Repairing a damaged organizational reputation: Can celebrities' Tweets do the work?

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DUTCH SUMMARY

Veel organisaties gebruiken Twitter vandaag de dag als onderdeel van hun communicatiestrategie. De vraag die in dit onderzoek wordt gesteld is of organisaties Twitter kunnen gebruiken om reputatieschade te herstellen. Het onderzoek richt zich specifiek op het verzenden van Tweets door bekende personen in plaats van de organisatie zelf. Eerder onderzoek heeft namelijk aangetoond dat informatie van secundaire bronnen als meer betrouwbaar wordt gezien dan directe informatie van organisaties. De onderzoeksvraag van dit onderzoek luidt als volgt: *In hoeverre kunnen organisaties Twitter inzetten, gebruikmakende van bekende personen, om reputatieschade te herstellen?*

Het gebruik van bekende personen om mensen mee te beïnvloeden is geen nieuw fenomeen. Veel organisaties gebruiken bekende personen om een positief merkimago of merkattitude te creëren, of om koopintentie te stimuleren. Tegenwoordig zien we dat dit fenomeen ook op Twitter verschijnt. Steeds meer organisaties, met name in de Verenigde Staten, betalen bekende personen om positieve berichten te verspreiden over hun organisatie en met name over hun producten. Ook in Nederland zien we sinds kort dat bekende Nederlanders worden betaald door organisaties om Tweets te versturen.

Bekende personen die gebruik maken van Twitter kunnen invloed uitoefenen doordat zij veel volgers hebben en vaak geretweet worden. Echter is het ook belangrijk dat bekende personen worden gezien als geloofwaardig, omdat de boodschap anders niet overtuigend is. Eerder onderzoek heeft aangetoond dat naast expertise en vertrouwen, aantrekkelijkheid van de bron van invloed is op de geloofwaardigheid. In dit onderzoek wordt de perceptie van aantrekkelijkheid van de bron vergeleken met de perceptie van intelligentie. Aan de hand van het vooronderzoek zijn een aantrekkelijke en een intelligente bekende Nederlander geselecteerd. Naast twee types bekende Nederlanders worden in dit onderzoek twee verschillende soorten Tweets gebruikt: Tweets die een ervaring met een organisatie beschrijven en Tweets die algemene informatie over een organisatie geven. Het vooronderzoek toont aan dat deze type Tweets het meest worden verstuurd door bekende Nederlanders.

In deze studie wordt een 2 x 2 (type bekende Nederlander x type bericht) experiment uitgevoerd. Dit experiment wordt herhaald voor twee organisaties: KLM en NS. Respondenten is eerst gevraagd naar hun mening ten aanzien van de organisatie. Vervolgens moesten zij een nieuwsbericht lezen met negatieve informatie over de organisatie. Na een tweede reputatiemeting kregen respondenten een Tweet van een bekende Nederlander te zien. Vervolgens werd er een derde reputatiemeting uitgevoerd.

De resultaten tonen aan dat Tweets van bekende personen daadwerkelijk een positieve invloed hebben op de reputatie van organisaties. Echter konden de Tweets er niet voor zorgen dat de reputatie weer op hetzelfde niveau kwam als voor het verschijnen van het negatieve nieuwsbericht. Tevens werden er geen significant verschillen gevonden tussen de vier condities. Dit leidt tot de conclusie dat het niet uit maakt of een bekend persoon aantrekkelijk of intelligent is, en of hij vertelt over een ervaring of over algemene informatie. Wanneer echter wordt gekeken naar de geloofwaardigheid dat een aantrekkelijk persoon algemene informatie over een organisatie deelt, blijkt dat deze het laagst is in vergelijking met de andere condities. Organisaties wordt dan ook aangeraden om hier rekening mee te houden als zij gebruik willen maken van bekende Nederlanders om hun reputatieschade te herstellen.

SUMMARY

Nowadays, many organizations use Twitter as part of their communication strategy. This study focuses on the question if organizations can use Twitter in order to repair a damaged organizational reputation. More specifically, the research concerns the sending of Tweets by celebrities instead of organizations themselves. This because previous research has revealed that information from secondary sources is being viewed as more reliable than information from organizations themselves. The following research question has been created: *To what extent can organizations use Twitter, making use of a celebrity, to repair a damaged organizational reputation?*

The use of celebrities in order to influence people is not a new phenomenon. Many organizations engage in celebrity endorsement in order to create a positive brand image or brand attitude, or to increase purchase intention. With the rise of Twitter we see that this phenomenon also takes places via this social medium. More and more organizations, especially in the United States, are paying celebrities for spreading positive messages about the organization and more specifically about their products. Recently, Dutch organizations have also started to approach celebrities for promoting their organization.

Celebrities who use Twitter can exert influence because they have a large amount of followers and their messages are often retweeted. However, it is also important for celebrities to be seen as credible, because otherwise their message cannot be convincing. Research has revealed that besides expertise and trust, source attractiveness has an influence on credibility. The current study will compare the perception of attractiveness with the perception of intelligence. A pre-test has been executed in order to find an attractive and an intelligent celebrity. In addition to the different types of celebrities, two different types of Tweets will be used in this study: Tweets containing an experience with an organization and Tweets containing general information about an organization. Preliminary analysis showed that these two types of Tweets are sent most by celebrities.

In this study a 2 x 2 (type of celebrity x type of message) experiment will be executed. This experiment will be repeated for two Dutch organizations: KLM airlines and NS railways. First, respondents were asked about their opinion regarding the organization. Next, they were shown a news message containing negative information about the organization. After a second reputation measurement, respondents read a Tweet of celebrity. Subsequently, a third reputation measurement was executed.

The results reveal that celebrities' Tweets can indeed have a positive influence on the reputation of organizations. However, the Tweets could not repair the reputation to such an extent that the reputation was back on the initial level, before the appearance of the negative news message. No significant differences were found between the four conditions. This leads us to the conclusion that it does not matter whether a celebrity is attractive or intelligent, or whether he sends a message containing an experience or containing general information. But, when looking to the likability that an attractive celebrity shares general information about an organization it is found that this is at a low level compared to the other conditions. Therefore, it is recommended to organizations to keep this in mind when using a celebrity in order to repair a damaged organizational reputation.

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ABSTRACT

These days many organizations engage in Twitter activities as part of their communication strategy. Organizations can use this medium to share information with stakeholders or to answer questions of customers. This study focuses on the way Tweets can be used to repair a damaged organizational reputation. More specifically, the study examines the question of organizations can use celebrities to share Tweets about the organization. A 2 x 2 (type of celebrity x type of message) experiment is conducted. The results reveal that celebrities' Tweets can significantly influence people's perception of organizations positively. No significant differences are found between the conditions. This implies that celebrities' Tweets can repair a damaged reputation to a certain extent, but it does not matter whose they are or what message they contain.

KEYWORDS

Twitter, organizational reputation, celebrities

INTRODUCTION

Twitter is booming business, not only among people but also among businesses. Many businesses feel the pressure they should anticipate to this new medium, because everyone is doing it. Much recent research is looking into this phenomenon. These researchers have focused on the ways organizations can analyze information emerging via Twitter, like gathering marketing information or brand perception (Jansen et al., 2009), and spotting damaging rumours (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2006). Others have looked at the ways organizations can actively use Twitter themselves by for example responding to questions of customers (Jansen et al., 2009), sharing relevant information about the organization to stakeholders (Zhang et al., 2011) or engaging in dialogues with stakeholders (Rybalko and Seltzer, 2010). But perhaps Twitter can also be used to influence people their perceptions of organizations, in other words: the organizational reputation. The study that is presented in this paper will focus on this topic. More specifically, the question is if it would be possible for organizations to repair a damaged organizational reputation via Twitter messages. Not by sending direct messages, Tweets, themselves, but by selecting others to do so. Others because it is already known that information of secondary sources is being viewed as more reliable than information of organizations themselves (Allsop et al., 2007). Organizations have already found out that they can use celebrities to promote their products and services via Twitter. But can they also use them to spread positive messages in order to repair a damaged organizational reputation?

In this paper a study is presented regarding the influence of celebrities their Tweets on organizational reputation. Specifically, an empirical study will be conducted to find out if 1) the type of celebrity, attractive or intelligent, and 2) the type of message, experience or information, determine the extent of influence on the reputation of organizations. First, the concepts of reputation, electronic word of mouth and Twitter will be explained more extensively. In addition, the concepts of celebrities and credibility will be discussed.

Subsequently, the method that is used for the experiments will be elaborated on. After an overview of the results, a conclusion and discussion are given.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Reputation

Reputation refers to 'mental associations about the organization actually held by others outside the organization' (Walsh et al., 2009: 189). Or as Schultz et al. (2001: 24) put it: 'Reputation combines everything that is knowable about a firm. As an empirical representation, it is a judgment of the firm made by a set of audiences on the basis of perceptions and assessments'. Reputation is an important aspect for organizations, because the way the public perceives an organization will determine its success (Fombrun, 1996). A positive reputation will lead to favourable word of mouth, as well as loyalty (Walsh et al., 2009). As a consequence, and on the long run, a good reputation has a positive impact on the financial performance of an organization (e.g. Roberts and Dowling, 2002; Rindova et al., 2005). On the other hand, having a bad reputation will lead to people not having confidence in the services or products and organization offers (Groenland, 2002). A poor reputation makes it also difficult for organizations to build a strong brand (Page and Fearn, 2005). Therefore, it is of great importance for organizations to make sure their reputation is positive and to repair a damaged reputation if necessary.

Berens and Van Riel (2004) distinguish between different concepts of reputation. According to them, there appear to be three leading streams in the literature of reputation: social expectations, corporate personality and trust. It was found that the concept of social expectations has been used most frequently in past research (Berens and Van Riel, 2004). One of the methods for measuring reputation based on social expectations is the Reputation Quotient of Fombrun et al. (2000). The Reputation Quotient is based on the fact that people justify their opinions about organizations on two factors: emotional appeal and rational appeal. These factors are represented by the following dimensions: emotional appeal, products & services, workplace environment, vision & leadership, financial performance, and social responsibility. More than a decade after the introduction of the Reputation Quotient, Ponzi et al. (2011) came with a shorter version of the measurement instrument: the RepTrack™ Pulse. This measurement instrument is a simplified emotion-based measurement tool for corporate reputation. The tool was created because previous reputation instruments had been indicated as being too extensive. Respondents often complained questions appear redundant and this can lead to fatigue and non-response. Also, a short measurement instrument can enhance the willingness of respondents to participate.

The measurement instruments show that reputation is a multidimensional concept that is based on different associations. These associations people have can come from different sources. On one hand, reputation can be directly influenced by the experience people have with an organization. The amount of satisfaction and trust with an organization are important antecedents for reputation (Walsh et al., 2009). People can also base their opinion about an organization on things they hear via media or via other people (Highhouse et al., 2009). The latter form of information is called word of mouth, or in the digital environment, electronic word of mouth. WOM is a channel of marketing that is dominated by consumers. Because of this,

word of mouth is seen as reliable, because the consumer decides for himself whether to say something about the brand, product or service, and he or she is independent of the organization (Arndt, 1967 cited in Brown et al., 2007, p. 7; Silverman, 1997). Also, WOM is seen as more credible and trustworthy than messages spread by organizations directly (Allsop et al., 2007).

Electronic word of mouth

Due to the rise of the Internet people can nowadays engage in electronic word of mouth (eWOM). EWOM is defined as 'any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet' (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004: 39). Before the rise of eWOM, customers were just passive receivers of marketing actions. There was a unidirectional relationship in which organizations had a large amount of control over brand-shaping messages (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010). Nowadays, the relationship is multidirectional. According to Deighton and Kornfeld (2009) organizations now also provoke conversations among customers. The reasons for people to engage in eWOM are, among other things, a desire for social interaction, a concern for other consumers and the potential to enhance their own self-worth. EWOM is an important type of word of mouth, because of the characteristics of the Internet and the immediate nature of microblogging. EWOM will reach many people for an indefinite period of time and can be anonymous (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004).

Electronic word of mouth can have different effects on consumers. It is already known that conventional word of mouth has an influence on both the attitude (e.g. Fitzgerald Bone, 1995; Giese et al., 1996) and behaviour (e.g. Godes and Mayzlin, 2009) of stakeholders towards organizations and their products and services. Based on previous researches Cheung and Thadani (2010) show that the effects of word of mouth are partly similar to electronic word of mouth. Both forms of communication influence consumers their beliefs, attitudes and purchase intention. Other researchers, for example Chu and Kamal (2010), also found a relation between positive word of mouth on blogs and favourable brand attitudes. EWOM can also be a predictor of sales according to both Davis and Khazanchi (2008) and Chevalier and Mayzlin (2003). This is also confirmed by Forman et al. (2008) who argue that positive online product reviews will lead to an increase of product sales. Unfortunately, organizations cannot easily control such external factors, especially with the rise of online platforms where everyone can share his or her opinion (Blackshaw and Nazzaro, 2006).

Nevertheless, it seems that the research into electronic word of mouth has mainly focused on marketing effects like purchase intention. Hardly anything is known about the effects on the reputation of an organization. In addition, most research is about the effects of eWOM via product review websites and blogs. There has not been much research into eWOM via other platforms where people can share their opinion, such as microblogging websites.

Twitter

With the introduction of smart phones microblogging became increasingly popular (O'Reilly and Battelle, 2009). Microblogging differs from conventional blogging. Microblogging is a much faster form of communication, because the short messages do not take up much time to post and posting can be done via

mobile devices. Because of this, a microblogger will update its blog every few hours whereas a conventional blogger will only do this every few days (Java et al., 2009).

Twitter is one of the platforms for microblogging. Twitter is an information network which connects people to information of other people. The information is given via so-called Tweets. A Tweet can take up to 140 characters. This seems to be a small space, but one can also use a Tweet as a headline and give a link to other sources of information like websites, photos and videos (Twitter, 2011a). According to Twitter: 'Twitter is the best way to discover what's new in your world' (2010: 1). Twitter is a network that is expanding every day. In September 2011 there were 200 million registered users from which half are active users. Furthermore, about 230 million tweets are written every day (Twitter, 2011a).

Twitter can be used for different purposes. It was found by Java et al. (2009) that the main intention to use Twitter is daily chatter. Most of the people talk about what they are doing. Furthermore, people also like to share information and URLs, and report news. The latter type of Tweets often also includes the mentioning of organizations and brands. Research of Jansen et al. (2009) shows that brands are mentioned in 19% of microblogs. Out of these, 20% contains some expression of brand sentiment. Half of these tweets were positive and 33% were negative. Hence, electronic word of mouth seems to take place quite often via Twitter.

Celebrities

Twitter is used by many types of people, from students to business men. Among the many users, celebrities are quite a large group (Kwak et al., 2010; Lipsman, 2009). There has not been much scientific research on the topic of celebrities' use of Twitter. Wu et al. (2011) found that although the media generate the most information, celebrities are being followed most. They also found that the relative small group of elite users, including celebrities, produce 50% of Tweets containing URLs. Hessert (2009 cited in Greenberg, 2009) argues that celebrities share their stories via Twitter because people want to know about them as people. In this way celebrities can please their fan base and enhance themselves as their own "brand".

In the offline world celebrities can have a substantial impact on the opinions of people. Many organizations engage in celebrity endorsement as a marketing tool for creating brand awareness (Premeaux, 2005), a positive brand image (Hakimi et al., 2011), a positive brand attitude (Amos et al., 2008) or to increase purchase intention (Kahle and Homer, 1985). Celebrities are often seen as opinion leaders: 'people who influence the opinions, attitudes, beliefs, motivations, and behaviors of others' (Valente and Pumpuang, 2007: 881).

But also in the online world celebrities can be influential. An example concerning the influence of celebrities is the case of Dutch comedian Youp van 't Hek and telecom provider T-Mobile. In October 2010 Van 't Hek used Twitter to report negatively about the telecom provider. Because of his Tweets the bad service of T-mobile gained wide public attention (Nu.nl, 2010). As a result of his Tweets, negative reporting about T-mobile increased from 42% to 64%. In addition, it was found that the reputational damage has cost T-mobile 200,000 to 300,000 euro (Buzzcapture, 2010). Nevertheless, celebrities can also have a positive influence on people and can therefore be used as a marketing tool. Organizations have already found out that celebrities can be an important marketing tool in the world of Twitter. More and more organizations are willing to pay celebrities for promoting their brand via endorsed Twitter messages (Daily Mail, 2011; Yue and Xuecheng, 2010). US

celebrities such as Kim Kardashian are getting paid over 10,000 dollar per Tweet to promote certain products (Daily Mail, 2009). Until recently this phenomenon did not exist in the Netherlands. However, Dutch celebrities are nowadays also approached for marketing via Twitter, for example for the promotion of films (Van Stein Callenfels, 2012).

Nevertheless, it is not yet known if celebrities their Tweets can exert such an influence that they also can repair a damaged organizational reputation. What we already know is that in the Twitter environment influencers are those individuals 'who disproportionately impact the spread of information or some related behaviour of interest' (Bakshy et al., 2011: 2). The number of followers (Bakshy et al., 2011; Kwak et al., 2010), the page-rank (Kwak et al., 2010) and the number of retweets (Cha et al., 2010; Kwak et al., 2010) are important indicators of influence via Twitter. These characteristics are mainly found among celebrities using Twitter. Hence, celebrities their Tweets can have a large influence on people their opinions.

Credibility

For celebrities exerting influence via Twitter, it is also important to be seen as credible. Messenger or source credibility refers to the extent to which the 'recipient believes that the information source provider himself has considerable knowledge, skills and experiences, and that the information provided by him is objective without bias' (Ho and Chang Chien, 2010: 396). This is especially important in the Twitter environment, because everyday users are exposed to many extreme opinions (Li and Li, 2011). Murray (1991) explains that personal sources, such as friends, are viewed more credible than impersonal sources. As celebrities are not real friends of their followers, the question is if they are being viewed as credible and hence can exert influence. Consequently, credibility is an essential issue. Previous research has revealed that the credibility of an endorsed message of a celebrity is, among other things, depended on the physical attractiveness of the celebrity (Ohanian, 1990; Amos et al., 2008). The fact that attractiveness is important has been confirmed by other researchers. Hakimi et al. (2011) have found that good looks and the attractiveness of a celebrity lead to a positive brand image. In addition, other researchers found that attractiveness has an effect on both brand attitude and purchase intention (Kahle and Homer, 1985; Till and Busler, 2000). Besides attractiveness, it is argued that source expertise (Ohanian, 1990; Till and Busler, 2000) and source trustworthiness (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Ohanian, 1990) are important indicators of credibility. However, it is unknown yet if source intelligence is also an indicator of credibility. Therefore this research will focus on the difference between attractive and intelligent celebrities.

To conclude, reputation is an important factor for the success of organizations. Repairing a damaged reputation is therefore important, but this is not an easy thing to do. People their perception of an organization can, among other things, be based on the stories they hear from other people. Especially celebrities can exert influence on people as being opinion leaders. Their stories can nowadays easily be spread via online platforms, like Twitter. Many organizations already use celebrities to promote their products via Tweets, but perhaps celebrities can also be used to spread positive messages in order to repair a damaged

reputation. This leads us to the following research question: *To what extent can organizations use Twitter, making use of a celebrity, to repair a damaged organizational reputation?*

Hypotheses

Based on existent literature several hypotheses have been set up. First, many different types of celebrities are active on Twitter, including attractive celebrities. The question is if people see Tweets of attractive celebrities as more credible than Tweets of celebrities who are viewed as intelligent. Previous research has indicated that within the context of celebrity endorsers, attractiveness is an important indicator for credibility and hence leads to more persuasion. Accordingly, Hypothesis 1 is as follow:

H1. A tweet of an attractive celebrity will have more effect than a tweet of an intelligent celebrity

Moreover, it is important that the endorsed Tweets do not stand out from the other Tweets, otherwise the Tweets might be seen as less credible. If we look at research regarding the content of Tweets we see that 41% of Tweets contain personal information, like telling what one is doing right now. People also like to share random statements and thoughts (25%), give opinions (24%) or share general information (21%) (Naaman et al., 2010). Preliminary research has been executed in order to find out in what way Twitter is used by Dutch celebrities. The analysis was carried out in May 2011 and included the last 25 Tweets of the 25 most followed Dutch celebrities. It was found that Twitter is mainly used as a direct communication channel, for example, between celebrities and their fans. 35% of the Tweets contained some form of conversation. Furthermore, 14% of celebrities their Tweets contained statements and random thoughts. In addition, telling what one is doing right now (13%) or sharing information (11%) was also often done. Accordingly, it can be concluded that Tweets about personal information seem to appear more often than Tweets with information. It is expected that using the first type of Tweet will be more credible than the latter, because it fits in better with other Tweets that are posted. This leads us to the second hypothesis:

H2. A Tweet containing an experience with an organization will have more effect than a Tweet containing general information about an organization.

Furthermore, it is important that there is a fit between the message and the messenger, otherwise the informative might be seen as not credible. As the current research includes two organizations which services are used by many people, it is expected that the fit between the type of celebrity and the experience Tweet will not be that important. However, the Tweet containing general information about an organization might be more credible if it is sent by a celebrity who is perceived as intelligent. This is because source expertise is an important indicator of credibility (Amos et al., 2008; Ohanian, 1990) and an intelligent celebrity might be seen as having more expertise than an attractive celebrity.

H3. A Tweet containing general information of an intelligent celebrity will have more effect than a Tweet containing general information of an attractive celebrity.

METHODOLOGY

In order to measure the influence of celebrities their Tweets on the reputation of organizations with a damaged reputation a 2 (types of celebrities) x 2 (types of messages) design has been setup. The type of celebrity, either attractive or intelligent, and the type of message, either containing an experience or containing general information, were the manipulated variables. The reputation of a Dutch organization served as the dependent variable. Respondents were first primed negatively by exposing them to a negative news message regarding the organization involved. The experiment was repeated for two Dutch organizations in order to investigate whether the effects of the manipulated variables would be generalizable. The design of the experiment can be found in Figure 1. This design only includes NS railways, the design for KLM was exactly the same.

Sample

Respondents that were be approached were men and women in their twenties. Previous research has indicated that this group of people makes use of Twitter the most in comparison to other age groups in the Netherlands (Schoonderwoerd, 2010). In order to make the sample as homogenous as possible, only college students were approached.

In the KLM experiment 82 respondents completed all the questions of the questionnaire, incomplete questionnaires (N=11) were removed. About 48% of the respondents was male and 52% was female. The average age was *M* = 23.94 years (*SD* = 2.76). In addition, most students (62%) indicated they were a university student, the other 38% is following a higher vocational education. Nearly 30% of the respondents is an active Twitter user. These respondents send Tweets themselves and also follow other Twitter users. 40% indicated they do not make use of Twitter. Furthermore, 27% follows other users but does not send Tweets him- or herself. The remaining respondents indicated that they send Tweets but they do not follow any other users.

In the NS experiment 80 respondents completed the questionnaire, incomplete questionnaires (N=13) were removed. 46% was male and 54% was female. The average age was *M* = 23.48 (*SD* = 2.13). Among the respondents, 74% was a university student and the remaining students were a higher vocational education student. When looking at the use of Twitter, 28% is an active Twitter user. About 41% of the respondents does not make use of Twitter at all. Furthermore, 22% only follows other users and the remaining respondents only send Tweets but do not follow any other users.

Respondents were equally and randomly assigned to one of the organizations and within these organizations, one of the four conditions. For KLM, a one way ANOVA test showed no significant difference between the results of the respondents of the four conditions on the first reputation test ($F(3) = 1.31$, $p = .28$) and the second, after the appearance of the news message ($F(3) = 0.99$, $p = .40$). As with the results for KLM, no significant differences were found between the respondents of all four groups in the NS experiment. That holds for both the first reputation test ($F(3) = 1.305$, $p = .28$) and the second one, which was shown after the news message ($F(3) = 0.288$, $p = .83$). Accordingly, respondents were equally divided among the four conditions.

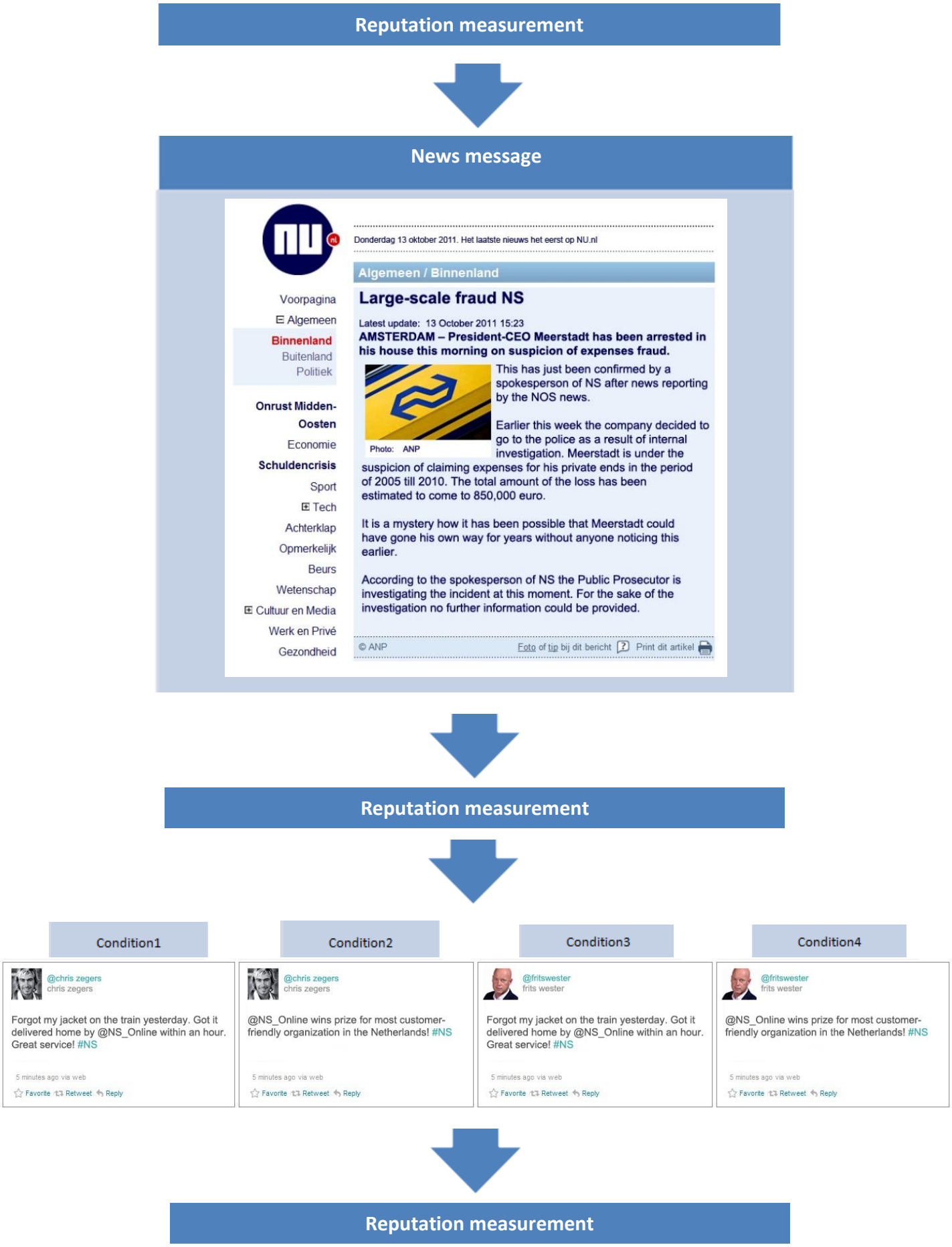

Figure 1: Design of the study

Procedure

Respondents were invited via an e-mail or a Facebook message to participate in the online survey. First, respondents were asked about their opinion regarding three Dutch organizations: KLM, NS and Philips. The latter organization was used as a filler. After this, respondents had to read a news message of Dutch news website NU.nl. This message contained negative information about either KLM or NS, depending on the experimental group respondents were assigned to. Subsequently, respondents were asked about their thoughts on the organization mentioned in the news message. After these questions, respondents had to answer several questions about their demographics. Next, respondents were shown a Tweet of a Dutch celebrity. This Tweet involved information about the organization that was mentioned earlier in the news message. Respondents were made aware this Tweet was published shortly after the publication of the news message. After reading this Tweet, respondents again had to share their opinion about the organization involved. At the end of the questionnaire some control questions were asked. Respondents were asked to indicate to what extent they think it is likely that the aforementioned celebrity would make use of Twitter and would say something about the organization involved. They were also asked about their opinion of celebrities getting paid for spreading positive messages about organizations. In addition, respondents were asked about their use of the products and services of the organization involved and about their use of Twitter. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix 1.

Stimuli

Celebrities. Previous research has revealed that the credibility of a celebrity's message is depended on attractiveness. In this research there will be a focus on both attractiveness and intelligence. In order to manipulate this variable, respondents had to read a Tweet either coming from a celebrity with a high level of attractiveness or a celebrity with a high level of intelligence. The levels of attractiveness and intelligence have been pre-tested. A wide range of celebrities was selected, from actors to politicians. The celebrities were all aged between 30 and 50, so there would be no extreme differences between the celebrities. Eight men and eight women were invited to rate 23 Dutch male celebrities on an attractive – intelligent scale via the Q-sort method. The photos of the celebrities were selected based on their neutrality, so no photo would stand out from the other pictures. An overview of all photos can be found in Appendix 2. In addition, participants were asked to indicate to what extent they think it would be likely that the celebrities involved would make use of Twitter. This was measured on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1 = very unlikely to 5 = very likely).

It was found that actor and television host Chris Zegers scored highest on attractiveness and news presenter Frits Wester scored highest on intelligence. On an attractive – intelligent scale (from -3 = attractive to 3 = intelligent), the first celebrity scored an average of M = -2.31 (SD = 1.01) and the latter M = 2.12 (SD = .66). Both celebrities also scored high on the abovementioned likeability scale with Chris scoring M = 3.94 (SD = .93) and Frits scoring M = 4.13 (SD = .96).

As the behaviour of celebrities can influence the effect of celebrity endorsement (Amos et al., 2008), it has been checked whether both celebrities have appeared in the news negatively. This monitoring was done for the total period of data collection, starting with the pre-test mid August 2011 until the collection of data for

both experiments in October – November 2011. It was found that both celebrities were not negatively reported via news website NU.nl, the largest news website in the Netherlands (STIR, 2011).

Organizations. The Tweets contained information about two Dutch organizations: either railway company NS or airline (Air France) KLM. There has been made a choice for these organizations, because they are widely known in the Netherlands (Reputation Institute, 2011). Moreover, both organizations are transport companies, which makes it more easy to compare the results of both experiments.

In addition to the Tweet, the organizations were mentioned in a news message that contained negative information. The news messages of both organizations can be found in Appendix 4. The news message has first been pretested with help of 16 respondents, both men and women. The name of the organization were replaced by the fictitious name "Alpha" in this preliminary research. The reputation of this fictitious organization was measured with the help of the RepTrack™ Pulse of Ponzi et al. (2011). Results showed that the news message led to a low score on reputation with an average of $M = 2.44$ ($SD = .40$) for the four items on a 7-point scale (from 1 = totally disagree to 7 = totally agree).

The organizations have been checked for their negative appearance in the news during the data collection period from 13 October until 6 November 2011, as this could influence the opinion of respondents. It was found that NS railways was not negatively reported via news website NU.nl, the largest news website in the Netherlands (STIR, 2011). The same website showed one result when checking for KLM. This news message from 21 October 2011 contained information about the large amount of costs for Air France-KLM caused by strikes in France.

Messages. The Tweets either contained information about a positive experience with the organization or general positive information about the organization. It was made sure the Tweets appeared to be the same as real-life Tweets. It should be noticed however that after the data collection, Twitter changed its layout. In accordance with the guidelines of Twitter the Tweets did not contain more than 140 characters (Twitter, 2011a). Also, they included the mention of the Twitter accounts of the organizations via the, often used, @-sign (Twitter, 2011b). Examples of the Tweets can be found in Appendix 4.

Measures

The dependent variable in this research, the reputation of KLM and NS, has been measured with the recently developed RepTrak™ Pulse of Ponzi et al. (2011). Ponzi et al. (2011) have shown the reliability of the RepTrak™ Pulse. Four studies were executed, all having results with $\alpha > .93$. It was found that the instrument can also predict behavioural intentions such as word of mouth behaviour, and purchase and investment intention. Furthermore, the tool is suitable for the Dutch market as it was also tested across cultures, including the Netherlands.

The RepTrak™ Pulse consists of the following statements:

1. *[Company] is a company I have a good feeling about*
2. *[Company] is a company that I trust*
3. *[Company] is a company that I admire and respect*
4. *[Company] has a good overall reputation*

Respondents were asked to give their opinion about the organizations by assessing the above statements on a 7-point Likert scale (from 1 = totally disagree to 7 = totally agree). The first reputation measurement included all above statements for three Dutch organizations, these were shown in random order. The second reputation measurement contained the same statements plus an additional three statements in order to avoid any bias in remembrance. The last reputation measurement again included the above statements plus three other additional statements that were used as a filler.

Reliability analyses have been performed for all three reputation constructs. For KLM it was found that the first reputation construct had a reliability of $\alpha = .76$. High reliability was also found for the second ($\alpha = .84$) and third construct ($\alpha = .84$). The three constructs in the NS experiment also showed high reliability (respectively, $\alpha = .89$, $\alpha = .87$ and $\alpha = .93$).

The questions regarding demographics included questions about gender, age and education. The likelihood that the celebrities involved would make use of Twitter and would say something about the organizations via Twitter were measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale (from 1 = very unlikely to 7 = very likely). Furthermore, the opinion of respondents about celebrities getting paid for spreading positive messages about organizations was measured on a 7-point semantic differential scale (from 1 = very negative to 7 = very positive). In addition, the use of products and services of the organization involved and the use of Twitter were measured with closed questions.

RESULTS

The findings of the research will first be explained separately for the KLM airlines experiment and the NS railways experiment. Subsequently, the main findings will be summarized in a conclusion and an answer to the main research question will be given.

KLM airlines

General information. Respondents in the condition with the attractive celebrity indicated that they think it is quite likely that this celebrity makes us of Twitter, the average score was *M* = 5.24 (*SD* = 1.29). When looking at the results for the intelligent celebrity, we see about the same (*M* = 5.05, *SD* = 1.38). Most respondents who received a Tweet about an experience of the attractive celebrity indicated they thought it is likely that this celebrity would say something about KLM. The average score was *M* = 5.24 (*SD* = 1.29). The same results were found for the experience message (*M* = 5.00, *SD* = 1.21) and the informational message (*M* = 5.29, *SD* = 1.15) of the intelligent celebrity. However, respondents in the condition with the attractive celebrity and an informational message were less positive (*M* = 3.70, *SD* = 1.59). Most of the respondents had a negative

attitude towards the attractive celebrity being paid for spreading positive messages about KLM(*M* = 2.68, *SD* = 1.29). The results for the intelligent celebrity were about the same (*M* = 2.29, *SD* = 1.19).

Furthermore, when being asked about their use of the products and services of KLM, 46.3% of the respondents said to only use these once in a few year. In addition, 36.6% indicated to never use any of the products and services. 15.9% makes use of the products and services on a yearly basis and 1.2% on a quarterly basis.

News message effects. Preliminary analysis has shown that the news message included in this research led to a low total score on reputation (*M* = 2.44, *SD*= 0.40). Nevertheless, because the preliminary analysis included a fictitious organization, it has been tested to what extent this result is also visible in the main research.

The reputation score for each respondent was calculated by taking the average score of the four reputation items. This would lead to a score between 1 and 7. As is visible in Table 1, the total average reputation score significantly decreased from *M* = 5.92 to *M* = 5.09 (t = 11.79, df = 81, p < .005). This was also the case for all separate conditions. This shows the news message was effective as it had a negative effect on the opinion of respondents.

Tweet effects. A paired-samples t test has been executed in order to see whether the Tweet messages would actually have an influence on the opinion of respondents. To measure this, the average scores of the reputation measurement after the Tweet were compared to the average scores of the reputation measurement right after the news message appeared. As is visible in Table 1, it was found that in all conditions, scores significantly increased after respondents read the Tweet.

Overall, the Tweets had a positive effect on the reputation of KLM when looking at the total average scores, there was a significant increase in scores (t = 7.11, df = 81, p < .005). The experience message of the attractive celebrity increased the reputation score significantly (t = 0.46, df = 20, p < .005). This was also the case for the information message of this celebrity, but the effect was a little less significant (t = 1.80, df = 19, p < .05). The experience message (t = 3.87, df = 19, p < .005) and information message (t = 4.39, df = 20, p < .005) of the intelligent celebrity both led to a significant higher score on reputation. As can be seen in Table 1, both experience messages led to higher differences than the informational messages. This implies support for Hypothesis 1. However, a two way ANOVA test showed no main effect for the type of message (F(1,78) = 0.89, p = .35), so no support was found for this hypothesis. In addition, both Tweets of the attractive celebrity led to lower differences than the Tweets of the intelligent celebrity. There seems to be no evidence for Hypothesis 2. Nevertheless, no main effect was found for type of celebrity F(1,78) = 2.23, p = .14), therefore this hypothesis was indeed not supported. Lastly, the informational message of the intelligent celebrity led to a higher difference than the same message of the attractive celebrity. This is in accordance with Hypothesis 3. However no interaction effect was found (F(1,78) = 0.54, p = .47) and so, Hypothesis 3 was also not supported.

Tweet repairing effects. It has been tested whether the Tweets could actually repair the scores to such an extent that the reputation scores would return to their level before the negative news message appeared. As

Table 1 shows, the reputation scores after the Tweet were not on the same level as the scores of the zero measurement. A paired-samples t test showed that the overall differences between these two measurements were significant (t = -6.71, df = 81, p < .005). The same results were found for the separate conditions. This implies that the positive effect of the Tweets could not overrule the negative effect caused by the news message.

Table 1. Average reputation scores per condition in the KLM experiment (on a scale from 1 to 7) and differences between reputation measurements

			1. Zero measurement		2. News message		3. Tweet		Differences between reputation measurements		
Celebrity	**Message**	N	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	2 – 1	3 – 2	3 – 1
Attractive	*Experience*	21	5.75	0.54	4.90	0.64	5.30	0.67	-0.85**	0.39**	-0.45**
	Information	20	5.86	0.69	5.18	0.68	5.39	0.61	-0.69**	0.21*	-0.48**
Intelligent	*Experience*	20	5.98	0.74	5.03	0.90	5.50	0.74	-0.95**	0.47**	-0.48*
	Information	21	6.11	0.44	5.27	0.74	5.73	0.62	-0.83**	0.45**	-0.38**
Total averages		82	5.92	0.62	5.09	0.75	5.48	0.67	-0.83**	0.38**	-0.44**

*p < .05, ** p < .005

NS railways

General information. Most respondents thought it is likely that both the attractive celebrity (*M* = 5.28, *SD* = 1.63) and the intelligent celebrity (*M* = 4.95, *SD* = 1.41) make use of Twitter. When respondents were asked about the extent to which they think it is likely that the attractive celebrity says something about NS, respondents in the experience condition gave an average of *M* = 4.70 (*SD* = 1.49). As with the results of KLM, respondents who received an informational message of the attractive celebrity (*M* = 2.55, *SD* = 1.19) thought this would be less likely than respondents in the other conditions. When looking at the results for the intelligent celebrity we see that respondents in the experience condition (*M* = 4.70, *SD* = .98) were more positive than those in the informational condition (*M* = 3.80, *SD* = 1.36). Furthermore, respondents had a negative attitude when being asked about their opinion of celebrities being paid for sending positive messages about NS. The average for the attractive celebrity was *M* = 2.38 (*SD* = 1.43). The intelligent celebrity gained an average score of *M* = 2.08 (*SD* = 0.97).

Lastly, most respondents (32.5%) make use of the products and services of NS every fortnight. In addition, 25.0% travels by train on a daily basis. In addition, 16.3% uses the products and services every month and 10.0% every week. Furthermore, 5.0% indicated to use the products and services on a quarterly basis and 2.5% on a half-yearly basis.

News message effects. A paired-samples t test showed that also in the NS experiment, the scores after the news message were significantly lower than before. The average score decreased from *M* = 3.41 to *M* = 2.98 (t = 7.156, df = 80, p < .005). As is visible in Table 2, this significant decrease could be found in all conditions.

Tweet effects. A paired-samples t test has been executed in order to see whether the Tweets would actually have an influence on the opinion of respondents. To measure this, the average scores of the reputation

measurement after the Tweet were compared to the average scores of the reputation measurement right after the news message appeared. As is visible in Table 2, the scores after the Tweet were found to be higher in all four conditions. However, not all scores were significantly higher.

When looking at the total averages, it is found that in general the Tweets increased the reputation score significantly ($t = 6.18$, $df = 79$, $p < .005$). The experience message of the attractive celebrity led to a significantly higher score ($t = 3.488$, $df = 19$, $p < .005$). This did not go for the condition in which this celebrity shared information ($t = 1.406$, $df = 19$, $p = .09$). Nevertheless, both the experience message ($t = 4.040$, $df = 19$, $p < .005$) and the informational message ($t = 3.442$, $df = 19$, $p < .005$) of the intelligent celebrity increased the score significantly. As can be seen in Table 2, both Tweets of the attractive celebrity did not lead to larger differences than the tweets of the intelligent celebrity. There seems to be no evidence for Hypothesis 1. In addition, no main effect was found for the type of celebrity ($F(1,76) = 3.042$, $p = .09$) and therefore Hypothesis 1 was not supported. Furthermore, both informational Tweets showed larger differences than the experience Tweets. This implies support for Hypothesis 2. However, no main effect was found for the type of message ($F(1,76) = 1.352$, $p = .25$) and therefore this hypothesis was not supported. To finish, the informational message of the intelligent celebrity led to a larger difference than the same message from the attractive celebrity. Accordingly, Hypothesis 3 seems to be supported. Nevertheless, no interaction effect was found ($F(1,76) = .528$, $p = .47$), so no evidence was found for this hypothesis.

Tweet repairing effects. Lastly, it has been tested whether the Tweets could actually repair the scores to such an extent that the reputation scores would go back to their level before the negative news message appeared. With a paired-samples t test it was found that overall the Tweets could not increase the reputation score more than the news message had decreased the score, as can be seen in Table 2.

The differences in scores between the zero measurement and the measurement after the Tweet were found to be significant ($t = -2.92$, $df = 79$, $p = 0.005$). When looking at the different conditions we see that the two messages of the attractive celebrity could not increase the score to the prior level. The differences between the first reputation test and the last were significant for both the experience message ($t = -2.562$, $df = 19$, $p < .05$) and the informational message ($t = -3.356$, $df = 19$, $p < .005$). However, the experience message of the intelligent celebrity led to a smaller difference. Although the reputation did not increase to the prior level, the difference between the scores were not significant ($t = -0.909$, $df = 19$, $p = .38$). The same was found for the other message of this celebrity. The informational message even led to a positive difference between the scores of the zero measurement and those of after the Tweet ($t = 1.718$, $df = 19$, $p = .102$). These results show that the Tweets of the intelligent celebrity had a more positive effect than the news message had a negative. One can carefully conclude that both Tweets of the intelligent celebrity could repair the damage caused by the news message.

Table 2. Average reputation scores per condition in the NS experiment (on a scale from 1 to 7) and differences between reputation measurements

			1. Zero measurement		2. News message		3. Tweet		Differences between reputation measurements		
Celebrity	**Message**	N	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	2 – 1	3 – 2	3 – 1
Attractive	*Experience*	20	3.71	1.17	3.15	0.97	3.43	1.07	-0.56**	0.28**	-0.29*
	Information	20	3.68	1.14	3.09	1.01	3.20	1.19	-0.59**	0.11	-0.48**
Intelligent	*Experience*	20	3.56	1.11	3.08	0.83	3.44	1.02	-0.49**	0.36**	-0.13
	Information	20	3.08	1.19	2.89	0.96	3.21	1.24	-0.19**	0.33**	0.14
Total averages		80	3.51	1.16	3.05	0.93	3.32	1.12	-0.46**	0.27**	-0.19*

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .005$

Conclusions

From the data of both experiments it can be concluded that celebrities their Tweets can have a significant influence on people their perception of organizations. When being exposed to a negative news message about an organization people perceive the organization involved negatively. After reading a positive Tweet from a celebrity people think more positively about the earlier mentioned organization. The results of the KLM airlines experiment showed that experience Tweets of both an attractive and an intelligent celebrity can increase the reputation significantly after the appearance of a negative news message. In addition, informational Tweets of both types of celebrities also significantly increased the reputation score, although the informational message of the attractive celebrity led to the least increase. When the experiment was repeated for NS railways, the same results were found. However, the condition in which the attractive celebrity shared information about the organization did not result in a significant increase in reputation.

This leads to the conclusion that an attractive celebrity who sends an informational message does not have the same positive effects than the other conditions. Also, when asking respondents about the likeliness that a celebrity will share information about the organization, the conditions with the attractive celebrity sharing an informational message scored much lower on likeliness than the other conditions. This result was found for both experiments. People simply do not think it is credible and likely that an attractive celebrity shares general information.

However, no significant differences were found between all four conditions in both experiments. Accordingly, none of the hypotheses was supported. This implies that celebrities their Tweets have an effect on reputation and can repair a damaged reputation to a certain extent, but it does not matter whose they are or what message they contain. The fact that a celebrity is talking positively about an organization seems to have enough effect already.

It is hard to conclude whether celebrities' Tweets can actually repair a damaged reputation to such an extent that the reputation will be on the same level as it was before the appearance of a negative news message. In the KLM experiment the reputation scores after the appearance of the Tweets were significantly lower than the initial reputation scores. Although the scores increased compared to the scores after the appearance of the news message, they did not return to the initial level. The negative news message had a more negative effect than the Tweets had a positive effect. When looking at the outcomes in the NS

experiment the same significant differences are found for the conditions with the attractive celebrity. However, the experience message of the intelligent celebrity led to around the same reputation score as the initial score. No significant differences were found between the two scores. In addition, the informational message even led to a higher reputation score than the initial score.

DISCUSSION

In this research the influence of celebrities their Tweets on the reputation of organizations was examined. More specifically, the research focused on the extent to which Tweets sent by celebrities could repair a damaged organizational reputation and if so, what type of celebrity and what type of message would be more effective. It was found that in general celebrities their Tweets have a significant influence on people their perception of organizations. These Tweets can be used by organizations to make people think more positively about an organization and hence organizations can use Tweets to repair a damaged reputation. It should be noted however that overall, the Tweets could not repair the damage to such an extent that the reputation increased to the initial level again. But, in the NS condition both Tweets of the intelligent celebrity actually did have a full repairing impact. Perhaps the same result would have been found for KLM if no external negative news message would have been published during the data collection.

No significant results were found between the four conditions in both experiments. From this we can conclude that Tweets sent by celebrities have a positive effect on reputation, no matter whether they are sent by an attractive or an intelligent celebrity, or whether they contain an experience or general information. Yet, it was found that the condition in which the attractive celebrity sent a message containing general information stood out from the other conditions. From this we can then conclude that it seems to be important that there is a match between the celebrity and the content of the message. This fits in with previous research regarding source credibility. According to Ohanian (1990), expertise is an important factor for the credibility of the source. Expertise is defined as 'a communicator's ability to confer accurate information (i.e., an expert source possesses the requisite knowledge necessary to provide accurate information)' (Priester and Petty, 2003: 408). One could argue that an attractive celebrity might be seen as less credible than an intelligent celebrity when a message contains general information, because he or she is perceived as less intelligent and therefore as having less knowledge and expertise about the topic on hand.

This study offers important insights into brand perception via Twitter. The results show that organizations have the opportunity to repair a damaged organizational reputation via celebrities their Tweets. Existing research has already shown that Twitter is a platform in which brand perceptions can be formed. More and more users are mentioning brands in their Tweets. Consumers also trust social networking systems as sources of information increasingly more (Jansen et al., 2009). In addition, this research can be seen as a first step towards a better understanding of the use of celebrities for spreading positive messages via Twitter and their influence on organizational reputation. As celebrities belong to the group of elite Twitter users (Wu et al., 2011) and are seen as influential due to their large number of followers (Bakshy, et al. 2011; Kwak et al., 2010) and their high page-rank (Kwak et al., 2010), their Tweets can be used to influence people their perception of organizations. More research is needed to explore this topic more intensively.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Despite careful construction of this research there are limitations to this study. First, this research included an experimental method in which reality was simulated. Although it has been tried to replicate reality as much as possible, it is nevertheless conceivable that in the real world people will respond differently to tweets of celebrities. The study included an isolated experiment, so the stimuli were reduced to a minimum. In real life, people are influenced by many external stimuli, so the effect of Tweets can be weaker then. It was found by Herr et al. (1991) that consumers base their judgments on diagnostic pieces of information. When these are more available than word of mouth information, for example in the case of their own opinion, the opinion of others will be trusted less. It can be concluded then, that when consumers have already formed an opinion about an organization, for example because they have had a bad experience, they will not be influenced by the opinion of others that easily. In addition, the experiment was conducted in one session with a low time span. When celebrities will be used in real life to repair a damaged reputation, for example caused by a negative news message, the time between the appearance of the negative message and the sending of the Tweet will be larger. Therefore, the effects of the Tweets can be weaker in real life.

Furthermore, this study included two types of celebrities, an attractive and an intelligent celebrity. Although the levels of attractiveness and intelligence of these celebrities have been pre-tested among the target audience of the main experiment, it is possible that due to the amount of time between the pre-test (August 2011) and the main experiment (October-November 2011), people their opinion about these celebrities has changed. In order to reduce this possible bias, both celebrities have been monitored for their negative appearance in the news. No negative information of these celebrities was found. Also, other research suggests that the credibility of an endorsed message from a celebrity is not only depended on the attractiveness of the sender, but also on the expertise and the trustworthiness of the sender (Ohanian, 1990). Expertise has not specifically been taken into account in the current research, but it could be argued that intelligence is part of expertise. In addition, one could also see experience as part of expertise. The more experience a person has with an organization, the more he becomes an expert. Furthermore, although the trustworthiness of the celebrities involved in this research has not been pretested, respondents were asked about the extent to which they think it would be likely that the celebrities would make use of Twitter and would actually spread information about the organizations. It was expected that this would have an influence on the trustworthiness of the messages. If a celebrities is not perceived as a Twitter user, then a message can hardly be effective. Nevertheless, future research can take the dimensions of expertise and trustworthiness into account more explicitly.

Future research can also focus on the use of female celebrities for spreading Tweets about organizations. The current research only included male celebrities. It is possible that female celebrities have a different influence on both genders. Previous research has already revealed that attractive female models have a more positive impact than attractive male models, especially among the male public (Debevec and Kernan, 1984). Another question that has not been examined is how often Tweets should be sent in order to have an influence. Perhaps the same message should be repeated by the same celebrity or by other celebrities. In addition, the current research has measured influence of the celebrity by looking at the change in reputation

scores. However, there are also other ways to measure influence via Twitter. Bakshy et al. (2011), for example, argue that reposting is an indicator of influence. If a Tweet is reposted by another user this means that the sender has had influence on the receiver.

Furthermore, this research included a negative news message regarding the crime of fraud committed by the president-CEO of an organization. Other researchers could focus on other types of news messages that can harm organizational reputation. Perhaps, celebrities' Tweets cannot always have an influence on people their perception when they are being exposed to negative news. In addition, future research can focus on using other types of messages besides experience and information messages. Perchance significant differences in types of messages will then be found more clearly.

Lastly, this research only included respondents who were in their twenties, because this age group uses Twitter most often in the Netherlands (Schoonderwoerd, 2010). It might also be interesting to look at other age groups, because these also seem to make use of Twitter often when looking at worldwide figures. According to Touch Agency (2011) the largest group of users (42.3%) is between 30 and 49 years old, followed by the age group of 18-29 years old (41.5%). Besides, this research only included the Dutch market, future research can focus on other countries. Nevertheless, the Netherlands is ranked number one worldwide when looking at Twitter representation. In March 2011, 26.8% of the Dutch population visited the Twitter.com website, leaving Ireland and the United States behind (ComScore Data Mine, 2011).

Managerial recommendations

The outcomes of this study show that celebrities' Tweets can have a substantial influence on people their perception of organizations. Hence, organizations can use Twitter to repair organizational reputation to a certain extent. Organizations wishing to make use of this knowledge should bear some things in mind. First, it is not important what type of celebrity is used, both attractive and intelligent celebrities can be used for sending messages about an experience. However, when using an attractive celebrity it might be wise to not send general information about the organization, as there is no positive effect, or a low effect, on organizational reputation. Second, when selecting a celebrity it is important there is a fit between the celebrity and the brand, because otherwise the message might not be seen as credible. Prior research has shown that this is important for celebrity endorsement (Hakimi et al., 2011; Pringle and Binet, 2005).

Third, it is important to consider that celebrities need to be trained in order to be a spokes person. Valente and Pumpuang (2007) argue that celebrities need to be educated about the message they are supporting, they need to know enough about the topic. In addition, negative personal behaviour of the celebrity is not wanted. If people hear negative information about the celebrity this can be harmful for the organization (Amos et al., 2008) and the effect of the endorsement will decrease (Zhou and Whitla, 2012). Lastly, respondents in this research showed a negative attitude towards celebrities being paid for spreading positive Tweets about organizations. This might be worrying, because this can make celebrities their Tweets less persuasive. In the Netherlands it is not compulsory to indicate whether a Tweet is sponsored. However, when this market expands, and it is expected that this will happen as Twitter itself is already anticipating on this trend by referring to the possibilities of promotional Tweets (Twitter, 2012), it is possible that celebrities are obliged to

mention this information. In the United States this is already the case. The US Federal Trade Commission has decided that it is forbidden to not clearly indicate a relationship with a brand. Celebrities should indicate whether they are sponsored for a Tweet by adding #spon, or #ad to their Tweet (Topping, 2011).

When keeping the aforementioned things in mind, Twitter is a suitable medium for organizations to repair their damaged reputation. Besides possibilities of Twitter like gathering market information or engaging in stakeholder dialogue, organizations can now also use this medium to influence people their perception of the organization. As the group of Twitter users is growing every day, the opportunities for organizations to influence these people via Tweets are promising.

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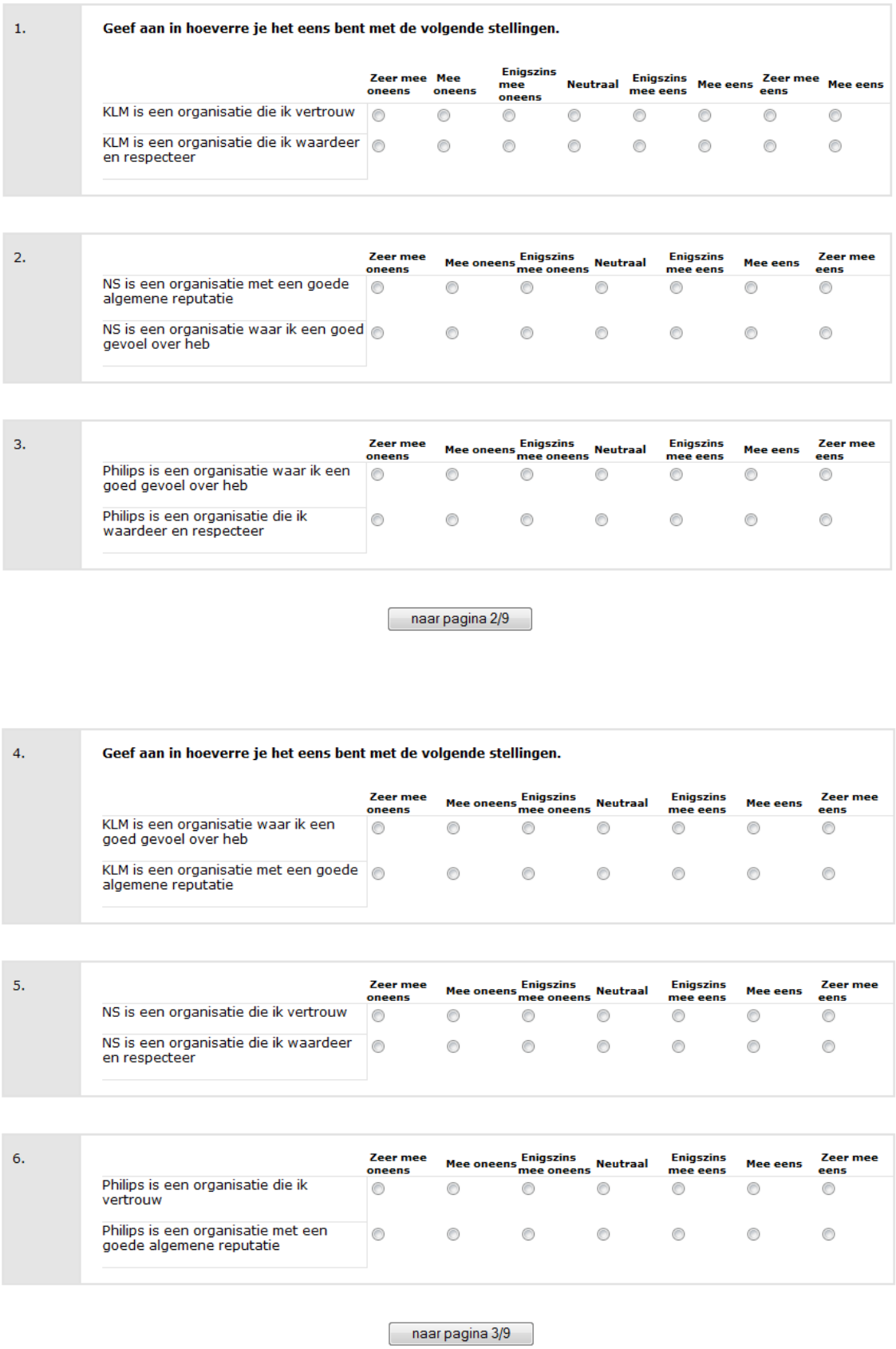
Appendix 1. Example of the Dutch questionnaire



1. **Geef aan in hoeverre je het eens bent met de volgende stellingen.**

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens	Mee eens
KLM is een organisatie die ik vertrouw	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
KLM is een organisatie die ik waardeer en respecteer	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

2.

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
NS is een organisatie met een goede algemene reputatie	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
NS is een organisatie waar ik een goed gevoel over heb	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

3.

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
Philips is een organisatie waar ik een goed gevoel over heb	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Philips is een organisatie die ik waardeer en respecteer	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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4. **Geef aan in hoeverre je het eens bent met de volgende stellingen.**

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
KLM is een organisatie waar ik een goed gevoel over heb	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
KLM is een organisatie met een goede algemene reputatie	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

5.

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
NS is een organisatie die ik vertrouw	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
NS is een organisatie die ik waardeer en respecteer	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

6.

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
Philips is een organisatie die ik vertrouw	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Philips is een organisatie met een goede algemene reputatie	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Figure 2: Questions regarding the reputation of three Dutch organizations

Stel dat het onderstaande nieuwsbericht vandaag is verschenen op nieuwswebsite NU.nl. Lees het bericht aandachtig.

Donderdag 13 oktober 2011. Het laatste nieuws het eerst op NU.nl

Voorpagina
⊟ Algemeen
Binnenland
Buitenland
Politiek
Onrust Midden-Oosten
Economie
Schuldencrisis
Sport
⊞ Tech
Achterklap
Opmerkelijk
Beurs
Wetenschap
⊞ Cultuur en Media
Werk en Privé
Gezondheid

Algemeen / Binnenland

Grootschalige fraude bij NS

Laatste update: 13 oktober 2011 15:23

AMSTERDAM – President-directeur Meerstadt is vanochtend in zijn woning aangehouden op verdenking van fraude met valse declaraties.

Foto: ANP

Een woordvoerder van KLM heeft dat zojuist bevestigd na berichtgeving van het NOS journaal.

Het bedrijf stapte eerder deze week naar de politie naar aanleiding van intern onderzoek. Meerstadt zou in de periode 2005 – 2010 zaken gedeclareerd hebben ten behoeve van privé-doeleinden. De schade bedraagt naar schatting zo'n 850.000 euro.

Het is een groot raadsel hoe het mogelijk is geweest dat de heer Meerstadt al deze jaren zijn gang heeft kunnen gaan zonder dat iemand dit eerder heeft opgemerkt.

Volgens de woordvoerder van KLM doet het Openbaar Ministerie op dit moment onderzoek naar het voorval. In het belang van het onderzoek kon er geen verdere informatie worden verstrekt.

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7. **Geef hieronder aan in hoeverre je het eens bent met de stellingen.**

	Zeer mee oneens	Mee oneens	Enigszins mee oneens	Neutraal	Enigszins mee eens	Mee eens	Zeer mee eens
NS is een organisatie met uitstekend leiderschap	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
NS is een organisatie waar ik een goed gevoel over heb	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
NS is een organisatie waar ik zou willen werken	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
NS is een organisatie die ik waardeer en respecteer	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
NS is een organisatie die ik vertrouw	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
NS is een organisatie met goede werknemers	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
NS is een organisatie met een goede algemene reputatie	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

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Figure 3: Example of a news message and questions regarding the reputation of NS

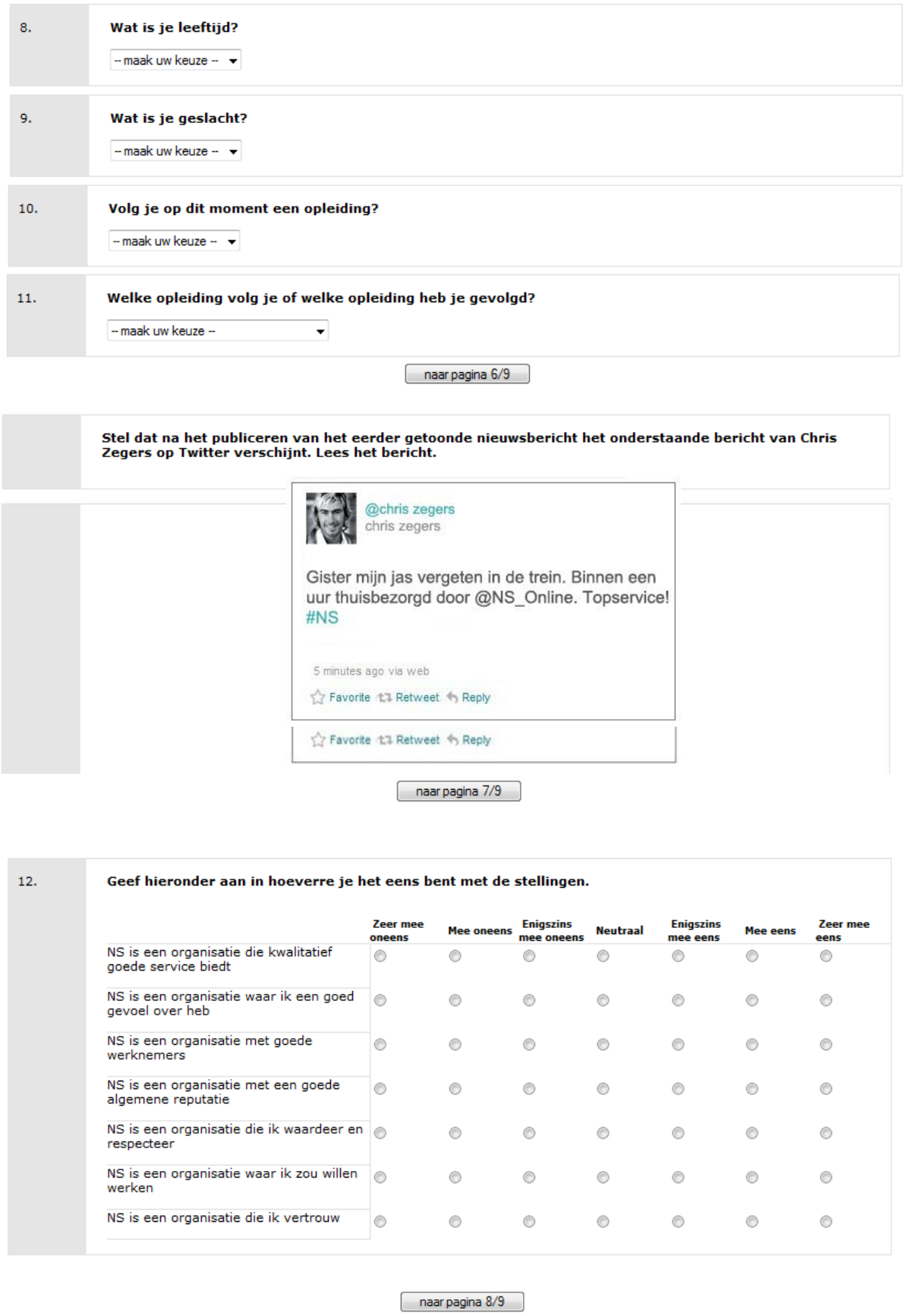

Figure 4: Demographical questions, example of a Tweet and questions regarding the reputation of NS

Figure 5: Questions regarding celebrity use of Twitter, use of products and services NS and use of Twitter

Appendix 2. Overview of Dutch celebrities selected for preliminary research

Figure 6: Dutch male celebrities selected for preliminary research

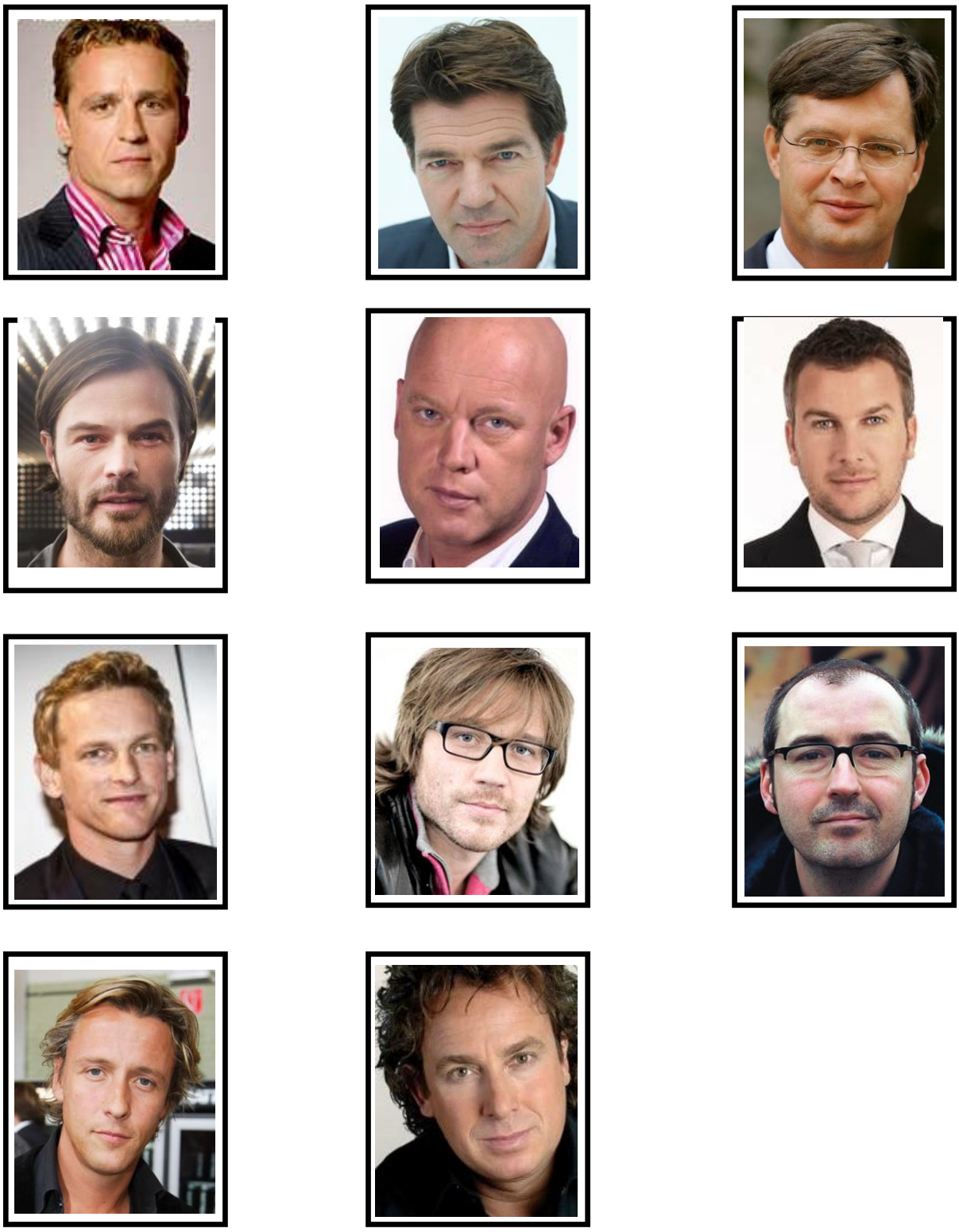

Figure 7: Dutch male celebrities selected for preliminary research

Appendix 3. Qsort response chart preliminary research

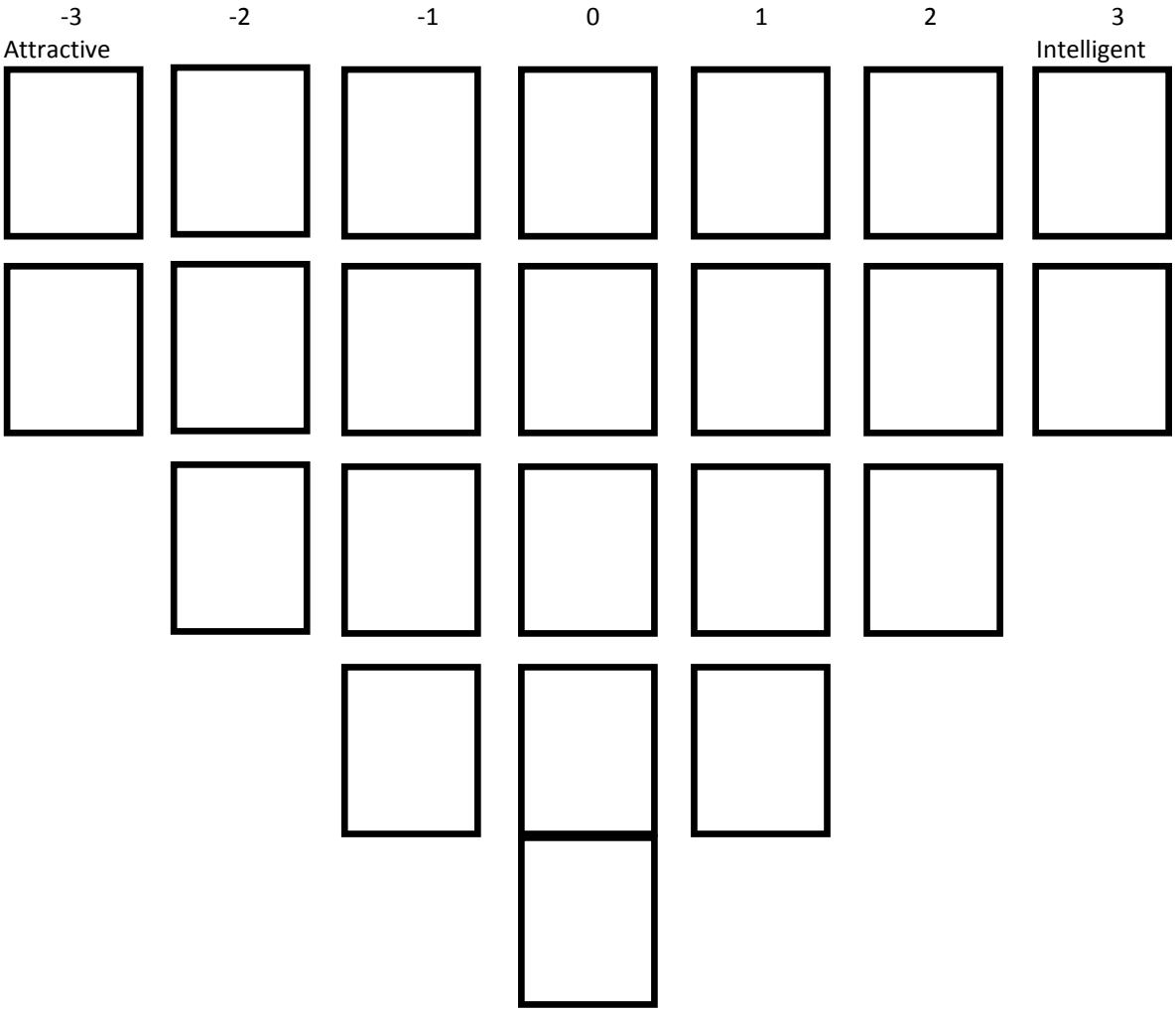

Figure 8: Qsort response chart

Appendix 4. Stimulus material

Figure 9: News message KLM airlines

Figure 10: News message NS railways

Figure 11: Tweets from an attractive celebrity containing an experience

Figure 12: Tweets from an attractive celebrity containing general information

Figure 13: Tweets from an intelligent celebrity containing an experience

Figure 14: Tweets from an intelligent celebrity containing general information