

A different glance.

The effects of facial expressions and text framing on reputation and message transportation in a fashion crisis response.

BSc Communication Science

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Abstract

INTRODUCTION: Fashion industries have been branded as damaging to the environment and suspected of greenwashing which causes a crisis for the fashion companies. A crisis that has a serious impact and requests for proper crisis communication. The European Union is responsible for regulations surrounding these industries and therefore is chosen to be the source of communication about this crisis. Besides creating a well-perceived reputation, it is crucial for such a crisis message to be received well by the public. Therefore, besides perceived reputation, the awareness around the issue and how the receiver can transport themselves in the message is tested in this research.

PURPOSE: Crisis communication has several facets and can be differently used in various situations. The framing of the message holds meaning and can cause the crisis to be differently evaluated. Additionally, non-verbal communication might impact how a message is received. Therefore, this research examines the effects of facial expressions and text framing on how the crisis message is evaluated. The impact on perceived reputation, issue awareness and message transportation are tested to better understand how the European Union can communicate about a crisis in the fashion industry.

METHOD: By using a 2 (rational/emotional) by 2 (neutral/excited) design, the effects of the four differently manipulated press releases were tested in an online experiment. The press releases of the European Union were evaluated by items on a 7-point Likert scale. The sample consisted of 124 valid cases that mostly consisted of students with varying nationalities. By performing a MANCOVA analysis, the variables were tested and the covariate effect of the level of environmental conscious was considered.

RESULTS: Results show a significant effect of text framing on issue awareness and the level of environmentally consciousness showed a significant impact on the message transportation. The mean score for a rational text together with a neutral facial expression was higher than an emotional text with an excited facial expression.

CONCLUSION: A rational text combined with a neutral facial expression created higher issue awareness among the respondents. Furthermore, a person who is environmentally conscious can better transport themselves into a message. These results can advise the European Union on how it can best communicate a message regarding a crisis within the fashion industry.

Keywords: facial expressions, text framing, perceived reputation, issue awareness, message transportation, crisis communication

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1. Introduction

In the modern world, sustainability and acting environmentally friendly are supposedly perceived as the standard. Several organizations are choosing more sustainable production processes; items are required to be recyclable; materials are expected to be sustainably sourced; waste is being reduced; and nature is safeguarded. Yet, many grand industries are still responsible for heaps of greenhouse gas emissions. One of the leading industries responsible for pollution in the world is the fashion industry. According to The Guardian (2022), the fashion industry is currently responsible for 8% of the greenhouse gas emissions in the world. As demonstrated by the World Resources Institute (2021), the environmental footprint will increase by 60% before 2030.

Besides the negative environmental impact of the industry, human safety during production processes have also not been positive. The disastrous collapse of the Rana Plaza in 2013 - a garment manufacturer that multiple fashion brands (such as Walmart & Zara) source their materials from, had a huge impact on the industry. More than 1000 lives were lost, and another 1000 people were injured. Due to this event, more than 200 fashion brands joined a pact to prevent anything like this from happening again (Kent, 2023). Though these arrangements have been in action for years, not all garment manufacturers perform accordingly. Even after having certain legislations and policies in order, the impact does not seem to change. However, fashion brands do claim to be ethically friendly and sustainable, even though they are not devoted to the rules. Multiple fast-fashion brands such as H&M, Zara, and Uniqlo have been claimed to be greenwashing (Igina, 2022). Greenwashing means that an organization wrongly promotes its efforts of being more environmentally friendly than the organization is (Becker-Olsen & Potucek, 2013). According to Kent (2023) multiple textile factories still show forms of labor abuse. It seems that the existing policies are not demanding enough for the fashion industry to comply with the rules. Likewise, Pucker (2022) emphasizes the need for new regulations to prevent brands from misusing terms such as “sustainable” and “circular” in their advertising.

Accordingly, communication plays a huge role in transmitting the right information about regulations to the industry as well as its consumers. The European Union is responsible for defining general policies and guidelines. Correspondingly, the European Union has established certain policies to regulate when businesses can claim to be “ethical” or “sustainable” (European Union, 2021). However, it seems that even when multiple fashion industries experience accusations that cause crises, yet they continue to work and succeed in having consumers. Herewith, questions arise regarding the crisis communication within the

fashion industry. The public requests more legislation and further enforcement of these rules. Alongside the importance of good communication regarding informing the public, it is also crucial that the public understands the impact of the crisis and can transport themselves in the situation. To encourage the highest results in how a crisis response is received, communication specialists should consider the best ways to transfer information regarding these issues. To repair the reputation or reduce any negative associations towards an organization, a crisis response strategy is used (Coombs, 2007). Due to the already established relation people might have to the fashion brands that are accused of greenwashing (H&M, Zara, Uniqlo), an experiment with a fictional crisis response from any of these brands might give biased results. Additionally, this research aims to examine the effects of the message rather than the reputation of the company itself. Therefore, this research conducts an experiment in which the European Union makes a fictitious statement regarding the crises in the fashion industry. By analyzing the perceived reputation, issue awareness and message transportation, it is analyzed how the European Union can best send a message regarding a crisis in the fashion industry.

Previous research has prominently focused on analyzing the effects of emotionally loaded messages or non-verbal cues in crisis communication. However, these studies were performed in a situation in which the responsible organization also responded to the crisis. People create an opinion towards the organization based on how much responsibility the organization holds (Coombs, 2013). However, there is a need for knowing the interaction effect between non-verbal communication and the text framing, to better understand how messages should be sent by organizations. A crisis response can be given in many ways and the framing of a message might influence how the message is received. Additionally, non-verbal communication can affect the perception of the message. Therefore, understanding how a message is received and the influence on text framing and non-verbal communication on the message perception is important for future crisis communication. Hereby, the impact of different facial expressions and textual elements in the crisis communication are considered in this fictional scenario. This research aims to provide communication specialists advice regarding crisis communication and therefore answers the following research question:

RQ1: How do different facial expressions and textual elements in a press release affect perceived reputation, issue awareness, and message transportation?

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Crises in fashion industry

An organization claiming to be more sustainable than its actions actually show is also known as greenwashing (Becker & Potucek, 2013). When a business makes false statements regarding sustainability and ethical actions, but not actually applying to their statements, a gap between expectations and reality is formed. Reichart (2003) states this as an expectation gap, where the company's behavior is different from the expectations stakeholders hold towards that company. Eventually, this gap can lead to a bigger issue and turn into a crisis. In general, a crisis occurs when a company made a mistake or is not applying to their stakeholders' expectations. Therefore, accusations of greenwashing can send a particular unexpected picture to stakeholders. Generally, a crisis can be understood as an action that can hurt the image people have of the company.

According to Coombs (2006), crises can be divided into several clusters which allow the crisis response manager to create a response that can be used for several crises. The three clusters are the victim cluster, accidental cluster, and intentional cluster (Coombs, 2007). An intentional crisis is also known as a preventable crisis. People will hold the organization responsible when it is believed the organization could have controlled it (Coombs, 2004). In correlation, Park (2017) mentions how blame attribution might be higher due to a preventable crisis and creates more focus on how a company will respond instead of the company's responsibility. In addition, when an event is evaluated as stable or with a high level of personal control, more responsibility is accounted to a person or company (Coombs, 2004). Therefore, a company will be judged by its stakeholders based on how much responsibility they hold in the crisis.

2.2 Reputation management

Coombs (2007) describes a crisis as an event that poses a threat to the organization's reputation. A reputation is how people perceive the organization (Coombs, 2013). By actions of the company, this reputation can be modified, especially when the company communicates about the crisis. However, due to previously obtained knowledge, stakeholders usually already have a certain perception of the company. Besides the company's message, stakeholders will create evaluations based on information they receive in the forms of news media and word of mouth

(Coombs, 2007). Stakeholders will analyze the crisis and build the perception of the company's corporate reputation based on the messages received around the crisis.

Organizational reputation is an important aspect of organizations and crises can threaten those reputations (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). As shown by Walsh, Beatty and Shiu (2009), a positive corporate reputation can influence outcomes such as trust and loyalty. Additionally, crises can cause organizations to experience shame or anger, and this might affect the employees of the company. Due to the image stakeholders and customers have of the organization, any event that disturbs that image might damage the reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). As stakeholders are affected by the organization, a crisis might also impact the stakeholders and therefore require information right after the crisis to protect themselves (Coombs, 2007). Next to informing stakeholders, the emotion that is communicated during the crisis can impact how the crisis is evaluated (Loewenstein et al., 2001). Lerner et al. (2015), emphasizes how different emotions influence the decision-making process and cause varying evaluations of risk.

Accordingly, people generate feelings and reactions about the event and assess who holds responsibility (Coombs, 2013). A theory that belongs to this is the attribution theory. The attribution theory explains that people seek factors that might have caused the event (Coombs, 2013). Furthermore, the attribution theory implies that people judge the causes of a certain event, namely when the event has negative outcomes (Coombs, 2004). Therefore, an organization is at risk when the reputation of the company is harmed. To manage the reputational threat, organizations must respond to the crisis. By giving a response to the crisis, the organization has a chance to safeguard or rebuild its reputation. Hence, understanding what attributes people connect to a crisis can help formatting a fitting crisis response message that can protect the corporate reputation.

2.3 Crisis types and response strategies

After understanding how the crisis can be categorized and what attributions people attribute to the crisis, a fitting response can be created. A correct crisis response strategy can prevent or repair damage to the reputation (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Assessing the crisis and being aware of the issue is crucial for handling the crisis properly (McKenzie & Lutz, 1989).

Several factors come into play in analyzing the crisis type and deciding on a fitting response. Coombs (2007) mentions that by identifying the crisis type, crisis history, and previous relationship reputation, a fitting strategy that would protect the organization's

reputation can be created. Additionally, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) can be used to examine the type of crisis and seek a proper response (Coombs, 2006). Firstly, the crisis manager must establish the responsibility the organization holds in the crisis (Coombs, 2007). Secondly, two intensifying factors must be identified: crisis history and prior relationship reputation (Coombs, 2007). A crisis manager needs to identify the correct crisis type to establish a response that will be best for the stakeholders involved (Coombs, 2007). Important to the SCCT is the need for understanding the stakeholders involved, rather than a perspective from the sender (Coombs, 2006). Accordingly, Coombs mentions that its best to first instruct the stakeholders with information to have them learn more about the crisis and be able to protect themselves. Coombs (2006) divides the crisis management process into two categories: (1) managing information and (2) managing meaning, depending on the level of responsibility an organization has in the crisis. Hereby the crisis communication attempts to savor the corporate reputation after a crisis. Reputational repair strategies options are summarized in deny, diminish, and deal.

2.4 Message framing

After the correct crisis response strategy is chosen, crisis managers should consider how to properly formulate their message. A message can be presented in a certain way and the use of words can influence how the message is received. Claeys and Cauberghe (2014) suggest that the effect of involvement and message framing depends on the match between crisis type and crisis response strategy. The study of Claeys and Cauberghe (2014) shows that the SCCT effectiveness is depending on the message framing. In accordance, differently framed news impacts how an individual processes the information and evaluates the company (Kim & Cameron, 2011). The information in a message can be framed from an emotional or rational perspective. Previous research has analyzed the influence and effectiveness of emotion in crisis communication. Emotional framing in crisis situations influences the emotional response people have towards the crisis (Kim & Cameron, 2011). Several studies have found to have a relation between emotion and responsibility; therefore, the emotional reaction of the public is important (Choi & Lin, 2009). Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014) showed how emotions communicated by an organization give the audience more information and can protect the reputation by building credibility and integrity. Accordingly, Read (2007) emphasizes on the importance of including emotional aspects in corporate communication techniques to protect the corporate reputation. The post-crisis attitude of people that have a low crisis involvement

will be higher when a crisis response message is framed emotionally (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014). As discussed by Coombs and Holladay (2008), showing sympathy and compassion carry the same levels of effectiveness in comparison to an apology as a response, as the focus is on victims when sympathy is shown. Van Meer and Verhoeven (2014) state how a distanced and emotionless response can make the organization be perceived as insincere which in turn can impact the corporate reputation. Accordingly, it is a usable response strategy because the sympathy response is less expensive than the apology response (Coombs and Holladay, 2008). According to Stafford and Day (1995), emotionally framed messages include subjective, evaluative, and emotional adjectives.

In contrast, a rational frame can communicate towards an individual's logic rather than their feelings. A rationally framed message is presented with objective and straightforward information that requests the rationality of the reader (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014). Claeys and Cauberghe (2014) state how a company should match the type of crisis to the SCCT-provided response when a message is framed rationally.

Depending on what type of feeling the organization wants to evoke in the audience, an organization might choose between an emotional or rational frame. Rational framing appeals to an individual's logic, whereas the feeling of a person is influenced by emotional framing. Kim and Cameron (2011) found that a corporate message holding emotional elements resulted in people having more positive behavioral intentions than when a message had no emotional aspects. Therefore, the following hypothesis regarding text framing is formed:

H1: An emotionally framed message will result in a higher (a) corporate reputation, (b) message credibility, (c) issue awareness, and (d) message transportation.

2.5 Non-verbal communication and emotions

Next to framing, non-verbal communication also influences how a message is received. The body language and non-verbal cues of someone sending a message can transfer a certain meaning. As Mehrabian (1971) states, the non-verbal mannerisms influence the perception one has of someone. Therefore, an organization should be conscious of the non-verbal cues that the spokesperson sends with the crisis response message. People evaluate someone's status based on their posture and movements and therefore decide how much power an individual has (Mehrabian, 1971). Non-verbal communication is visible in body mannerisms and facial expressions. Especially facial expressions can convey a particular emotion. Mehrabian (1971)

argues how 90% of the processed information is established in the non-verbal emotional communication. There are several different human facial expressions and it differs per person how an emotion is fully expressed. Also, emotions can be differently expressed in different cultures (UWA, 2019). However, certain characteristics can define certain emotions. In general, the six widely familiar basic emotions are anger, fear, happiness, sadness, surprise, and disgust (UWA, 2019; Arumugam, 2011; Hammal et al., 2007). Emotions are displayed by humans to interact and are visual in the face and body and recognizable in the voice. As described by Arumugam (2011), emotions can be visually seen by recognizing different elements of the face. Anger is described as having lowered brows that are closer together, the corners of the lips are faced downwards, and nostrils may be expanded. Another basic emotion is happiness, which can be noticed by the corners of the lips being drawn upright, the mouth may be open, and the cheeks are lifted. Another emotion is seen as disgust and is identified as smaller pupils and eyes, and the mouth is drawn downwards (Arumugam, 2011). Hammal et al. (2007) distinguish the expression of joy from disgust by analyzing the wrinkles between the eyebrows.

Visibly, certain emotions can be distinguished and differently perceived. For an organization sending a message regarding a crisis, the emotion that is conveyed with the message can impact the evaluation of the message. An organization is often seen as a whole in which all employees are a crucial element of the unity. The spokesperson or communication managers are visibly the face of the organization. Christensen and Cornelissen (2011) state that the organization is dependent on how individuals of the company share their voice. Accordingly, the emotion shown by the person communicating the message can be connected to the entire organization and therefore have a crucial impact on how the message is received (Christensen & Cornelissen, 2011). In addition, Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014) discovered how the emotion of a spokesperson influences how the audience evaluates the organization's role during a crisis. Likewise, Pham (2007) argues how emotion affects the reasoning process and self-control. Nabi (2002) suggests how sharing information in an anger emotion caused a deeper information process. Whereas Hammal et al. (2007) mentions how a joyful and neutral facial expression result in higher evaluations. Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014) emphasize on the importance of having the communicated emotion align with the message to keep it authentic. To further enhance the knowledge around the connections between facial expressions and message evaluation, this research examines the effects of neutral and happy facial expressions on how a message is evaluated. Therefore, the following hypothesis is tested:

H2: An excited facial expression enhances the (a) corporate reputation, (b) message credibility, (c) issue awareness, and (d) message transportation.

2.6 Interaction effects of text framing and facial expressions

As studied by Read (2007), including emotional elements in corporate messages might protect the reputation. Additionally, the importance of having the message and emotion shared with the message aligned is emphasized. The message might be perceived as insincere and lead to negative reputation whenever the emotion is not like the crisis response message (Van der Meer & Verhoeven, 2014). Congruency between the facial expressions and the text framing is important during the crisis communication. Followingly, the hypothesis regarding the interaction effect is formed:

H3: A neutral facial expression combined with the rational text increases the (a) corporate reputation, (b) message credibility, (c) issue awareness, and (d) message transportation in comparison to a excited facial expression combined with the rational text.

2.7 Effects of text framing and facial expressions

The way in which a crisis response message is sent can result in many different effects. Especially in the situation of an organization which is responsible for the crisis, effects may be way more focused on the evaluation of the organization or the purchase intention people have. However, this research aims to find the results in how the message is evaluated. For this reason, the crisis response is communicated by an outside organization (European Union) that is not assigned full responsibility during the crisis, instead of an organization that is fully responsible for the crisis responding. Additionally, results will be less influenced by the biased image people have of a fashion company because the European Union gives a more outside, credible perspective. The European Union is responsible for regulations and therefore holds a credible responsibility towards the consumers to inform and protect them about the crisis. To better understand how the message is evaluated by the public, the following dependent variables are tested: corporate reputation, message credibility, issue awareness, and message transportation.

The influence of text framing and facial expressions on corporate reputation is tested. Reputation can be described as the image stakeholders hold of the company and it can affect the

company's success (Ozdora Aksak et al., 2016). Alongside, a message emphasized on the public's wellbeing can enhance corporate credibility (Kim & Cameron 2011).

Followingly, message credibility is understood as how the audience evaluates the validity and believability of a message (Newell & Goldsmith, 2001). Nabi (1999) states how a receiver's motivation is influenced by the messenger's emotion. As the spokesperson is responsible for how a message is sent the message credibility is expected to be influenced.

Additionally, issue awareness can be understood in the extent to which someone is consciously aware of the issue. In this situation, the issue regards the crises in the fashion industry. Previous research mostly defines awareness as individuals being aware in situations such as illness or disasters (Marková & Berrios, 2006; Dikmenli et al., 2018). However, the construct used in this research entails the level of conscious awareness an individual experiences surrounding the crisis situation. By analyzing what individuals feel after reading the message and what attitude they hold towards the situation. Shen et al. (2014) showed how a narrative or informational formulated message differently influenced the issue attitudes and emphatic feelings.

Furthermore, this research analyses to what extent people can transport themselves in the message and therefore understand the message better. Nabi (1999) mentions how the emotion sent with the message affects an individual's ability to engage in the message. The message transportation concept is drawn from how an audience can be transported and immersed into a narrative world (Green, 2008). Accordingly, an individual might be more persuaded while immersed in a story (Green & Fitzgerald, 2017).

2.8 Covariate effects

Besides the expected influence text framing and facial expressions have on the dependent variables, some other elements might influence how individuals evaluate the message and organization. Considering the crisis discussed in this study entails an environmental issue, it is expected that environmentally concerned people might be more impacted by the message. This is in line with Shen et al. (2014), where the environmental narrative significantly influenced the issue attitude.

Furthermore, as the environmental issues take place within the fashion industry, people who are highly interested in fashion and are familiar with the fashion industry might evaluate the message differently as they feel more personally involved. Therefore, the level of fashion interest and environmental consciousness are considered as possible covariates.

Below, the conceptual model can be seen in Figure 1.

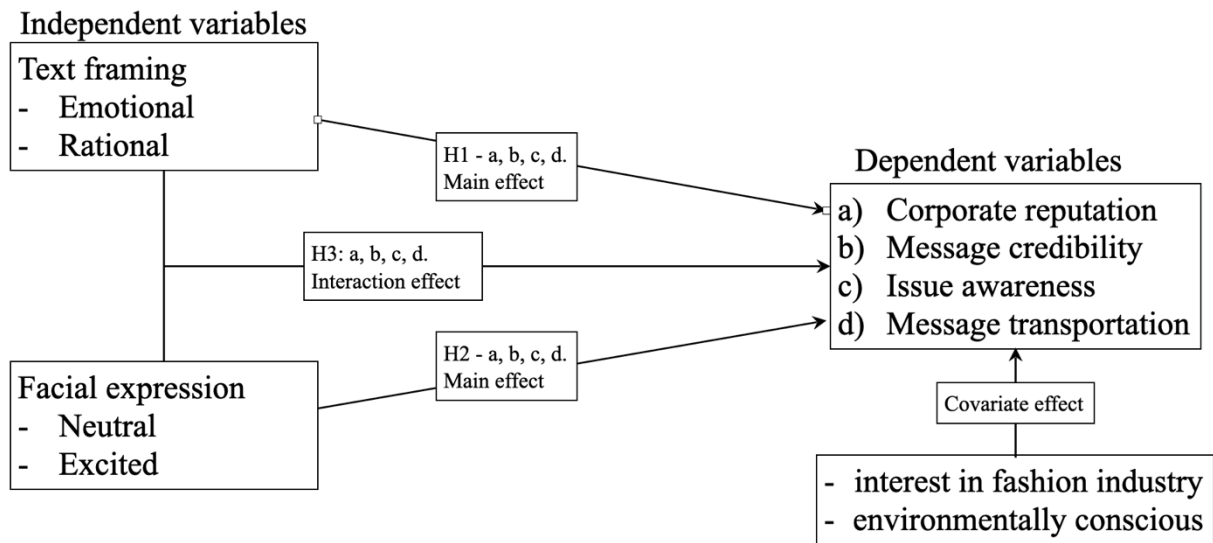


Figure 1.
Conceptual model of variables

3. Method

3.1 Design

To test the effects of different textual elements and facial expressions on corporate reputation, message credibility, issue awareness, and message transportation a 2 (emotional vs rational) by 2 (neutral vs excited) experimental design was used. The study presented a fictional press release of the European Union after some news regarding incidents in sustainability and greenwashing within the fashion industry were presented. This was situated to be a preventable crisis, according to Coombs (2007). However, to prevent any biases from participants upon their judgment of fashion brands, an outside organization such as the European Union was chosen to give a press statement to showcase the concern towards the consumers. A pre-test was completed to examine the manipulated press releases. Firstly, a one-way analysis was executed to inspect whether the chosen covariate variables were actually influencing the results. Furthermore, a multivariate analysis of covariance was performed to test the covariate effects of environmentally conscious and the influence of text framing and facial expressions on the dependent variables. Additionally, a chi-square test was performed to understand the distribution of demographics among the four different groups.

3.2 Stimuli

In total, four differing press releases were used, but each participant was only presented with one of the four press releases. This was randomized by use of the randomization tool in “Qualtrics”. As can be seen in Appendix A, the stimuli were visually designed to be a believable press release from the European Union. After analyzing several former press releases, the statement was designed with the European Union logo and a fictional signature, to make it more credible. Only the text and picture of the person making the statement were alternated. Several elements in the text were altered to be rather rational or emotional. Table 1 shows what words were manipulated. Appendix B shows all exact differences within the text. The rational text consisted of textual elements such as numbers and objective words and is seen as more straightforward (e.g., “negatively impacting”, “10%”, and “this policy aims”). Whereas the emotionally framed text made use of personal words to emphasize the emotional connection (e.g., “hurting”, “our planet”, and “I aim to”). As shown by Claeys and Cauberghe (2014) using personal pronouns inclines the reader to have more trust in the person.

The pictures of the fictional minister of the European Union were found via stock imagery (Shapecharge, 2017). According to Arumugam (2011), the neutral expression is visible through the neutral positioning of the eyebrows, the mouth corners pointing rather down than up, and the closed mouth. Following the descriptions of Arumugam (2011), the excited facial expression was classified as excited because of the slightly heightened eyebrows, the corners of the mouth pointing upward, and the showing of teeth. After an initial selection of pictures was tested via a pre-test, the two pictures used in this research were chosen.

Table 1
Text framing manipulations

<i>Rational</i>	<i>Emotional</i>
The	Our
10%	A serious portion
Made untruthful statements	Falsely stated
The	We as the
Harry Stone	I will personally
Minister of environment	-
Negatively impacting the planet	Hurting our planet
This policy aims	With this policy I aim
Negative	Harmful

3.3 Pre-test results

To test the validity of the stimuli, a pre-test was conducted. Respondents ($N = 7$) were asked to evaluate 8 different pictures on the facial expressions of the pictures' subjects based on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) very excited to (5) very neutral. Additionally, the two divergent texts were presented, and participants were asked to evaluate on a 5-point scale ranging from (1) very rational to (5) very emotional. From this pre-test, two pictures of the corresponding subject were found to have the highest values. Figure 2 shows the two chosen pictures. Picture 1 was unanimously considered neutral with a mean value of 5 ($SD = 0$). Picture 2 was evaluated as excited ($M = 1.7, SD = 0.5$). The texts were found to be as expected, one was rated to be rational ($M = 2.1, SD = 0.9$) while the other was evaluated as emotional ($M = 4.0, SD = 0.9$).

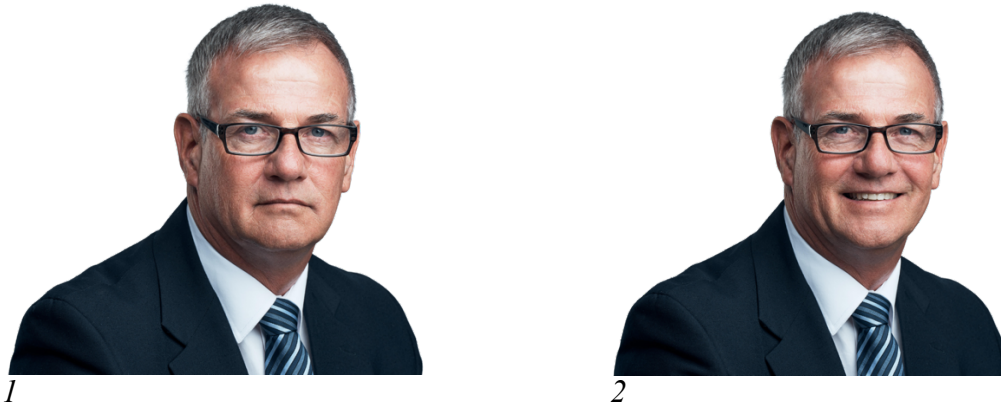


Figure 2
Pictures resulted from pre-test

3.4 Procedure

Participants were gathered via the use of convenience sampling through the social media of the researcher. The online questionnaire was presented via the tool “Qualtrics” and made it possible for participants to join the experiment from anywhere. Participants were first introduced to the study, informed about the confidentiality of the results, and asked to express their voluntary consent to join the study. This introduction was very short, to prevent any biases from occurring with respondents’ answers. Participants were introduced to a study regarding crisis communication in the fashion industry. Following, the respondents that voluntarily agreed to participate, were asked to fill in several demographical questions. Additionally, two questions regarding their interest in the fashion industry and how environmentally friendly they categorize themselves were asked. After that, a brief introduction regarding the fashion industry and its sustainability issues was given before showing the press release to inform participants about the crises. Hereby, several headings of news articles that emphasize how fashion producers have been accused of greenwashing or found to be ignoring regulations were visually showcased. In Appendix C, the briefing and ethical approval are presented. Accordingly, respondents were randomly presented with one of the four fictional press releases. Afterward participants were requested to answer questions regarding the dependent variables. These questions were answered via the use of a 7-point Likert scale varying from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). In the following section, the items used in the questionnaire are explained. Furthermore, to assure the manipulated perception of the press releases was correct, respondents were asked to evaluate to what extent they classified the text to be emotional or rational and how neutral or excited they perceived the facial expression. At the end of the

survey, participants were thanked for their participation and briefed with a more elaborate explanation of the research's purpose.

3.5 Instruments

To measure the dependent variables, several studies were reviewed to include different measuring items. An overview of these measurement items used in the questionnaire can be found in Appendix D.

3.5.1 *Corporate reputation*

To measure corporate reputation, three items of the corporate reputation scale of Coombs and Holladay (2002) were used: "After reading the press release, I believe the European Union is concerned with the well-being of the public", "After reading the press release, I respect the organization", and "After reading the press release, I believe the European Union is environmentally responsible". Participants evaluated these items on a 7-point Likert scale.

3.5.2 *Message credibility*

According to McKenzie and Lutz (1989), Newell and Goldsmith (2001), and Appelman and Sundar (2016), message credibility was evaluated by the following items using a 7-point Likert scale: "I think the press release is believable", "I think the press release is convincing", "I think the press release is biased", "I think the press release is accurate", and "I think the press release is trustworthy".

3.5.3 *Issue awareness*

The dependent variable issue awareness was constructed based on Marija et al. (2016) and Ivana and Berrios (2006). Eventually, three items were formed, which were evaluated on a 7-point Likert scale. "The press release has made me more aware of this issue", "After reading the press release, I realize the impact of the issue more", and "The press release has made me more sensitive to the environmental issue."

3.5.4 *Message transportation*

Message engagement was measured by using items based on the transportation items of Green and Brock (2000) and Green and Fitzgerald (2017), who describe transportation as transportation in persuasiveness. Participants were asked to indicate to what extent they agree

to the several statements on a 7-point Likert scale. The items are “The story in the press release affected me”, “I felt emotionally affected by the press release”, and “The story in the press release is relevant to my everyday life”.

3.5.5 Covariates

Besides the dependent variables, two possible covariate effects were analyzed. These were “environment conscious” and “fashion interest” and were asked during the demographical variables before participants read the press release. The individual’s perception of being sustainably friendly was asked with the statement “I consider myself to be environmentally friendly” and answered by use of a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly agree” (value 1) to “strongly disagree” (value 5). Furthermore, participants were asked to indicate their level of interest in the fashion industry on a scale from “not interested” (value 1) to “extremely interested” (value 5).

3.6 Reliability and validity

Before the hypotheses were tested a factor analysis was performed by using SPSS. Even though the items used were gathered from previously performed research, the factor analysis and reliability analysis tested whether all items and constructs were as distinct as intended. The first factor analysis concluded that not all items of the four dependent variables were identified as four diverse constructs. The message credibility item “I think the press release is biased” (Q9_3) was perceived as a separate construct. The other items of the message credibility instrument were classified together with the items of corporate reputation. Therefore, the solo message credibility item was disregarded and the factor analysis was run again. As visible in Table 2 the items of both the corporate reputation and message credibility variables were observed as one construct. Accordingly, these items were brought together and concluded as one construct named “perceived reputation”. The other items of the dependent variables were seen to be distinguishable as two separate constructs. All items had a significant variance above 50%.

Table 2
Factor analysis – (rotated component matrix)

Statements	Factor		
	1	2	3
Credibility_5 - I think the press release is trustworthy	0.80		
CorRep_1 - After reading the press release, I believe the European Union is concerned with the well-being of the public.	0.78		
CorRep_3_1 - After reading the press release, I believe the European Union is environmentally responsible	0.78		
Credibility_2 - I think the press release is convincing	0.77		
Credibility_1 - I think the press release is believable	0.74		
CorRep_2 - After reading the press release, I respect the organization.	0.72		
Credibility_4 - I think the press release is accurate	0.60		
Awareness_2 - After reading the press release, I realize the impact of the issue more.		0.88	
Awareness_1 - The press release has made me more aware of this issue.		0.87	
Awareness_3 - The press release has made me more sensitive to environmental issue.		0.84	
Transportation_2 - I felt emotionally affected by the press release.			0.86
Transportation_1 - The story in the press release affected me.			0.85
Transportation_3 - The story in the press release is relevant to my everyday life.			0.68
Explained variance:	44.33%	13.69%	10.28%
Eigenvalue:	5.76	1.78	1.34
Cronbach alpha:	0.89	0.89	0.79

Note: Second factor analysis

Accordingly, the Cronbach’s alpha of all constructs was tested to evaluate the reliability per variable. The construct perceived reputation now consisted of 7 items ($\alpha = .89$), the variable issue awareness consisted of 3 items ($\alpha = .89$), and the message transportation consisted of 3 items ($\alpha = .79$). All items were analyzed to have a favorable significance. Following, each construct was computed into a new variable with the mean scores of all items per dependent variable. Eventually, the research was performed with three constructs, and the conceptual model was adapted, which is visible below in Figure 3.

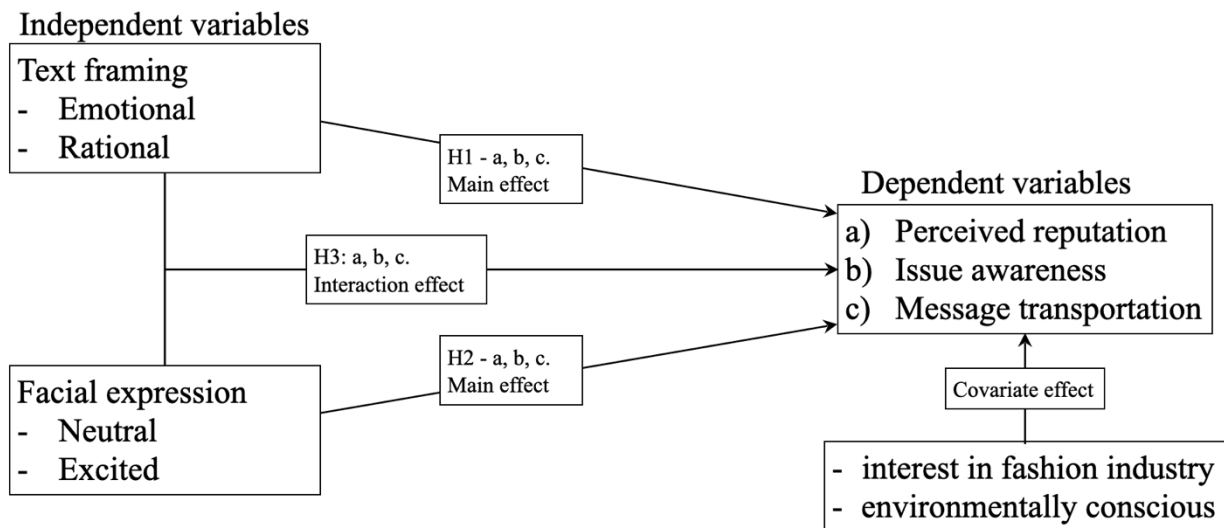


Figure 3
Adapted conceptual model

3.7 Respondents

Participants were gathered via the use of convenience sampling, spread via social media. In total, 151 responses to the questionnaire were recorded. However, 27 of these were counted as invalid due to incomplete answers, which left the sample with 124 respondents. The greatest part of the sample consisted of female participants ($n = 70$), and 4 participants mentioned to be non-binary. The mean age was 24 years old ($SD = 8.5$) with a minimum of 18 and a maximum of 62. Almost half of the sample was indicated to have a Dutch nationality ($n = 58$), 27 respondents had a German nationality, and 35 participants indicated to have different nationalities than Dutch or German. In total, the sample consisted of 24 diverse nationalities. The sample mostly consisted of students ($n = 92$), and 27 respondents were mentioned to be employed. Most participants indicated to have completed the level of high school or equivalent education ($n = 70$), others mentioned to have achieved the University of Applied Sciences ($n = 13$), some indicated to have a bachelor's degree on an academic level ($n = 34$), and 7 people have graduated with a master's degree.

Additionally, two other demographical variables were analyzed for possible covariate effects on the dependent variables. In general, the sample was evaluated as somewhat conscious of the environment. 77 respondents indicated to somewhat agree with the statement "I consider myself to be environmentally friendly". Further, the sample was slightly interested in the fashion industry ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.01$). By performing a chi-square test, all demographics per condition were analysed. In general, the division of the randomized stimuli was approximately

equal, with each condition holding around 30 participants. Table 3 shows the division of demographical information of participants per condition.

Table 3
Distribution of sample demographics per condition

	<i>Emotional</i>		<i>Rational</i>	
<i>Neutral</i>				
	N	30		32
Gender	Male	37%	Male	47%
	Female	60%	Female	53%
	Non-binary	3%	Non-binary	0%
Age ^{a)}	23.83	7.84	23.03	4.89
Nationality	Dutch	57%	Dutch	47%
	German	23%	German	13%
	Other	17%	Other	41%
Educational level ^{b)}	1)	57%	1)	47%
	2)	17%	2)	6%
	3)	23%	3)	34%
	4)	3%	4)	13%
Employment ^{c)}	1)	87%	1)	72%
	2)	13%	2)	25%
	3)	0%	3)	3%
<i>Excited</i>				
	N	30		32
Gender	Male	37%	Male	38%
	Female	70%	Female	44%
	Non-binary	3%	Non-binary	6%
Age ^{a)}	25.27	9.98	26.38	10.49
Nationality	Dutch	57%	Dutch	28%
	German	30%	German	22%
	Other	20%	Other	34%
Educational level ^{b)}	1)	60%	1)	63%
	2)	13%	2)	6%
	3)	30%	3)	22%
	4)	7%	4)	0%
Employment ^{c)}	1)	80%	1)	59%
	2)	23%	2)	25%
	3)	7%	3)	3%

a) Mean and Standard Deviation

b) Percentage: 1)= high school / 2)=University of applied sciences / 3)= Bachelor / 4)= Master

c) Percentage: 1)= student / 2)= employed / 3)= self-employed

Note: in some cases participants decided to opt for "prefer not to say"

4. Results

4.1 Manipulation check

To confirm the impact of the stimuli, participants were asked to evaluate the text they have read and the photo they have seen in the press release at the end of the questionnaire. The manipulation check was performed before the analysis to assure the analysis was based on the proper intentions of the conditions. Respondents were asked on a 5-point scale to what extent they perceived the text to be emotional (value = 1) or rational (value = 5). The difference in text framing was significant ($t(122)=-3.08, p = 0.04$) where the rational text was perceived as moderately rational ($M = 3.75, SD = 1.09$) and the other text can be perceived as less rational ($M = 3.10, SD = 1.28$).

Additionally, participants evaluated the facial expression on a 5-point scale (1 = neutral, 5 = excited). From the pictures, the neutral facial expression was perceived as neutral ($M = 1.95, SD = 1.06$) and the excited face was perceived as moderately excited ($M = 3.13, SD = 1.06$), though the variance was not significant ($t(122) = -6.17, p = 0.83$).

4.2 Covariate analysis

Due to the context of this research being the fashion industry, the respondents were also asked to indicate to what extent they were interested in the fashion industry and how environmentally conscious they perceived themselves. Therefore, these two variables were checked for any correlation to the dependent variables. Accordingly, a correlation analysis was performed to analyze whether any correlations between the possible covariates and the dependent variables can be concluded. It seems that a person who is environmentally oriented can better transport themselves into a crisis response message. In Table 4 the correlations between variables are visible.

Table 4
Mean, standard deviations, and correlations

Variable	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2
Environment (1)	2.28	0.78	-	
Fashion interest (2)	2.81	1.08	-0.10	-
Perceived reputation	4.46	1.04	-0.12	0.11
Issue awareness	3.51	1.22	0.09	0.01
Message transportation	3.51	1.22	-0.24	0.17

Note: Significance level of correlation = 0.01

4.3 Descriptive results

Before the hypotheses testing, the descriptive results of all variables were viewed. All variables were measured with a 7-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree (value = 1) to strongly agree (value = 7). The descriptive results show that the whole sample evaluated the perceived reputation as fairly high ($M = 4.46$, $SD = 1.04$). Additionally, the respondents generally indicated being aware of the issue ($M = 3.93$, $SD = 1.41$) but not convincingly strongly. Furthermore, transportation was evaluated as slightly neutral ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.22$). Table 5 shows the descriptive results per condition for each dependent variable.

Table 5
Descriptive statistics per condition

		<i>Text framing</i>				<i>Totals</i>	
		<i>Emotional</i>		<i>Rational</i>			
		Mean	SD	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<i>Facial expression</i>	<i>Neutral</i>						
	Perceived reputation	4.47	1.09	4.79	0.99	4.63	1.04
	Issue awareness	3.61	1.42	4.40	1.37	4.02	1.44
	Message transportation	3.31	1.05	3.71	1.15	3.52	1.11
	<i>Excited</i>						
	Perceived reputation	4.20	1.03	4.40	0.99	4.29	1.01
	Issue awareness	3.46	1.28	4.28	1.39	3.84	1.38
	Message transportation	3.52	1.37	3.48	1.30	3.50	1.33
	<i>Totals</i>						
	Perceived reputation	4.33	1.06	4.61	1.00		
	Issue awareness	3.53	1.34	4.34	1.37		
	Message transportation	3.42	1.23	3.60	1.22		

Note: All constructs were measured via a 7-point Likert scale.

4.4 Hypotheses testing

A multivariate analysis of covariance was performed to determine whether there was a significant difference between the four conditions. The dependent variables were “perceived reputation”, “issue awareness” and “message transportation”. As a covariate, the descriptive variable of the level of environmentally conscious was included in the analysis. Table 5 shows all values per condition. Primarily, it is visible that almost all values are higher for the rational text framing than the emotional text. Additionally, the neutral facial expression also resulted in higher values than the excited facial expression. However, the dependent variable message transportation was higher for an emotional text and excited facial expression than for a neutral

facial expression with an emotional text. Yet, the differences in mean values are not enormous. The significance per each independent variable is discussed followingly. All values are visible in table 5.

4.4.1 Text framing

From the multivariate analysis the effect of text framing resulted to be significant for issue awareness ($F(4, 119) = 9.78, p = 0.02$). Explaining that the issue awareness is influenced by the text framing. The rational text resulted in higher mean scores than the emotionally framed text. This is not in line with our first hypothesis (H1). No other significant results were found for text framing. However, text framing had an almost significant result on perceived reputation ($F(4, 119) = 2.98, p = 0.09$). Accordingly, these results are not alike the hypothesis stated, as no further significant influences of text framing were found. The model reported an explained variance of $R^2 = 0.07$.

4.4.2 Facial expressions

Unfortunately, facial expressions did not result in any significant effect from the MANCOVA analysis. The effect on perceived reputation was almost significant ($F(4, 119) = 3.33, p = 0.07$). The descriptive results show how the neutral facial expression resulted in higher mean values than the mean scores of the excited facial expression. Except for the effect on message transportation. The second hypothesis (H2) can unfortunately not be evaluated due to the insignificant results. Message transportation seems to have been enhanced when the facial expression was excited. However, this only counts for the combination of excited facial expression with the emotionally framed text. This model explained the variance of $R^2 = 0.09$.

4.4.3 Interaction effect

No significant interaction effect was found. Seemingly, the combination of text framing and facial expressions did not result in a significant enhancement on the dependent variables. The mean scores show that the highest mean score for perceived reputation is achieved with a rational text combined with a neutral facial expression. The highest mean score for issue awareness was also established with the rational text combined with the neutral facial expression. Lastly, the message transportation mean score was highest for the rational text and neutral facial expression. The insignificant results are not according to the third hypothesis (H3). The congruency between facial expressions and text framing seems to impact mean scores. The explained variance was $R^2 = 0.08$.

4.4.4 Covariate effect

Furthermore, an individual's level of environment seemed to have a significant covariate effect on message transportation ($F(4, 119) = 8.11, p < 0.01$). Stating, that people who have a higher environment consideration are more likely to transport themselves in the message.

Additionally, an almost significant result was found for the covariate on perceived reputation ($F(4, 119) = 2.87, p = 0.09$).

Table 5
Multivariate test of covariance (MANOVA)

	<i>F-value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Wilks' Lambda</i>		
Text framing	3.27	0.02
Facial expression	1.28	0.28
Text framing * facial expression	0.31	0.82
<hr/>		
Test of between subjects design effects		
	<i>F-value</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Text framing</i>		
Perceived reputation	2.98	0.09
Issue awareness	9.79	0.002
Message transportation	1.83	0.18
<hr/>		
<i>Facial expression</i>		
Perceived reputation	3.33	0.07
Issue awareness	0.29	0.59
Message transportation	0.01	0.91
<hr/>		
<i>Text framing * facial expression</i>		
Perceived reputation	0.05	0.82
Issue awareness	0.01	0.97
Message transportation	0.74	0.39
<hr/>		
<i>Covariate environment</i>		
Perceived reputation	2.87	0.09
Issue awareness	0.13	0.72
Message transportation	8.11	0.005

5. Discussion

5.1 Main findings

This research aimed to study the effects of different press releases to understand whether facial expressions and text framing might influence perceived reputation, issue awareness, and message transportation. The analysis found a significant result of text framing on issue awareness. The use of a rational text combined with a neutral facial expression has the best effect in achieving high issue awareness. This is partly supported by previous research, stating how the framing of texts influences how a crisis response message is received (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014). Correspondingly, the SCCT emphasizes on the use of framing to send particular information. Accordingly, it can be concluded that a rational text with a neutral facial expression receives the highest values regarding issue awareness. Unexpectedly from previous research, this study found the neutral facial expression to have higher mean scores than the excited facial expression. However, no significant results were found for facial expressions. As mentioned by previous scholars, showing emotion in crisis can convey more sympathy from stakeholders (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). However, the relation between facial expressions and text framing had no significant effect in this research. Eventhough, previous knowledge expected an influence due to congruency of non-verbal mannerism and text crisis communication. As stated by Van der Meer and Verhoeven (2014), the alignment between the emotion and crisis response message should be considered to positively impact corporate reputation.

Additionally, an individual's perception of being environmentally conscious and their interest level in the fashion industry was analyzed for possible covariate effects. According to the covariate analysis, the level of environmental consciousness had a significant effect on message transportation. With this, it can be implied that people who are generally more conscious of the environment and act sustainably can better transport themselves into the sent message.

5.2 Theoretical implications

The results of this study request a further analysis of text framing and the effects of different facial expressions within crisis communication. This research was performed surrounding a crisis in the fashion industry, yet the crisis response was given by an outside organization. Therefore, the results could have been different when the response came from the directly

responsible organization, which is in line with previous research. Coombs (2013) states that people generate a reaction based upon how responsible they judge the organization. Therefore, the results of this study can be used as advice for the European Union communication regarding a crisis in the fashion industry. However, the results may not be generalized towards other organizations in the fashion industry. As respondents might have a specific perception of a company's reputation before the crisis communication. Considerable fashion companies (e.g., Zara, H&M, Uniqlo), might be differently evaluated as different blame characteristics are attributed to the crisis, which can influence stakeholders' perception (Coombs, 2013).

5.3 Practical implications

In crisis situations, communication specialists should recognize the stakeholders' behavior and expectations, to assure a fitting reaction is given to the crisis. This research shows how message framing and facial expressions impact how a message is received. For the European Union, this may be practical information to perform proper crisis communication, during a crisis in which they hold indirect responsibility. Additionally, for crisis communication, it is interesting to consider how visual and non-verbal elements in a person's expression can influence how a message is received.

Moreover, the covariate effect of the perception of sustainability can be considered for regarding crisis response messages about sustainable crises. As Coombs (2006) explains that understanding the stakeholders' perception, a better crisis response can be provided. Resulting from this research, an individual's level of being environmentally considerate influenced how they transported into the message. Therefore, crisis managers might benefit from understanding whether their audience can transport themselves well into the message.

5.4 Limitations

For this research, it is important to acknowledge the weaknesses in this study. Conflicting with previous research, the instruments used for the dependent variables "message credibility" and "corporate reputation" were not perceived as separate constructs. This might be explained due to the possible overlap between statements regarding credibility and reputation. Furthermore, one of the items on the credibility scale was discarded as this item was perceived as ambiguous and separate from the other items for the credibility instrument. Surprisingly this item was considered ambiguous seeing these items were used in previously performed research by (Park,

2017). Participants might have been confused due to the negative annotation of the item. Accordingly, a new construct “perceived reputation” was formed.

Additionally, the stimuli were not entirely identified as intended. The emotional text was significantly different from the rational text, however, the emotional text on its own was not exactly received as emotional. Because the text could not be classified as emotional but rather less rational, a more emotionally oriented text might have primed the participants to evaluate the dependent variables differently. Subsequently, the pictures used could have had a more significant difference in facial gestures. Initially, this research planned to analyze effects of different facial expressions like emotional and angry. However, due to the available pictures on the internet, the research was performed with these photos. As the photos should entail the same person in the same environment and convey a certain level of credibility. Even though a pre-test was performed, the eventual results of the study showed that the pictures were not that distinguishable from one another. A more observable difference in pictures and text could have led to different results.

Moreover, a bias might have occurred due to the crisis response being given by the European Union. Participants may perceive the European Union as a rational and objective organization and therefore do not expect an emotional text to be used to communicate. Perhaps, the results could have been different if the perception of the European Union was measured beforehand of the research to compare to the results after reading the press release.

Furthermore, the study’s sample was limited due to a convenience sample which lead to a bias. Furthermore, due to the issue concerning a crisis within the fashion industry, it might have been more useful to have a sample in which the participants were more interested in the fashion industry.

5.5 Future research

Future research regarding crisis communication can consider a similar form of study to investigate the effects of facial expressions and text framing. However, a more diverse contrast in facial expressions should be studied. Currently, the effects of facial expressions were insignificant. Due to emotions being transmitting different information, a different facial expression might give varying results. Therefore, future research might benefit from using more diversified pictures of facial expressions.

Furthermore, this research performed an experiment with a substantial organization that was not directly responsible for the crisis. Future research may find different effects on how a

company is evaluated when the company holds more blame within the crisis. Claeys and Cauberghe (2014) suggests that the effect of involvement and message framing depends on the match between crisis type and crisis response strategy. Yet, because the European Union did not have direct responsibility towards the crisis, the crisis type might be not in line with the given strategy.

Subsequently, a pre-analysis of how participants evaluate the reputation of the organization beforehand could bring diverse values. Future research within this field might benefit from recording the previous perception respondents might have of the organization before the press release is reviewed,

Additionally, a more specific sample consisting of people that have a higher interest in the fashion industry might result in different results. As this sample was not random, the results of a random sample with more pre-requirements might lead to divergent results. Future research might benefit from including respondents who are highly interested in fashion to identify a possible impact on the dependent variables.

5.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this research has analyzed the effects of differently presented press releases on perceived reputation, issue awareness, and message transportation. The study shows that a rationally framed text with a neutral facial expression resulted in the highest mean value score for issue awareness. In addition, an individual's level of environmental friendliness achieves a higher message transportation. In sum, a rational text develops the highest values in comparison to an emotional text, and a neutral facial expression is preferred in combination with a rational text in crisis communication.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Press-releases

A: Rational x neutral

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
MAY 29, 2023



POLICY FASHION INDUSTRY

The fashion industry has grown into one of the biggest polluting industries on the planet. The industry is responsible for 10% of the global greenhouse gas emissions. Even though, several fast-fashion industries have stated to make steps towards a more sustainable form of manufacturing, many of these steps hold little effect to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions. Several companies even made untruthful statements regarding how sustainable and eco-friendly the form of production is.

The European Union recognizes the immense impact this industry has and understands the need for stricter regulations. Therefore, Harry Stone, minister of environment, has declared to create a policy that prevents the fashion industry from further negatively impacting the planet. Further, this policy aims to protect consumers and create more awareness around the negative effects of the fashion industry.

Yours Sincerely,

Harry Stone

Minister of Environment
European Union

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Stone'.



B: Rational x excited

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
MAY 29, 2023



POLICY FASHION INDUSTRY

The fashion industry has grown into one of the biggest polluting industries on the planet. The industry is responsible for 10% of the global greenhouse gas emissions. Even though, several fast-fashion industries have stated to make steps towards a more sustainable form of manufacturing, many of these steps hold little effect to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions. Several companies even made untruthful statements regarding how sustainable and eco-friendly the form of production is.

The European Union recognizes the immense impact this industry has and understands the need for stricter regulations. Therefore, Harry Stone, minister of environment, has declared to create a policy that prevents the fashion industry from further negatively impacting the planet. Further, this policy aims to protect consumers and create more awareness around the negative effects of the fashion industry.

Yours Sincerely,

Harry Stone

Minister of Environment
European Union

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Harry Stone".



C: Emotional x neutral

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
MAY 29, 2023



POLICY FASHION INDUSTRY

The fashion industry has grown into one of the biggest polluting industries on our planet. The industry is responsible for a serious portion of the global greenhouse gas emissions. Even though, several fast-fashion industries have stated to make steps towards a more sustainable form of manufacturing, many of these steps hold little effect to actually reduce the greenhouse gas emissions. Several companies even falsely stated to have a more sustainable and eco-friendly form of production.

We as the European Union recognize the immense impact this industry has and understand the need for stricter regulations. Therefore, I will personally ensure to create a policy that prevents the fashion industry from further hurting our planet. Further, with this policy I aim to protect consumers and hope to create more awareness around the harmful effects of the fashion industry.

Yours Sincerely,

Harry Stone

Minister of Environment
European Union

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Harry Stone', written over a white background.



D: Emotional x excited

EUROPEAN COMMISSION
MAY 29, 2023



POLICY FASHION INDUSTRY

The fashion industry has grown into one of the biggest polluting industries on our planet. The industry is responsible for a serious portion of the global greenhouse gas emissions. Even though, several fast-fashion industries have stated to make steps towards a more sustainable form of manufacturing, many of these steps hold little effect to actually reduce the greenhouse gas emissions. Several companies even falsely stated to have a more sustainable and eco-friendly form of production.

We as the European Union recognize the immense impact this industry has and understand the need for stricter regulations. Therefore, I will personally ensure to create a policy that prevents the fashion industry from further hurting our planet. Further, with this policy I aim to protect consumers and hope to create more awareness around the harmful effects of the fashion industry.

Yours Sincerely,

Harry Stone

Minister of Environment
European Union

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Stone'.



Appendix B: Differently framed texts

Rationally framed text

The fashion industry has grown into one of the biggest polluting industries on **the** planet. The industry is responsible for **10%** of the global greenhouse gas emissions. Even though, several fast-fashion industries have stated to make steps towards a more sustainable form of manufacturing, many of these steps hold little effect to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions. Several companies even **made untruthful statements** regarding how sustainable and eco-friendly the form of production is.

The European Union recognizes the immense impact this industry has and understands the need for stricter regulations. Therefore, **Harry Stone**, **minister of environment**, has declared to create a policy that prevents the fashion industry from further **negatively impacting the planet**. Further, **this policy aims** to protect consumers and create more awareness around the **negative** effects of the fashion industry.

Emotionally framed text

The fashion industry has grown into one of the biggest polluting industries on **our** planet. The industry is responsible for **a serious portion** of the global greenhouse gas emissions. Even though, several fast-fashion industries have stated to make steps towards a more sustainable form of manufacturing, many of these steps hold little effect to actually reduce the greenhouse gas emissions. Several companies even **falsely stated** to have a more sustainable and eco-friendly form of production.

We as the European Union recognize the immense impact this industry has and understand the need for stricter regulations. Therefore, **I will personally** ensure to create a policy that prevents the fashion industry from further **hurting our planet**. Further, **with this policy I aim** to protect consumers and **hope** to create more awareness around the **harmful** effects of the fashion industry.

Appendix C: Introduction, consent, and briefing

Introduction

Dear participant,

You have been invited to participate in a study performed by Sophie Nijkamp, a third-year bachelor Communication Science student at the University of Twente. This study aims to research people's perception about communication from the European Union about the fashion industry.

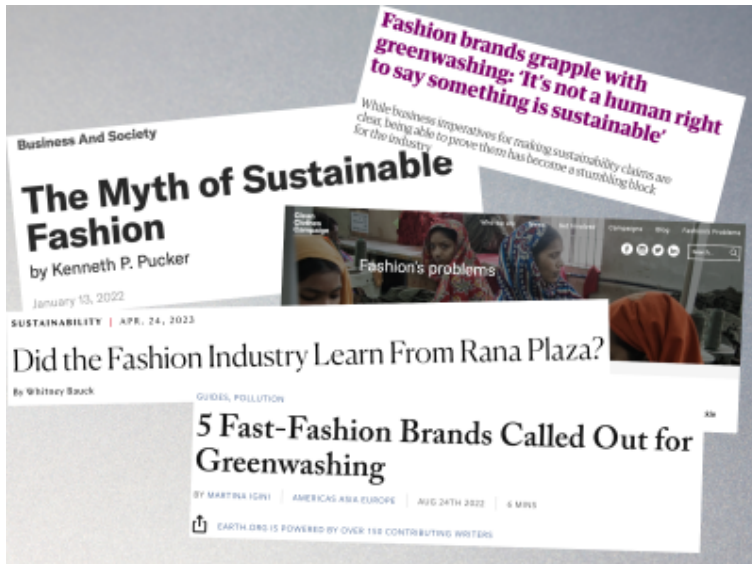
This study will take you approximately 5 to 10 minutes to complete. You will be presented with a press release regarding the issues in the fashion industry. You will be asked several questions in order to evaluate the given statement.

Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Your answers will be handled with care and kept confidential. Meaning the answers will not be traced back to you. The collected data will only be used in this research context and only visible to the research team. If you wish to withdraw from the study, you can do so at any time without providing any reason by simply closing the survey.

I have read above information and I consent to participate in this study voluntarily.

Briefing

Nowadays, the fashion industry has become one of the biggest industries in the world. The industry is responsible for greenhouse gas emissions and has an impact on the planet. Due to the current rising trend to be more ethically friendly, fashion brands market their products to be "sustainable" and "eco-friendly", to satisfy consumers. However, some brands claim to be more sustainable than they are in reality. This is also known as greenwashing. Several news media have already described how concerning it is that fashion producers can keep on ignoring regulations. Therefore, governmental organizations are asked to take action.



When you continue to the next page, you will be presented by a press release of the European Union upon this matter. Please read it and answer the following questions. Once continued, you will not be able to return to the press release again, so please read it carefully.

Appendix D: Questionnaire measuring items

Message credibility

- I think the press release is believable
- I think the press release is convincing
- I think the press release is biased
- I think the press release is accurate
- I think the press release is trustworthy

Corporate reputation

- After reading the press release, I believe the European Union is concerned with the well-being of the public.
- After reading the press release, I respect the organization.
- After reading the press release, I believe the European Union is environmentally responsible

Issue awareness

- The press release has made me more aware of this issue.
- After reading the press release, I realize the impact of the issue more.
- The press release has made me more sensitive to environmental issue.

Message transportation

- The story in the press release affected me.
- I felt emotionally affected by the press release.
- The story in the press release is relevant to my everyday life.