulus material - scenario: CEO video



## Appendix 2

### Questionnaire German

#### Default Question Block

Liebe/r Teilnehmer/in,

zu allererst möchte ich mich für Ihre Bereitschaft, den anliegenden Fragebogen auszufüllen, herzlich bedanken. Der Fragebogen bezieht sich auf ein Experiment, das ich im Rahmen meines Masterstudiums *Organizational Communication and Reputation* an der Universität Twente durchführe und das die Unternehmenskommunikation erforscht.

Das Ausfüllen des Fragebogens wird circa 10 Minuten dauern. Zunächst werden Sie gebeten, einige persönliche Angaben zu machen. Daraufhin bitte ich Sie, die präsentierten Nachrichten aufmerksam anzuschauen und die Fragen so gut wie möglich zu beantworten.

Die Erfassung und Verarbeitung der Ergebnisse erfolgen anonym und in vertraulicher Weise. Das bedeutet, dass die Ergebnisse nur zum Zwecke dieser Forschung verwendet werden.

Ich danke Ihnen sehr für Ihre Teilnahme.

Für Rückfragen stehe ich Ihnen gerne zur Verfügung.

Lara Carolina von Rosenstiel,  
University of Twente

#### Block 1

Alter



Geschlecht

- ☐ Weiblich
- ☐ Männlich

Nationalität

Höchster Bildungsabschluss

- ☐ Kein Schulabschluss
- ☐ Grund-/ Hauptschulabschluss
- ☐ Realschule (Mittlere Reife)
- ☐ Gymnasium (Abitur)
- ☐ Abgeschlossene Ausbildung
- ☐ Fachhochschulabschluss
- ☐ Bachelor
- ☐ Master
- ☐ Diplom
- ☐ Promotion

In welchem Bundesland leben Sie?

- ☐ Baden-Württemberg
- ☐ Bayern
- ☐ Berlin
- ☐ Brandenburg
- ☐ Bremen
- ☐ Hamburg
- ☐ Hessen
- ☐ Mecklenburg-Vorpommern
- ☐ Niedersachsen
- ☐ Nordrhein-Westfalen
- ☐ Rheinland-Pfalz

- ☐ Saarland
- ☐ Sachsen
- ☐ Sachsen-Anhalt
- ☐ Schleswig-Holstein
- ☐ Thüringen

Bitte beantworten Sie die folgenden Fragen:

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
Milchprodukte sind ein wichtiger Bestandteil meiner Ernährung.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich benutze Facebook regelmäßig.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich könnte nicht auf Facebook verzichten.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich könnte nicht auf Milchprodukte verzichten.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich glaube daran, dass Menschen nicht auf Basis ihrer Ethnizität diskriminiert werden sollten.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin politisch interessiert.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich denke, dass jede Form von Diskriminierung vermieden werden sollte.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin eine Person, die jegliche Art von Diskriminierung ablehnt.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich Sorge mich um unsere Umwelt.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Sie sehen nun eine Pressemitteilung. Studieren Sie diese aufmerksam und beantworten Sie bitte die darauffolgenden Fragen.



## Bacteria E.coli in Milchprodukten gefunden

Auf der gestrigen Pressekonferenz gab CEO Bruno Schmidt bekannt, dass in Puria+ 1,5% Milch Produkten Escherichia- coli- Keime nachgewiesen worden sind. Im Folgenden nimmt CEO Bruno Schmidt persönlich Stellung:

*„Ich bin Bruno Schmidt, Geschäftsführer von Puria+. Qualität und Frische haben bei uns oberste Priorität. Leider sind wir bei einigen Produkten unseren hohen Standards nicht gerecht geworden. So haben wir während unserer intensiven Kontrollen Bakterien E.coli festgestellt. Diese gelten als Lebensmittelinfektionserreger und können bereits in geringen Mengen Erkrankungen und Entzündungen verursachen. Die Produkte führten bei zahlreichen Kunden zu Beschwerden wie Durchfall und Erbrechen, sowie Darmentzündungen und einem nachgewiesenen Kindestodesfall.“*

*Ich bedauere zutiefst, dass ich das Vertrauen meinen Kunden enttäuscht habe und werde alles in Bewegung setzen, um den Fall aufzuklären. Infizierte Produkte wurden umgänglich aus dem Verkauf genommen. Bei Puria+ stehen eine einwandfreie Qualität der Produkte und die Sicherheit der Verbraucher an erster Stelle. Um dies zu gewährleisten und unter Berücksichtigung größtmöglicher Transparenz, habe ich den Rückruf umgesetzt.*

*Sollten Sie unter Symptomen wie Durchfall, Übelkeit und Erbrechen leiden wird empfohlen unmittelbar einen Arzt aufzusuchen. Ferner bitte ich Sie das Unternehmen Puria+ zu informieren. Sie sollten keinesfalls die Milch trinken und können Produkte zurück in den Markt bringen. Das Geld wird Ihnen ohne Kassenbeleg zurückerstattet.*

*Für die Zukunft versichere ich, dass wir die Kontrollverfahren unserer Produkte nochmals verstärken und verschärfen werden. Hierfür wird auch ab heute Marie Burg die Verantwortung übernehmen und intensive Kontrollen innovativ verbessern.“*

*B. Schmidt*

Nachdem Sie die Nachricht gesehen haben, auf welche Art und Weise wurde die Nachricht publiziert?

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
Die Nachricht wird in einem Video publiziert.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Die Nachricht wird in einem Text publiziert.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Die Nachricht wird mündlich präsentiert.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Die Nachricht wird schriftlich präsentiert.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Nachdem Sie die Nachricht gesehen haben, wer hat die Nachricht kommuniziert?

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
Die Reaktion auf die Krise kam von dem Geschäftsführer des Unternehmens.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Die Reaktion auf die Krise kam von dem Pressesprecher des Unternehmens.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Der Geschäftsführer des Unternehmens nahm Stellung zur Krise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Der Pressesprecher des Unternehmens nahm Stellung zur Krise.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Nachdem Sie die Nachricht gesehen haben, worum handelt sich bei der Krise des Unternehmens?

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
Die Krise hängt mit der Qualität eines Produktes des Unternehmens zusammen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Der Krise wurde durch Diskriminierung hervorgerufen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Die Krise betrifft ein infiziertes Milchprodukt.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Die Krise betrifft das Verletzen der Menschenwürde.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Nachdem Sie die Nachricht gesehen haben, wie schätzen Sie das Unternehmen ein?

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
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	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
Puria+ ist in der Lage die Krise zu bewältigen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Puria+ weiß, was nun getan werden muss.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin zuversichtlich, dass Puria+ richtig in der Krise handeln wird.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Das Management von Puria+ ist gut qualifiziert.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Das Unternehmen ist vertrauenswürdig.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Das Unternehmen sorgt sich um ihre Kunden.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Nachdem Sie die Nachricht gesehen haben, was fühlen Sie?

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
Ich bin sauer.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin verärgert.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin empört.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich fühle Mitleid.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin traurig.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich habe Mitgefühl.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Nachdem Sie die Nachricht gesehen haben, wie würden Sie weitere Einkäufe bei Puria+ einschätzen?

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
Ich werde in Zukunft Puria+ Produkte kaufen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
Ich würde Produkte von Puria+ kaufen, wenn ich in Zukunft die Chance dazu habe.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich erwarte, dass ich in Zukunft Produkte von Puria+ kaufen werde.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Die Wahrscheinlichkeit, dass ich in Zukunft ein Produkt von Puria+ kaufen werde, ist hoch.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Nachdem Sie die Nachricht gesehen haben, was würden Sie anderen über Puria+ erzählen?

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
Ich werde Puria+ an Freunde weiterempfehlen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich werde gut über Puria+ sprechen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich wäre stolz darauf, Anderen sagen zu können, dass ich Kunde von Puria+ bin.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich empfehle anderen Leuten, Produkte von Puria+ zu kaufen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich berichte Anderen überwiegend Positives über Puria+.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Nachdem Sie die Nachricht gesehen haben, was denken Sie im Allgemeinen über Puria+?

	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
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	Stimme überhaupt nicht zu	Stimme nicht zu	Teils/Teils	Stimme zu	Stimme völlig zu
Puria+ weiß viel über ihre Produkte.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Puria+ verfügt über Fachwissen, das sicherstellt, dass die Arbeit ordnungsgemäß ausgeführt wird.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Puria+ ist besorgt um das Wohlbefinden seiner Kunden und Mitarbeiter.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meine Bedürfnisse sind Puria+ wichtig.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Puria+ tut alles, um mir keinen Schaden zuzufügen.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Puria+ beachtet wirklich, was mir wichtig ist.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin davon überzeugt, dass Puria+ sich an ihre Worte hält.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin mir sicher, dass sich Puria+“s Handeln nach wichtigen Werten orientiert.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Puria+ gibt nicht ihr Bestes, um andere fair zu behandeln.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Puria+ hat versagt.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Meine Gedanken über Puria+ sind positiv.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich lehne Puria+ ab.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Ich bin bereit, Puria+ zu vergeben.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

## Block 2

Vielen Dank für Ihre Teilnahme!

### *Appendix 3*

#### Translation questionnaire English

Dear participant,

First of all, I would like to thank you for filling in the attached questionnaire.

The questionnaire refers to an experiment that I am conducting as part of my master program in Organisational Communication and Reputation at the University of Twente and which explores the reactions of companies to a crisis.

The aim of the experiment is to find out how companies react best when faced with a crisis. Completing the questionnaire will take about 10 minutes. First, you will be asked to provide some personal information. Then, I ask you to look attentively at the news presented and to answer the questions as well as possible.

The collection and processing of results is anonymous and confidential. This means that the results are used only for the purpose of this research.

Thank you very much for your participation.

For further information, you can always contact me.

Lara Carolina von Rosenstiel  
University of Twente

#### Demographic questions

1. Age
2. Gender
3. Nationality
4. Highest educational level
5. In which federal state of Germany do you live?

#### Lifestyle questions/ Product involvement



1. Milk products are an important part of my diet
2. I use Facebook regularly
3. I consume milk regularly
4. I could not imagine myself not consuming any milk product
5. I am regular Facebook user
  
6. I believe people should not be discriminated based on their ethnicity or race
7. I believe that any form of discrimination should be avoided
8. I am interested in politics
9. I see myself as somebody who opposes all forms of discrimination
10. I care about the environment

#### Note

Now, you are going to see a press release. Please study it carefully and answer the following questions.

#### Manipulation check questions (True/ False questions)

##### *CEO vs. PR*

1. The crisis response comes from the company's CEO.
2. The crisis response comes from the company's PR manager.
3. The CEO gave a statement about the crisis.
4. The PR manager gave a statement about the crisis.

##### *Product-harm vs. Value-harm*

1. The crisis involves a defective product.
2. The crisis involves discrimination.
3. The crisis concerns an infected milk product.
4. The crisis concerns violation of human dignity.

### *Video vs. text*

1. The message is given through a video channel.
2. The message is given through a printed channel.
3. The message is purely textual.
4. The message is purely spoken.

### Final evaluation questions (5-Point Likert scale)

#### *Trust*

1. Puria+ is able to handle the crisis.
2. Puria+ knows what they need to do.
3. I am confident that Puria+ will act right in the crisis.
4. The management of Puria+ is well qualified.
5. The company is trustworthy.
6. The company cares about their customers.

#### *Emotions*

1. I am angry
2. I am upset
3. I am outraged
4. I feel empathy
5. I am sad
6. I feel compassion

#### *Purchase behavior*

1. In future, I will buy Puria+ products.
2. I would buy Puria+ products, if I have the chance to.
3. I am expecting to buy Puria+ products in future.
4. The possibility of buying products from Puria+ is high.

*e-WOM (has been excluded from the study)*

1. I will recommend Puria+ to friends.
2. I will talk positively about Puria+.
3. I would be proud to tell others that I am a Puria+ client.
4. I will recommend others buying products from Puria+.
5. I will mainly tell positive things about Puria+ to others.
6. I will mainly tell negative things about Puria+ to others.
7. I will not recommend others to buy Puria+ products.

*Attitude*

1. Puria+ knows a lot about their products.
2. Puria + has expertise that ensures that the work is done properly.
3. Puria + is concerned about the wellbeing of its customers and employees.
4. My needs are important to Puria+.
5. Puria+ does everything to not cause any harm to me.
6. Puria+ is really paying attention to what's important to me.
7. I am convinced that Puria+ lives up to its words.
8. I am sure that Puria+'s actions are guided by important values.
9. Puria+ is not trying its best to treat others fairly.
10. Puria+ has failed.
11. My thoughts about Puria+ are positive.
12. I refuse Puria+.
13. I would forgive Puria+.

## 9| **Statutory Declaration**

I declare that I have authored this Master thesis independently, that I have not used other than the declared sources/resources, and that I have explicitly marked all material which has been quoted either literally or by content from the used sources.

Place, Date

Signature