The effects of paracrisis origin and response strategy on audience's perceived organisational reputation and behavioural intentions

Sophia Viktoria Honisch

Declaration

1   This work is composed by me.

2   This work has not been accepted in any of my previous applications for a degree.

3   The work of which this is a record is done by me.

4   All verbatim extracts have been distinguished by quotation marks and the sources of my information have been specifically acknowledged.

Signature:

Date: 19/07/2017

Agreement

I agree to Communications, Media & Culture using my dissertation for teaching purposes. I understand my dissertation may also be made available to future students in the library.

Signature:

Date: 19/07/2017

Abstract:

This project focuses on paracrisis management on Facebook. Recently, research has examined paracrisis response strategies to find adequate ways of handling these reputation threats. The objective of this study is to test different selected paracrisis response strategies and identify the most recommendable strategy. Four organisational response strategies were examined: reform, humour, refuse, and refute. Two within-subjects experiments were conducted. Using fictional paracrises of fictional international IT suppliers, differences and effects in respondents' perceptions of organisational reputation and paracrisis behavioural intentions were analysed. This was investigated in quasi-experiments with self-imposed and external paracrisis origins. In both experiments the results show that a reform strategy is the most recommendable, and a humorous strategy is the least recommendable, for this paracrisis situation. This component of Public Relations can prevent potential real-world crises and protect organisations' reputations. Paracrises are an increasing concern for organisations as social media provide a platform for critical user comments.

Table of Contents

Word Count: 10.282

Figures and Tables

In text:

Appendices:

1. Introduction: The Importance of Paracrisis Management

"Guys, don't buy any Sony product. Sony Mobile IN is such a fraud! […]" (Sony Corporation, 2017; see Figure 5, Appendices)

This is just one example of numerous critical user comments many organisations have to face on their social media pages. Regardless if appropriate or not, organisations' Public Relations (PR) practitioners regularly have to decide whether and how to respond to these comments made by internet users. Therefore, crisis communication researchers increasingly investigate online risk threats such as social media firestorms (Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley, 2014; Lim, 2016). An online reputation threat "can 'look like' a crisis and does require action from the organization [sic]" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012, p. 408). Therefore, although it is not a real crisis, Coombs and Holladay (2012) developed the term "paracrisis". Social media issues need to be monitored and controlled because they are publicly visible and can become very serious, if not adequately identified and managed (Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley, 2014, pp. 118-119). Reputation is the public's image of an organisation, or how the audience perceives an organisation in the long run. Ideally organisations control their own images by monitoring and controlling all information published about themselves (Coombs, 2007, p. 164; Resnick et al., 2000, p. 46).

Coombs and Holladay (2012), the creators of the traditional Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), highlighted the need for a translation of their crisis response strategies into paracrises and therefore adapted their theory for this newer form of risk. However, further scholars (Dutta & Pullig, 2011; Kim, Zhang, & Zhang, 2016; Freberg, 2012; Lim, 2016; Roh, 2017) pointed out that for social media, these response strategies are not sufficient and for this reason supplementary paracrisis response

methods, such as (self-) mockery and humour, need to be added to be suitable for these platforms.

PR professionals should prevent these situations by constantly monitoring potential crisis threats and responding to them properly. According to Jin, Liu and Austin (2014, p. 76), PR practitioners already have to deal with crisis management on social media on a regular basis and are ahead of research. Until recently, there were only a few studies dedicated to paracrisis. Therefore, there is still a high need for scientific approaches in this field and additional empirical exploration enriches both academia and professionals (Tække, 2015, p. 1).

This research focuses on paracrisis management on Facebook. With 1.86 billion monthly active users worldwide in 2016, it is the widest and most popular social network globally (Statista, 2016). Paracrises appear frequently on this platform and may threaten many organisations' reputations.

The purpose of this research is to test effects of two paracrisis origins (self-imposed vs. external) and four different identified paracrisis response strategies (refute, refuse, reform, humour) on audiences' perceptions of organisational reputation and paracrisis behavioural intentions. This was determined using two quantitative and anonymous four factor online quasi-experiments each with a within-subjects design. In this case, behavioural intentions are a sum of negative word-of-mouth intentions and likelihood of action. If these are high, they could make a paracrisis situation worse and possibly turn into a real-world crisis. The Facebook paracrisis situations are oriented by a real case and modified for fictional organisations, so they cannot be identified. The organisations are four fictional international IT suppliers operating in Europe with a target of 22-38 year old internet users.

This study provides a further basis for future research on the field. For the theoretical background, primarily Benoit's (1997), Coombs' (2007), and Coombs and Holladay's (2012) literature will be consulted. Moreover, the meaning of social media use for organisations will be explained and the term paracrisis defined in the context of crisis management. In addition, an overview of previous research will help identify and define key concepts. Furthermore, the methodological and epistemological approaches, stimulus material and experimental design, ethical implications, findings, limitations and future implications will be outlined.

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Role of Social Media for Organisations

Nowadays, organisations have the chance to interact with their publics in two-way streams by using social media in the Web 2.0. On the one hand, platforms like Facebook and Twitter enable organisational communicators to listen to their stakeholders, and facilitate feedback and information exchange. Individuals can follow organisations on social network sites (SNS) to receive updates, request further information or improved services, complain about product defects, or find solutions for other deficiencies (Shan et al., 2014, pp. 104-105). Additionally, companies can create their own communities and stakeholder networks on social media (Goolsby, 2010, p. 7:1), and send marketing messages to a wide audience (Hansson, Wrangmo, & Solberg Søilen, 2013, p. 112). These functions can improve communication processes between organisations and their different publics in an easy and fast way. To seize this opportunity, companies increasingly set up their own social media accounts (Shan et al., 2014, p. 104).

On the other hand, through the evolution of the internet and especially SNS, activists and non-governmental organisations are becoming more powerful, as they can spread their critical messages to a broad audience, easily reaching an organisation's and the traditional media's attention. As most of the commenting functions on social media are publicly visible, organisations are constantly subjected to public scrutiny. Previously, complaints almost exclusively happened between a company and its customer in a private context. Nowadays, communication on social media involves a broader public and makes organisational issue management more transparent (Coombs, 1998, pp. 289-290; Einwiller & Steilen, 2015, p. 196).

This examination focuses on Facebook as a social media platform, because it is the widest and most popular SNS globally. The platform had 1.86 billion monthly active users worldwide in 2016 (Statista, 2016). Facebook started as a university network project at Harvard University in 2004, and was later launched to a wider public. By 2013, it was the most successful SNS worldwide. Companies use Facebook to target strategic advertisements, because it is consumer-oriented, well-established in its users' everyday lives, and a SNS people use for various joyful private purposes (Hansson, Wrangmo, & Solberg Søilen, 2013, pp. 112-113). An eMarketer study (2013) showed that 87% of US-American companies used social media, and Facebook in particular, for marketing purposes. This result highlights the importance of this platform for organisational communication.

2.2 Integrating Paracrises Into Crisis Management

From the consideration of benefits and risks of organisations' social media use, which was also described as a "two-edged sword" (Einwiller & Steilen, 2014, p. 195), arises the need for an integration of social media monitoring into crisis management as a component of PR practice and research. Current PR research on crisis has not led to one single definition of crisis management, but there is consensus that it comprises several steps (Salzborn, 2015, p. 12).

Issue management is part of the prevention phase, so if done successfully, issue management has the power to prevent a crisis. One quality of good crisis management is to prevent a crisis event from happening (Coombs & Holladay, 2012, p. 408). The term "issue management" was first used by the US-American PR manager Howard Chase, referring to the monitoring and analysis of issues an organisation has to face. Issue managers, who are usually part of a PR team, have to advise their organisation's management team on how to deal with issues in the most adequate way (Fiederer & Ternès, 2017, pp. 57-58). According to existing research, social media monitoring should be part of the crisis prevention phase, and more specifically issue management. If reputation risks on SNS are not adequately monitored and controlled, they might evolve into a crisis (Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley, 2014, pp. 118-119; Jin, Liu and Austin, 2014, p. 76; Freberg, 2012, p. 416; Taylor & Kent, 2007, p. 140). The terms reputation and image are defined in chapter 2.4.

Fiederer and Ternès describe the steps of crisis management as warm-up, urgent and hot, cool down, and learning phases. The warm-up phase includes the preparation of documents and statements for a crisis, for example storylines, Q&As, press releases, fact sheets, and key messages for social media. In the urgent and hot phase, the organisation has to respond to the crisis by communicating all the prepared adequate

information to all its important stakeholders. After this, during the cool down phase, it needs to reassure and communicate that action has been taken. In the learning phase, the entire crisis process is reassessed by the crisis management team and long-term analyses show which steps must be improved (Fiederer & Ternès, 2017, pp. 58-64).

Various scholars (Salzborn, 2015, p. 22; Tække, 2015, p. 1; Coombs & Holladay, 1996, p. 284) differentiate between different kinds of crisis. Crises can be either self-imposed or externally imposed (Tække, 2015, p. 1). The different types of crisis include those of an economic, technical-ecological, product, organisation-internal, political-ideological, social-personal, and communication nature (Möhrle, 2004, p. 19). Pang, Begam Binte Abul Hassan and Chee Yang Chong (2014, p. 97) and other scholars (Salzborn, 2015, p. 12; Denis-Remis, Lebraty, & Philippe, 2013, p. 45; Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011, p. 20), categorise reputation threats on social media as one type of crisis.

However, in this examination, the term "paracrisis", as first mentioned and defined by Coombs and Holladay (2012), will be applied for the phenomenon of organisational reputation threats on social media. This definition was also used throughout latest research in the field (Tække, 2015, p. 12; Einwiller & Steilen, 2015, p. 196; Kim, Zhang, & Zhang, 2016, p. 903; Lim, 2017, p. 252; Roh, 2017, p. 1). This implies that a paracrisis is not a crisis yet, but "can 'look like' a crisis and does require action from the organization [sic]" (Coombs & Holladay, 2012, p. 408). Coombs and Holladay do not classify these situations as forms of crisis, because they do not require a crisis mode and the action of the whole crisis team. Instead, they are part of the issue monitoring phase within issue management (Coombs & Holladay, 2012, p. 408). According to these researchers, a paracrisis is "a publicly visible crisis threat that charges an organization [sic] with irresponsible or unethical behaviour. A paracrisis is a specific type of crisis threat." (Coombs & Holladay, 2012, p. 409).

These situations occur, for instance, when users criticise recently published information on organisations' social media sites, in the form of single negative comments under a Facebook post or tweet, or complaining about the company's moral, an advertisement or a product. Moreover, paracrises can occur as online firestorms, which are message attacks on an organisation's social media page by one or several users, resulting in high amounts of negative word-of-mouth (WOM) complaining about a company or its products and being generally aggressive (Pfeffer, Zorbach, & Carley, 2014, p. 118). All these require fast and adequately chosen action on behalf of the organisation concerned (Coombs & Holladay, 2012, p. 409).

2.3 Paracrisis Response Strategies and Paracrisis Origin

The basis of paracrisis response strategies can be found in traditional crisis communication theories. This comparably young discipline arose from descriptive approaches and guidelines of PR practitioners. Academia began focusing on this field in the early 1990s. Benoit (1995) transmitted his first approach, which is based on rhetorical theories and the concept of guilt, onto crisis communication in organisations. This is the foundation for later crisis communication theories, such as Coombs and Holladay's theory. Their achievement as crisis scholars is internationally recognised (Tække, 2015, p. 2). Benoit (1997, p. 179) identified five major strategies to restore an image, which can be regarded as crisis response methods. These include denial (simple or shifting the blame to another object), evasion of responsibility (provocation, defeasibility, accident or good intentions), reducing offensiveness of event (by bolstering, minimisation, differentiation, transcendence, attacking the accuser or compensation), corrective action, and apology.

Coombs's Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) comprises apology, denial and justification for responding to crises depending on their nature. This theory is based on a crisis definition that relates to a reputational threat caused by the crisis. The theory was tested in numerous experiments by both Coombs and other researchers. The SCCT defines a reputational threat as formed by three key factors: the initial crisis responsibility, the crisis history, and the prior relationship reputation (Coombs, 2007, pp. 163 ff.).

According to Coombs, the audience's belief of organisational responsibility for a crisis has a negative impact on reputational scores and therefore on the extent of the reputational threat created by a crisis. This means, that the higher the audience assumes the organisation is responsible for a crisis, the lower the reputation scores. Coombs found three crisis clusters related to responsibility attribution and type of crisis. Firstly, the victim cluster includes external crisis situations such as a natural catastrophe. These imply a low attribution on behalf of the audience and a perception of the organisation as being the victim. Secondly, the accidental cluster includes technical-error accidents or product harm/challenge. In this case, the responsibility attribution is minimal and the situation is perceived as unintentional or uncontrollable by the organisation. Thirdly, the intentional cluster includes all human-caused crisis situations that seem to be done on purpose. Crises perceived as intentional lead to a high crisis responsibility attribution on behalf of the audience (Coombs, 2007, pp. 166-167).

According to Coombs (2007, p. 167), two other variables have a direct effect on the extent of the reputational threat formed by the crisis, and an indirect effect by influencing the crisis responsibility. These variables are "crisis history" and "prior relational reputation". Crisis history includes whether the organisation has already faced a similar crisis in the past. Prior relational reputation is a long-term variable influenced

by how well or poorly the organisation has generally treated its stakeholders in the past. This variable is established based on how these stakeholders evaluate their treatment.

According to Coombs's SCCT, various crisis response strategies should be applied depending on the perceptions of responsibility acceptance. The aim of these crisis responses is to form the audience's attributions of the crisis, to modify the perceptions of the organisation affected, and to minimise the negative emotions the crisis produced. Past research tested Coombs's approach and identified three central groups of response strategies. These are denial, diminish (justification) and rebuild (apology/compensation). If an organisation wants to eliminate the link between itself and the crisis, it should apply a denial strategy. If the crisis manager has enough evidence of the situation being less negative than people think, or that the organisation lacked control over the crisis, it should react with a diminish response. Rebuilding strategies serve to generate reputational advantages by sending out new and positive information, such as apologising for the situation or offering to compensate for the deficiency (Coombs, 2007, pp. 170-172).

To tackle risks on social media, Coombs and Holladay (2012) recommended a simple transmission of the SCCT onto paracrises, from apology into reform, justification into refute, and denial into refuse. Firstly, an organisation can use a reform strategy as paracrisis response, if it wants to change its negative/wrong actions and improve. In this case, an expression of the desired changes should follow and the expressed commitments have to be met. Secondly, the scholars recommend applying a refute strategy, if the organisation will not change its behaviour but wants to maintain its values and followers, and fight against critical publics. Thirdly, if the organisation does not agree with the attacks made by an accuser on social media, it is recommended to apply refusal. This is appropriate, in situations when the organisation wants the

paracrisis to disappear due to a lack of interest. Instead of reacting to the offence, the organisation bolsters its reputation by sending out positive messages about itself (Coombs & Holladay, 2012).

Contrary to this, Kim, Zhang and Zhang (2016), Freberg (2012) and Dutta and Pullig (2011) highlight shortcomings of the SCCT's translation by Coombs and Holladay. These scholars suggest that this is not sufficient to tackle paracrises. Firstly, in social media content analyses, Kim, Zhang and Zhang identified additional forms of response applied by organisations in paracrisis situations, such as (self-)mockery and humour (Kim, Zhang, & Zhang, 2016, p. 911). These strategies were considered adequate depending on the situation, audience, and the social media platform. Furthermore, Freberg criticised that the transmitted SCCT approach is too focused on reputation management. Instead, it should be able to predict how far the publics comply with crisis safety messages (Freberg, 2012, p. 417). Moreover, they found that "a 'one type fits all' strategy for post-crisis responses can be suboptimal" (Dutta & Pullig, 2011, p. 1281).

Kim, Zhang and Zhang (2016) found further strategies of paracrisis response by qualitatively and quantitatively analysing the management of a situation on Alibaba's, the e-commerce corporation, social media page. They found that humour and self-mockery can be effective paracrisis strategies. Because the company could solve the negative situation in the early paracrisis moment, and used this as a means of PR, the researchers evaluated these strategies as successful. In addition, they identified the source of paracrisis response as an important variable. In their content analysis, the CEO was evaluated as a positive response sender to solve the issue. Furthermore, the style of paracrisis communication needs to be in accordance with the platform on which it occurs. Therefore, on Facebook, a humorous and self-mocking style or mocking the attacker can be helpful to turn a severe situation into an entertaining scenario.

Shortcomings of this study are that mockery might be part of the refute paracrisis response strategy and therefore not a new method (Kim, Zhang, & Zhang, 2016, p. 911). Thus, humour should be perceived as the only supplementary strategy, because it has a different nature than the traditional ones. The sender of the paracrisis response will not be included in this examination, because it is usually the organisation itself sending out a response on Facebook. In addition, as the organisations of this study will be fictional, the CEO would be unknown to the public.

Martin's Situational Humour Response Questionnaire (SHRQ) (1996) and the Coping Humour Scale (CHS) are originated in psychology. These are useful for this research, as they aim to exploit individuals' senses of humour. According to his research, outgoing, realistic, friendly and extroverted people achieve higher scores on the SHRQ than those who have the opposite attributes. In addition, the scholar correlated a function of humour to lower stress levels, which could indeed be helpful for organisations in paracrises. This individual approach could be transmitted onto how organisations are perceived by their audience. Martin found that there are numerous kinds of humour, varying between nonsense, aggression, and sexual humour. Because humour is subjective, there are various different types, including irony and aggressive humour. This experiment focuses on one paracrisis response strategy defined as humorous. It cannot include all types of humour and will therefore focus on a blatant strategy by using a "winking emoticon" and a "cheeky" response.

In contrast to Kim, Zhang and Zhang, Lim (2016) found that mockery, especially visually, may lead to a paracrisis. Visual mockery means that social media users imitate an organisation or its specific actions on these platforms and thereby make them seem untrustworthy and trivial. Furthermore, Lim identified that exposure to visual mockery about an organisation leads to unfavourable feelings towards the organisation on behalf

of the audience and can be a driver for a paracrisis. The present research will therefore avoid using mockery as a paracrisis response strategy.

In an experiment with 168 participants, Roh (2017) examined the effects of various response strategies, message source (for example individuals or a CEO), and social vigilantism in paracrises on the audience's reactions. The study's aim was to extend the SCCT by applying the denial crisis response versus a diminishing strategy and adding a cognitive model of wished actions. Roh found that denial is effective in order to minimise negative emotions and responsibility of the organisation. This approach also led to less negative reputation scores for the message source, while high scores of vigilantism (the user's willingness to speak out in social media) raised the intention of interaction with the organisation in paracrisis.

Jin, Liu and Austin (2014) approached the issue from a different direction by testing a model for Social-Mediated Crisis Communication (SMCC), in a mixed-design experiment on 338 college students. This is not related to a paracrisis, but communication through social media in an offline crisis. The scholars focused on the form of crisis information (for example word-of-mouth, social, or traditional media), its source (the organisation itself or a third source), and the origin of the situation, which was either internal or external. They found that the crisis origin has a strong effect on the participants' perception of the adequate crisis information source and the emotions towards the situation. This supports the integration of the crisis origin in an adapted form as a factor in these experiments.

2.4 Perceived Organisational Reputation and Paracrisis Behavioural Intentions

Jin, Liu and Austin (2014, p. 84) tested the public's acceptance of crisis response strategies by offering the participants several response options to be evaluated on five-point Likert scales, establishing the acceptability of each of the actions taken by the organisation. This concept seems to be too subjective, as acceptance can be interpreted in several ways. Jin, Liu and Austin did not define the concept sufficiently. For these reasons, it will not be applied in the experiments.

In addition, scholars have analysed the public's perceived crisis emotions, by explicitly asking the participants how much they felt the emotions anxiety, apprehension, fear, disgust, contempt, anger, embarrassment, guilt or shame (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014, p. 81). However, emotions are generally unconscious (Sylwester, 2000). Therefore, it is a variable that is difficult to be defined and should not be asked explicitly in these experiments.

Organisational reputation was mentioned in most of the (para)crisis response research as a dependent variable (Coombs & Holladay, 1996, p. 288; Coombs & Holladay, 2006, p. 123; Coombs, 2007, p. 163; Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011, p. 20; Coombs & Holladay, 2014, p. 49; Roh, 2017, p. 1). It is a key concept because of the reputational threat a paracrisis could evoke. Reputation is a central term in PR, and is defined as the public's image of an organisation or how the audience perceives an organisation. It is established over time in stakeholders' minds through the information they receive about the organisation, regardless of whether it comes from the organisation itself or external sources. Therefore, ideally organisations control their own reputation by monitoring and controlling all information published about themselves (Coombs, 2007, p. 164).

This public image is essential for individuals and organisations because it shapes beliefs and potential interaction with each other. According to Benoit, the perceived image is

more important than the reality of an organisation (Benoit, 1997, pp. 177-178). Organisational reputation is commonly used as a concept in crisis response experiments after presenting the case and stimulus material, although reputation is generally established in the long-term (Resnick et al., 2000, p. 46).

As this study includes fictional organisations, which do not have prior reputations, the variable perceived organisational reputation is used as a proxy variable for the short-term components of corporate reputation (Seibold, 2010, p. 236). It is used as the sum of variables, such as trust towards the organisation, perceived honesty, concern and potential interaction. An organisational reputation scale based on Coombs and Holladay's (1996, p. 288) widely validated (Seibold, 2010, p. 237) adaptation of McCroskey's measure of character (1966) into a reduced five-item scale will be integrated into the questionnaire after presenting the stimuli by asking about the short-term perceptions of the organisational reputation.

Schultz, Utz and Göritz (2011, p. 21) analysed recipients' likelihood of secondary crisis communications. They defined this as actions, such as sharing or forwarding the received information on Twitter, or leaving a message by commenting on it. Using an online experiment on crisis communication via Twitter, blogs and traditional media, they analysed the perceptions of reputation. This reputation depended on the medium and strategy used for crisis communication, and reactions to the communication forms. This included behavioural intentions, such as the willingness to boycott or negative word-of-mouth (Coombs & Holladay, 2009, p. 2). This variable was also included in Pfeffer, Zorbach and Carley's research (2014, p. 118).

Behavioural intentions are one component of Ajzen and Fishbein's social psychological Reasoned Action Approach and Theory of Planned Behaviour which they began developing in 1975 to explain how human behaviour could be predicted by individuals'

attitudes, beliefs and subjective norms (Ajzen, 2005, pp. 99 f.). According to these, behavioural intentions are directly linked to actual behaviour and can be measured as a short-term variable with Likert scales. Behaviour can be predicted if the individual has his own behaviour under control and the freedom to act (Ajzen, 2006, p. 1; Bierhoff, 2006, p. 340).

However, limitations of these concepts are that behaviour cannot always be controlled and decided consciously. Ajzen and Fishbein fail to include past behaviour as a learning effect, the individuals' moral obligation, or role identity, which could be evoked by habitualised behaviour. Furthermore, the operationalisation of the concepts' components is controversial. Social desirability can have an impact on the measurement of and gap between behavioural intentions and actual behaviour (Feldman & Lynch, 1988, p. 421).

As described in chapter 2.3, Roh (2017, p. 1) tested a cognitive model including the effect of discord with expectation for different actors on different perceived responsibility and counterfactual thinking processes, which include intended behaviour on the part of the actors. Furthermore, social vigilantism, which is defined as the individual's likelihood to oppress one's thoughts onto others, is regarded as a key concept by Roh. In this observation, Roh's cognitive model will not be applied. Due to its complexity this goes beyond the scope of this research.

In summary, many studies approached the new form of crisis communication or prevention in an indirect way through content analyses of cases and reflection on the (para)crisis response strategy used (Cheng, 2016, p. 4; Kim, Zhang, & Zhang 2016; Einwiller & Steilen, 2015). Others examined the public's reactions to crisis communication through social media use rather than Facebook paracrisis response (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014; Freberg, 2012; Schultz, Utz, & Göritz, 2011; Liu, Austin, & Jin,

2011). Few recent studies (Lim, 2016; Roh, 2017) tested the audience's reactions to organisational paracrisis response in experiments. However, there is still a lack of research on the most coherent paracrisis response practices and their effect on different sectors, regions, and various publics.

3. Methodology

3.1 Main Variables and Research Questions

This study aimed to adopt the current research and expand it for future studies and PR practice. In accordance with the previous literature, it sought to provide an understanding of new paracrisis response strategies on Facebook and influential factors for users' perceptions of organisational reputation and paracrisis behavioural intentions. The quantitative research paradigm was chosen based on the positivist epistemological underpinnings because this study focused on crisis response research and only aimed to examine chosen key variables and their effects. The identification of cause and effects applying quantitative methodologies is characteristic for the positivist approach (Brosius, Haas, & Koschel, 2012, p. 4).

As indicated by previous research, the main variables with impact on the users' behavioural intentions and perceived organisational reputation are (para)crisis origin (Coombs, 2007, pp. 166-167; Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014; Tække, 2015, p. 1) and the type of (para)crisis response strategy (Kim, Zhang, & Zhang, 2016; Lim, 2016; Roh, 2017). For this reason, these experiments were created using Coombs and Holladay's (2012) response strategies in paracrisis situations, refute, refuse, and reform, and additionally the strategy of humour, based on the definitions by Martin (1996) and Kim, Zhang and Zhang (2016) as one independent variable. The second independent variable used for this study was the paracrisis origin in a combined and simplified version of Coombs's

concept of crisis responsibility attribution and Jin, Liu and Austin's (2014) and Tække's (2015, p. 1) crisis origin. It was determined paracrisis origin and differentiated between external (the organisation has no or minimal responsibility) and self-imposed paracrisis origin (high responsibility on behalf of the organisation). The dependent variables were perceived organisational reputation (including trustworthiness, honesty, concern, potential interaction) and the audience's paracrisis behavioural intentions (action likelihood and negative word-of-mouth intentions). Prior relational reputation and crisis history could not be applied in this case, because fictional organisations were used which had no prior reputations or crisis histories.

In correspondence with the epistemological approach, this examination focused on the following research questions, adapted from Jin, Liu and Austin (2014, p. 9):

RQ1: How are the respondents' perceptions of the organisational reputation affected by the paracrisis strategy on Facebook in both conditions of paracrisis origin?

RQ2: Are there any differences in the respondents' perceptions of organisational reputation based on the paracrisis strategy in both conditions of paracrisis origin?

RQ3: How are the respondents' paracrisis behavioural intentions affected by the paracrisis strategy on Facebook in both conditions of paracrisis origin?

RQ4: Are there any differences in the respondents' paracrisis behavioural intentions based on the paracrisis strategy in both conditions of paracrisis origin?

3.2 Design

To answer the research questions, an online survey was conducted, consisting of two experiments with each a within-subjects design. The objective of this study was to test the response strategies in two conditions and determine which is the most recommendable strategy in two separate situations that are significantly different.

The first experiment was introduced with a scenario of self-imposed paracrisis origin (SIPO) with a high responsibility on behalf of the organisations. 88 participants were exposed to the paracrisis response strategies stimulus material (refute, reform, refuse, humour).

The second experiment was introduced with a scenario of external paracrisis origin (EPO) with low organisational responsibility. 86 other participants saw the same response strategies. Thus, the experiments each had four conditions. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the experiments. After the first stimulus, the same four Facebook paracrisis situation stimuli were shown for each group. The order was randomised to avoid order effects, so every participant was exposed to all paracrisis response strategies (see chapter 3.4). This was followed by similar scales indicating the perceived organisational reputation and paracrisis behavioural intentions after the stimulus exposure (see chapter 3.5; see Questionnaire parts 1-8, Appendices).

Firstly, this method was chosen because previous research on (para)crisis response is based on surveys with experimental design and this was cited as the most valuable measurement to find effects of different response strategies (Roh, 2017; Lim, 2016; Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 1996). It was consistent with the quantitative empirical research paradigm and the research questions, which were concerned with examining effects. Experimental design is generally used for empirical research in order to find causality for certain phenomena

which draw from reality and explain a small part of the causality. Other methods such as qualitative or quantitative content analyses and qualitative interviews would only show common practices of existing cases without taking into account a broader public's perceptions of these, or identifying any effects and testing alternative paracrisis response strategies. These methods were rejected because they would not answer the nature of the research questions and strategy (Brosius, Haas, & Koschel, 2012, p. 197; Huber, 1997, p. 63).

A quasi-experiment is a field experiment set in a stimuli-response design with natural conditions instead of a laboratory situation. Consequently, extraneous variables cannot be completely controlled. In contrast, the natural setting is more realistic than a laboratory (Huber, 1997, pp. 69-70). The within-subjects design was chosen in order to reduce the need for a large sample size and effects of extraneous variables. In this research design, individual differences were controlled by each respondent, reducing the error variance caused by country of origin, age, sex, Facebook usage, or educational level. Thus, through this related-subjects design the study concentrated on relative effects of paracrisis response strategies within each of the two experiments (Liu, Austin, & Jin, 2011, p. 348; Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2011, p. 11).

3.3 Participants and Procedure

As the topic focused on Facebook, the units were recruited via that platform between May 21st and 29th through the researcher's personal network. Due to limited budgets, they were convenience and snowball samples. The users completed the survey individually with an average duration of 13 minutes for the self-imposed paracrisis origin experiment and 11 minutes for the external paracrisis origin experiment.

The participants' age was limited to 22- to 38-year-olds. This group is often labelled "millennials" and born between 1979 and 1994 (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, p. 225). They were chosen as they would be the potential target group of the fictional IT companies. Millennials were chosen because of their communication via Facebook, technology, and social media use which differs them from other generations. They might understand the response strategies in a different way (Lenhart, A. et al., 2010, pp. 5-6) and are the future market for organisations. In addition, millennials are the present and future target of organisations' Facebook communications (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010, p. 225).

The completed sample of the first experiment was composed of 55 female and 33 male respondents with almost half of the participants ($p = 0.48$) from Germany and 24 other countries (see Figure 1, Appendices). The average age of both samples was 26 years (self-imposed paracrisis origin: $M = 25.95$, $SD = 4.331$; external paracrisis origin: $M = 25.56$, $SD = 3.138$) (see Figures 3&4, Appendices). The second completed sample consisted of 62 female and 24 male respondents with more than half from Germany ($p = 0.54$) and 25 other countries (see Figure 2, Appendices).

The respondents' average self-indicated Facebook use was between 30 and 60 minutes per day ($M = 3.94$, $SD = 1.307$) for the first sample and between 10 and 60 minutes per day ($M = 3.65$, $SD = 1.253$) for the second. This was measured applying a component of Valenzuela's validated scale (2009, p. 886), asking "On a typical day, about how much time do you spend on Facebook?", to be answered choosing one option from a scale ranging from 1=No time at all, 2=Less than 10 min, 3=10 to 30 min, 4=More than 30 min, up to 1 hr, 5=More than 1 hr, up to 2 hrs, 6=More than 2 hrs, up to 3 hrs and 7=More than 3 hrs. The average highest educational degree was a graduate degree (self-

imposed paracrisis origin: $M = 3.4$, $SD = 1.451$; external paracrisis origin: $M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.163$).

3.4 Stimuli Development

The first stimulus used for this experiment was the paracrisis origin. In the first experiment, the following statement was used to express a self-imposed paracrisis origin and attribute a high responsibility on behalf of the organisations:

> "Now you will be shown Facebook posts of four international IT suppliers operating in Europe. They provide big IT companies with IT components. Each of the companies contracted a production partner that exploits workers in India. They had unethical contracts with these producers and still collaborate with them."

In the second experiment, the last sentence was manipulated to express an external paracrisis origin and attribute a low responsibility on behalf of the organisations:

> "They had ethically safe contracts with these and stopped the collaboration when they found out about their partners' behaviours.".

The second part of the stimulus consisted of four Facebook posts of four invented international IT suppliers operating in Europe, based on a real-world situation of the technology company Sony in April 2017 (see Figure 5, Appendices). Therefore, IT suppliers were chosen as the sector concerned. It should be realistic, but unrecognisable for the respondents. This was realistic, because each company adapted a different strategy. Those companies were called BLAE, BAEL, TRAE and NEAL, because the original corporation's name had four letters, the names should be comparable, and they were non-existing. The companies' Facebook avatars were similarly created with black backgrounds and white capital letters of the corporation names. The international

background operating in Europe was chosen to explain why the context was English-speaking and why people might not know them. The companies were equally unknown. Independent of their responsibility for the situation, only the response strategy varied.

The original post's text was slightly modified from "Our new VR experience with The Chainsmokers is coming to the Playstation Store soon. Find out more at http://lostinmusic.sony #LostInMusic" (Sony Corporation, 2017) to "Our new Virtual Reality game will be released soon! Get informed on our website.". Extraneous effects through time, comments, and the company's response, were controlled by maintaining them equal for all posts. The time was modified to be closer to the survey's date. The 1.1k likes and reactions were kept for all posts and they did not have any shares or likes/reactions on the comment as in the original case.

The original user comment included various accusations. The Facebook user mainly criticised Sony India for potentially being a fraudulent company. Further investigation on incidents of this kind did not lead to any evidence for the user's attacks. For the stimulus in this experiment, only one sentence with two connected messages was used. This was modified so the user could not be recognised. The messages were 1. The company exploits workers in India. 2. Do not buy any products of the company. These were formulated slightly differently for each post to minimise participants' confusion and maximise authenticity, considering that there were four posts from different IT suppliers. While the original post showed the Virtual Reality game, the created posts included four different pictures of html-codes on a screen, but were very similar to maintain the comparability (Anagani, 2016; Pavlov, 2016; Spiske, 2017; Müller, 2017).

In the real-world case, the company did not respond to the attack made by the user. For these experiments, four different response strategies were applied according to Coombs and Holladay's (2012) definitions of refusal, reform and refute, and Martin's (1996) and

Kim, Zhang and Zhang's (2016) definition of humour. Firstly, the refusal response stated "Please read all about our high commitment to safe working conditions on our website.". Secondly, the refute response stated "One of our core values is our high commitment to safe working conditions. We are not responsible for what happened to our partner's workers in India and reject this offense.". Thirdly, the reform response stated "We are sorry about what happened to our partner's workers in India. We are contracting a new partner with adequate working conditions to solve this situation.". Fourthly, the humorous company used was "Wouldn't it be a cliché to exploit Indian workers ;-)?!".

The four Facebook posts, including one user comment and one company response each, were presented to both experiments' respondents in a randomised order to exclude the respondents' self-selection and effects like fatigue, which would have made the experiments causally non-interpretable (Brosius, Haas, & Koschel, 2012, p. 204).

3.5 Measures

The dependent variables perceived organisational reputation and respondents' paracrisis behavioural intentions depending on four different paracrisis response strategies and two opposing paracrisis origins. These were measured by a questionnaire instrument applying a series of validated item-scales, collected to indexes.

3.5.1 Perceived Organisational Reputation

Perceived organisational reputation was conceptually defined as the public's image of an organisation and operationalised as a short-term proxy variable for organisations' reputation. This was measured on the reduced validated five-item version of a ten-item

five-point Likert scale by Coombs and Holladay (1996). This scale consisted of "The organization is basically honest.", "The organization is concerned with the well-being of its publics.", "I do trust the organization to tell the truth about the incident.", "I would prefer to have NOTHING to do with this organization." and "Under most circumstances, I WOULD NOT be likely to believe what the organization says.". They were evaluated on a five-point scale from 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree. This was calculated into an index after recoding/reverse-scoring items four and five (Seibold, 2010, pp. 237-238).

3.5.2 Paracrisis Behavioural Intentions

In accordance with the literature review, the respondents' paracrisis behavioural intentions were conceptualised as one component of Ajzen and Fishbein's social psychological Reasoned Action Approach and Theory of Planned Behaviour. This tried to explain how human behaviour could be predicted and the link between behavioural intentions and actual behaviour (Ajzen, 2005, pp. 99 f.). In this study, respondents' paracrisis behavioural intentions were operationalised as a sum of two scale indexes from different researchers, consisting of the recipients' likelihood of paracrisis action and the willingness to boycott or negative word-of-mouth. These variables were considered as one in this study. This was the first study to combine these variables.

The components are the recipients' paracrisis action likelihood, for example by sharing the information or leaving a message. This followed Schultz, Utz and Göritz's scale (2011, p. 23), which asked the participants how likely they would be to "share the message with other people", "tell their friends about the incident", and "leave a reaction" on a five-point Likert scale from 1=Very unlikely to 5=Very likely. All of them were used because they implied different levels of effort for the user. The

willingness to boycott or negative word-of-mouth was compiled by four validated items of Coombs and Holladay (2008, p. 254) "I would say negative things about COMPANY and its products to other people.", "I would encourage friends or relatives NOT to buy products from COMPANY.", "I would recommend COMPANY products to someone who asked my advice." (reverse-scored) and Schultz, Utz and Göritz (2011, p. 23) "I would sign an online petition to boycott COMPANY.". Participants were asked how much they agreed or disagreed with these statements on a five-point scale from 1=Strongly disagree to 5=Strongly agree. This was calculated into an index after recoding the two reverse score items. The two scales were then summed. Figure 1 plots the research design and construction of the research questions.

Figure 1 Construction of RQs with variables
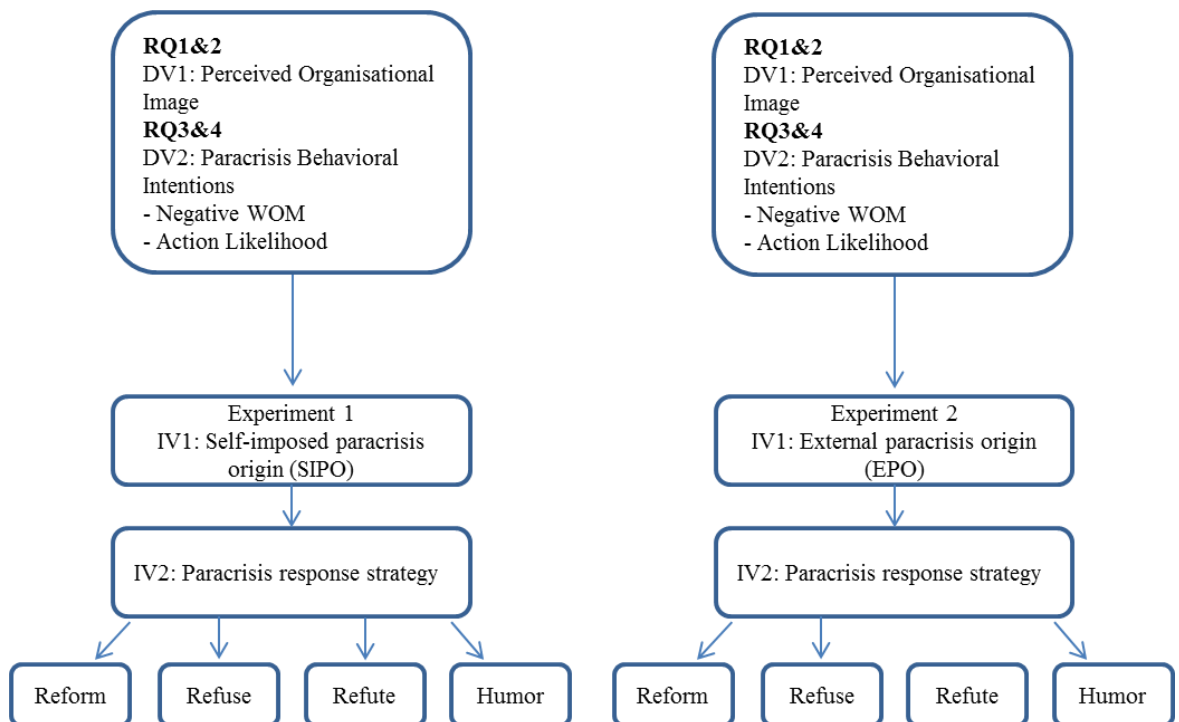
3.6 Validity

In a pre-test the questionnaire instrument and stimuli were checked by five participants. Their comments were taken into account and the questionnaire was slightly adapted to be clearly, easily and similarly understandable for every participant. In particular, the humorous response strategy was examined in the pre-test to ensure it was perceived as such. The language used was adapted to be shorter and more natural.

The components of the questionnaire instrument were used from constructs that were already tested frequently in terms of reliability (Cronbach's α) and validated because of the frequent use and tests (Brosius, Haas, & Koschel, 2012, p. 53). Internal consistency and validity were widely guaranteed by the randomisation of the four Facebook stimuli and the creation of four equivalent stimuli with regards to structure, text (style, length, type of words), company names and images, picture, time, likes/reactions and user comment. The stimuli were followed by the same questionnaire instrument each with the adjusted company name (Brosius, Haas, & Koschel, 2012, pp. 54-55). The validity of the companies was controlled by asking the participants at the end of the test whether they were aware of the organisation before, and if so, to evaluate their image on a scale from 1=Very negative to 5=Very positive.

The control question on the company should exclude the impact of a potential previous organisational image and ensure that the respondents did not confuse any of the organisations with an existing one. These questions may have been influenced by social desirability and a margin of people saying yes for the sake of responding to it positively. The margin was 3.3% for self-imposed paracrisis origin and 3.5% for external paracrisis origin. Participants were screened for minimum Facebook use and the stipulated ages (22 to 38 years).

The external validity was lower, as it was not a completely natural situation and people are not normally exposed to four Facebook posts from different companies with almost the same content. However, it was credible within the context of a study. It would have been less credible to use the same company with different response strategies, as this might have created confusion causing minor impact on the participants. Online experiments about Facebook were more natural than lab experiments, because the respondents were situated in the environment they would usually be exposed to these posts in. However, an online experiment lacked control over extraneous variables, such as distraction or influence by a third person. Without manipulation checks of the stimuli by asking questions about the situation's origin and the organisational response, extraneous variables, such as a lack of recognition of the paracrisis origin or strategy, could not be completely excluded.

3.7 Ethical Issues

As this study consisted of anonymous online experiments, it involved a degree of perception. In the beginning participants did not know that they took part in an experiment and the organisations and Facebook posts were fictional. To tackle this ethical issue, the debriefing at the end of the survey informed the respondents fully about the research, its nature, purpose, methods, and why the deception was necessary (Huber, 1997, p. 183). Participants had to give their consent at the beginning and end of the survey (see Questionnaire parts 1&8, Appendices). They were informed about their possibility to withdraw from the experiment and for their data not to be considered, if they so wished, in accordance with the Code of Human Research Ethics (The British Psychological Society, 2010). Any personal participant data was safeguarded and protected according to the Data Protection Act and the gathered data was stored and

encrypted with a password. In accordance with the Research Council UK's latest Code of Conduct it will be kept for ten years and then destructed (Research Council UK, 2015).

The participation was voluntary, and no one was forced or threatened to complete it. The respondents were offered to contact the researcher if they had questions. The survey did not involve direct interaction with the participants; they had to click on the survey link proactively and no confidential information such as name or income was requested. If respondents disclosed any personal information in open fields, it would be kept confidential and not disclosed to anyone except the research staff involved in this project. Corporation names, images and logos were blanked and the comments requested from a public corporate Facebook page were modified and anonymised in order not to be identifiable. The content and date of the real-world case for the stimuli was changed to be unrecognisable.

4. Findings

The research questions were answered by comparing the dependent variables' means and the paracrisis response strategy's main effects with one-way repeated measures ANOVAs (see Tables 1-6; 7 Appendices). To ensure the condition of sphericity, Mauchly's test was applied (see Table 8, Appendices). If sphericity was violated, the degrees of freedom were corrected with Greenhouse-Geisser estimates of freedom (for values see Table 1). Within-subjects effects were tested for each dependent variable and post-hoc tests indicated pairwise differences for the means, which were adjusted for multiple comparisons with Bonferroni. The differences between the scores of self-imposed and external conditions were tested on significance applying independent t-tests (see Table 3).

4.1 Research Questions 1 and 2: Perceived Organisational Reputation

Research question 1 asked about the effects of the paracrisis response strategy on Facebook on respondents' perceptions of organisational reputation in self-imposed paracrisis origin and external paracrisis origin. Research question 2 asked if there were any differences in the respondents' perceptions of organisational reputation based on the paracrisis strategy for both conditions of paracrisis origin.

Self-Imposed Paracrisis Origin

The results identified that organisational reputation and all its items, except for the reverse-scored "Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the organisation says", were significantly affected by the paracrisis response strategy (RQ1; see Table 1). The means of the four response strategies were significantly different for the variable perceived organisational reputation. Consequently, the respondents' scores of the dependent variables and their items differed from one strategy to another for all tested items except "Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the organisation says". The largest differences were always identified between the scores for the reform and humour strategies. The reform strategy is the most recommendable for achieving the best reputation because it generated the highest scores of the items in all cases. In contrast, humour led to the lowest organisational reputation scores, except for the item "I would prefer to have something to do with the organisation", and is thus the least recommendable. With regards to research question 2, no significant differences were detected between refuse and refute (RQ2; see Table 2; also see Table 7, Appendices).

There was no significant difference in the scores for self-imposed paracrisis origin and external paracrisis origin conditions (see Table 3). Detailed effects and mean differences with their significance levels can be found in Tables 1, 2 and 3 (also see Table 7, Appendices).

Table 1 Main effects of Paracrisis Response Strategy

Dependent measures	Self-imposed				External			
	F	df	df Error	part. η^2	F	df	df Error	part. η^2
Perceived organisational image	18.654	3	261	.177***	33.902	2.744	233.249	.285***
The organisation is basically honest.	16.523	3	261	.16***	18.515	2.665	226.487	.179***
The organisation is concerned with the well-being of its publics.	22.407	3	261	.205***	31.905	2.626	223.196	.273***
I do trust the organisation to tell the truth about the incident.	15.261	3	261	.149***	15.910	2.687	228.367	.158***
I would prefer to have something to do with the organisation.	6.841	3	261	.73***	11.892	3	255	.123***
Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the organisation says.	2.479	2.696	234.509	.028	12.121	2.526	214.684	.125***
Paracrisis behavioural intentions	8.565	2.751	239.354	.09***	7.999	2.729	231.957	.086***
Negative word-of-mouth intentions	8.931	2.710	235.734	.093***	8.943	3	255	.095***
I would encourage friends or relatives not to buy products from the company.	4.662	3	261	.051**	4.98	3	255	.055**
I would say negative things about the company and its products to other people.	9.399	3	261	.097***	9.095	3	255	.097***
I would not recommend the company's products to someone who asked my advice.	6.724	3	261	.072***	6.689	3	255	.073***
I would sign an online petition to boycott the company.	3.536	2.752	239.445	.039*	3.017	3	255	.034*
Action likelihood	4.480	3	261	.049**	7.999	2.708	230.180	.040*
I would share the message of the incident with other people.	5.341	3	261	.058***	5.19	3	255	.58***
I would tell my friends about the incident.	5.139	3	261	.056**	2.639	2.74	232.859	.03***
I would leave a reaction.	5.232	3	261	.057**	2.121	2.687	228.389	.024

*p<0.05. **p<0.01. ***p<0.001

Table 2 Correlations of Perceived Organisational Reputation Variables with Self-Imposed Paracrisis Origin

Perceived organisational reputation	M	Reform	Humor	Refuse	Refute
Reform	3.143		-.818***	-.382**	-.386**
Humour	2.325	.818***		.436***	.432*
Refuse	2.761	.382**	-.436***		.005
Refute	2.757	.386**	-,432*	.005	
The organisation is basically honest.					
Reform	3.30		-1.023***	-.455*	-.534**
Humour	2.27	1.023***		.568**	.489**
Refuse	2.84	.455*	-.568**		-.08
Refute	2.76	.534**	-.489**	.08	
The organisation is concerned with the well-being of its publics.					
Reform	3.33		-1,216***	-.489*	-.511*
Humour	2.11	1.216***		.727***	.705***
Refuse	2.84	.489*	-.727***		-.023
Refute	2.82	.511*	-.705***	.023	
I do trust the organisation to tell the truth about the incident.					
Reform	2.92		-.886***	-.261	-.193
Humour	2.03	.886***		.625***	.693***
Refuse	2.66	.261	-.625***		.068
Refute	2.73	.193	-.693***	-.068	
I would prefer to have something to do with the organisation.					
Reform	3.171		-.648***	-.398*	-.375*
Humour	2.523	.648***		.25	.273
Refuse	2.773	.398*	-.25		-.023
Refute	2.796	.375*	-.273	-.023	
Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the organisation says.					
Reform	3		-.318	-.307	-.318
Humour	2.682	.318		.011	.00
Refuse	2.773	.307	-.011		-.011
Refute	2.796	.318	.00	.011	

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 3 Comparison Mean Differences Self-Imposed vs. External Paracrisis Origins

Perceived organisational reputation	M	SD	t	p
Self-imposed paracrisis origin				
Reform	3.143	.856	-.975	.33
Humour	2.325	.772	.425	.67
Refuse	2.761	.728	.169	.87
Refute	2.757	.809	1.56	.12
External paracrisis origin				
Reform	3.265	.791	-.975	.33
Humour	2.274	.799	.425	.67
Refuse	2.742	.798	.169	.87
Refute	2.57	.772	1.56	.12
Paracrisis behavioural intentions				
Self-imposed paracrisis origin				
Reform	2.432	1.108	-.448	.66
Humour	2.921	1.212	.817	.42
Refuse	2.614	1.103	1.264	.21
Refute	2.58	1.143	-691	.49
External paracrisis origin				
Reform	2.488	1.094	-.448	.66
Humour	2.861	1.211	.817	.42
Refuse	2.512	1.008	1.264	.21
Refute	2.721	1.161	-691	.49

Note: The results were analysed with independent t-tests. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

External Paracrisis Origin

The organisational reputation and all its items were significantly affected by the paracrisis response strategy (RQ1; see Table 1). The means of the four response strategies were significantly different for the variable "perceived organisational reputation". However, there were less significant differences between the means of the items, with external than self-imposed paracrisis origin. The largest differences were always identified between the scores for the reform and the humour strategies. The reform strategy is the most recommendable for achieving the best reputation because it always generated the highest scores of the items. In contrast, humour always generated significantly lower scores of organisational reputation compared to reform. Humour led to lower scores than refusal for all items except "The organisation is basically honest"

and "I would prefer to have something to do with the organisation". Therefore, humour is the least recommendable strategy. With regards to research question 2, no significant differences were detected between the strategies refuse and refute (RQ2; see Table 4; also see Table 7, Appendices).

There was no significant difference in the scores for self-imposed paracrisis origin and external paracrisis origin conditions (see Table 3). Detailed effects and mean differences with their significance levels can be found in Tables 1, 3 and 4 (also see Table 7, Appendices).

Table 4 Correlations of Perceived Organisational Reputation Variables with External Paracrisis Origin

Perceived organisational reputation	M	Reform	Humor	Refuse	Refute
Reform	3.265		-.991***	-.523***	-.695***
Humour	2.274	.991***		.467***	.295*
Refuse	2.742	.523***	-.467***		-.172
Refute	2.57	.695***	-.295*	.172	
The organisation is basically honest.					
Reform	3.44		-1.058***	-.733***	-.721***
Humour	2.38	1.058***		.326	.337
Refuse	2.71	.733***	-.326		.012
Refute	2.72	.721***	-.337	-.012	
The organisation is concerned with the well-being of its publics.					
Reform	3.5		-1.384***	-.674***	-1.035***
Humour	2.12	1.384***		.709***	.349*
Refuse	2.83	.674***	-.709***		-.36
Refute	2.47	1.035***	-.349*	.36	
I do trust the organisation to tell the truth about the incident.					
Reform	3.03		-.919***	-.372*	-.581**
Humour	2.12	.919***		.547**	.337
Refuse	2.66	.372*	-.547**		-.209
Refute	2.45	.581**	-.337	.209	
I would prefer to have something to do with the organisation.					
Reform	3.186		-.791***	-.419**	-.593*
Humour	2.395	.791***		.372	.198
Refuse	2.767	.419**	-.372		-.174
Refute	2.593	.593*	-.198	.174	
Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the organisation says.					
Reform	3.163		-.802***	-.419*	-.547*
Humour	2.361	.802***		.384*	.256
Refuse	2.744	.419*	-.384*		-.128
Refute	2.616	.547*	-.256	.128	

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

4.2 Research Questions 3 and 4: Paracrisis Behavioural Intentions

Research question 3 asked about the effects of the paracrisis response strategy on Facebook on the respondents' paracrisis behavioural intentions in self-imposed paracrisis origin and external paracrisis origin. Research question 4 asked if there were any differences in the respondents' paracrisis behavioural intentions based on the paracrisis strategy in both conditions of paracrisis origins. The results of the analyses demonstrated that the paracrisis behavioural intentions were affected by the paracrisis response strategy with self-imposed and external paracrisis origin, except for the item "I would leave a reaction" in the external paracrisis origin condition (RQ3; see Table 1).

The means of the response strategies differed significantly in both experiments for the variable, except the items "I would sign an online petition to boycott the company" and "I would tell my friends about the incident" in the external paracrisis origin experiment. The humorous strategy led to the highest scores of behavioural intentions, except for the item "I would sign an online petition to boycott the company", therefore humour is the worst strategy. For self-imposed paracrisis origin, except for "I would leave a reaction", the reform strategy always achieved the lowest scores, so it is the most recommendable for this condition. For external paracrisis origin, reform led to the lowest scores for the index of paracrisis behavioural intentions and the index and items of negative WOM intentions, but not the scores for action likelihood. Therefore, it would not be clearly recommendable. There were no significant differences between refuse and refute within external paracrisis origin, except for the negative WOM intentions and "I would share the message with other people". In this case, refusal generated lower scores than refute (RQ4; see Tables 5 & 6; also see Table 7, Appendices).

There was no significant difference in the scores for self-imposed paracrisis origin and external paracrisis origin conditions (see Table 3). There were no clear patterns between

the mean differences of self-imposed and external paracrisis origins. Detailed effects and mean differences with their significance levels can be found in Tables 1, 5 and 6 (also see Table 7, Appendices).

Table 5 Correlations of Paracrisis Behavioural Intentions Variables with Self-Imposed Paracrisis Origin

Paracrisis behavioural intentions	M	Reform	Humor	Refuse	Refute
Reform	2.432		.489***	.182	.148
Humour	2.921	-.489***		.307*	.341*
Refuse	2.614	-.182	-.307*		-.034
Refute	2.58	-.148	-.341*	.034	
Negative word-of-mouth intentions					
Reform	2.466		.568***	.352*	.307*
Humour	3.034	-.568***		-.216	-.261
Refuse	2.818	-.352*	.216		-.045
Refute	2.773	-.307*	.261	.045	
I would encourage friends or relatives not to buy products from the company.					
Reform	2.52		.534**	.295	.261
Humour	3.06	-.534**		-.239	-.273
Refuse	2.82	-.295	.239		-.034
Refute	2.78	-.261	.273	.034	
I would say negative things about the company and its products to other people.					
Reform	2.35		-.625***	.330*	.284
Humour	2.98	.625***		-.295	-.341*
Refuse	2.68	-.330*	.295		-.045
Refute	2.64	-.284	.341*	.045	
I would not recommend the company's products to someone who asked my advice.					
Reform	3.5		.534***	.25	.227
Humour	4.034	-.534***		-.284	-.307
Refuse	3.75	-.25	.284		-.023
Refute	3.727	-.227	.307	.023	
I would sign an online petition to boycott the company.					
Reform	2.19		.375*	.227	.261
Humour	2.57	-.375*		.261	-.114
Refuse	2.42	-.227	.148		.034
Refute	2.45	-.261	.114	-.034	
Action Likelihood					
Reform	2.216		.330*	.068	-.023
Humour	2.546	-.330*		-.261	-.352*
Refuse	2.284	-.068	.261		-.091
Refute	2.193	.023	.352*	.091	
I would share the message of the incident with other people.					
Reform	1.95		.409**	.227	.193
Humour	2.36	-.409**		-.182	-.216
Refuse	2.18	-.227	.182		-.034
Refute	2.15	-.193	.216	.034	
I would tell my friends about the incident.					

	M	Reform	Humor	Refuse	Refute
Reform	2.68		.386*	.00	-.011
Humour	3.07	-.386*		.386*	-.398*
Refuse	2.68	.00	.386*		-.011
Refute	2.67	.011	.398*	.011	

I would leave a reaction.

Reform	2.09		.273	.102	-.102
Humour	2.36	-.273		-.17	-.375**
Refuse	2.19	-.102	.17		-.205
Refute	1.99	.102	.375**	.205	

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 6 Correlations of Paracrisis Behavioural Intentions Variables with External Paracrisis Origin

Paracrisis behavioural intentions	M	Reform	Humor	Refuse	Refute
Reform	2.488		.372***	.023	.233*
Humour	2.861	-.372***		-.349**	-.14
Refuse	2.512	-.023	.349**		.209
Refute	2.721	-.233*	.14	-.209	
Negative word-of-mouth intentions					
Reform	2.593		.465**	.128	.407**
Humour	3.058	-.465**		-.337**	-.058
Refuse	2.721	-.128	.337**		.279*
Refute	3	-.407**	.058	-.279*	
I would encourage friends or relatives not to buy products from the company.					
Reform	2.74		.407*	.081	.326*
Humour	3.15	-.407*		-.326	-.081
Refuse	2.83	-.081	.326		.244
Refute	3.07	-.326*	.081	-.244	
I would say negative things about the company and its products to other people.					
Reform	2.52		-.547***	.163	.419
Humour	3.07	.547***		-.384*	-.128
Refuse	2.69	-.163	.384*		.256
Refute	2.94	-.419	.128	-.256	
I would not recommend the company's products to someone who asked my advice.					
Reform	3.326		.43*	.128	.349*
Humour	3.756	-.43*		-.302*	-.081
Refuse	3.454	-.128	.302*		.221
Refute	3.674	-.349*	.081	-.221	
I would sign an online petition to boycott the company.					
Reform	2.23		.291	.151	.349
Humour	2.52	-.291		-.14	.058
Refuse	2.38	-.151	.14		.198
Refute	2.58	-.349	-.058	-.198	
Action Likelihood					
Reform	2.291		.105	-.209	.023
Humour	2.395	-.105		-.314*	-.081
Refuse	2.081	.209	.314*		.233
Refute	2.314	-.023	.081	-.233	
I would share the message of the incident with other people.					

	Mean				
Reform	2.34		.174	-.233	.081
Humour	2.51	-.174		-.407**	-.093
Refuse	2.1	.233	.407**		.314
Refute	2.42	-.081	.093	-.314*	

I would tell my friends about the incident.

	Mean				
Reform	2.64		.163	-.116	.116
Humour	2.8	-.163		-.279	-.047
Refuse	2.52	.116	.279		.233
Refute	2.76	-.116	.047	-.233	

I would leave a reaction.

	Mean				
Reform	2.12		.023	-.198	-.128
Humour	2.14	-.023		-.221	-.151
Refuse	1.92	.198	.221		.07
Refute	1.99	.128	.151	-.07	

*p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

5. Discussion

Most of the items of organisational reputation were significantly affected by the paracrisis response strategy with self-imposed (SIPO) and external (EPO) paracrisis origins (RQ1) with significant mean differences in almost all items (RQ2). Paracrisis behavioural intentions were affected by the paracrisis response strategy with self-imposed and external paracrisis origins for almost all items (RQ3) with significant mean differences for most of the paracrisis behavioural intentions' items (RQ4). Reform consistently obtained the highest scores of organisational reputation, and therefore was the most successful strategy. The largest differences were identified between the reform and the humour strategies' scores. Humour was the least successful strategy as it caused the lowest organisational reputation scores.

The humorous strategy led to the highest scores for behavioural intentions in almost all items, so humour is the worst strategy to be adopted. With regards self-imposed paracrisis origin, the reform strategy mostly achieved the lowest scores, so it is the most recommendable for this condition. For external paracrisis origin, reform led to the

lowest scores for the index of paracrisis behavioural intentions and the index and items of negative WOM intentions, but not the ones of action likelihood. Therefore, it is not recommended to achieve the lowest paracrisis behavioural intentions scores.

There were no clear patterns between the mean differences of self-imposed and external paracrisis origin. However, there were less significant differences between the means of the items with external than self-imposed paracrisis origin. This indicates that the users placed less importance on what the company said when it had low responsibility for the situation.

With regards to research questions 1 and 2, no significant differences were detected between the strategies refuse and refute, regardless of the paracrisis origin. Regarding research questions 3 and 4, there were almost no significant differences between refuse and refute. This could be due to their similarity in terms of language and messages, and the lower contrasts between the two strategies compared to the humour and reform, which seem more extreme.

The convenience for the reform strategy is in line with the state of art of crisis research. However, Coombs and Holladay (2012) developed the different strategies for a variety of situations and, in accordance with Dutta and Pullig (2011), recommended not to always use the same one. Following this, they criticised previous crisis research for labelling apology (for paracrisis: reform) as "the" ideal response strategy and found that it was not the best strategy in all situations (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). According to the present study's results, organisations should always adopt the reform strategy. Taking into account previous research, this is a partially unexpected outcome. They recommended to further analyse the situation, the responsibility and the future actions the organisation wished to take regarding the issue. In the conducted experiments, the reform strategy was most convincing to the respondents because it included an apology

and expressed a high commitment to change. As fictional situations and fictional companies were used, the respondents could have assumed that these organisations would improve and solve the situation without knowing whether this was going to happen. Therefore, the reform strategy may have resulted less favourable for well-known companies with a paracrisis history and prior relationship reputation, in case it had faced similar situations or a poor reputation before. However, further research is required in this direction.

The results regarding the humour strategy correspond with Lim's findings (2016), which advised against the use of humour because it could evoke a crisis situation and make a paracrisis worse, as it aroused negative emotions on behalf of the participants. The findings do not correspond with Kim, Zhang and Zhang's results which claimed humour was being effective to manage a paracrisis (2016, p. 911) and Martin's assumption of humour's stress-lowering function. These studies indicated that humour had a positive effect on critical situations and could help turn these into PR opportunities. This was not reflected in this research. However, they did not generalise the situations in which humour is valuable. Therefore, the examined situations might simply not have been appropriate for the adaptation of humour.

6. Conclusion

This research focused on organisational paracrisis response strategies on Facebook. Paracrises are publicly visible reputation threats, for instance critical user comments on an organisation's social media page. They have the potential to turn into real-world crises. Public Relations professionals are already trying to prevent these situations by monitoring them and responding appropriately. Little research has been conducted on this issue.

Two within-subjects experiments were conducted. Using fictional paracrises on Facebook of fictional international IT suppliers, differences and effects in respondents' perceptions of organisational reputation and paracrisis behavioural intentions were analysed. Four organisational response strategies were examined: reform, humour, refuse, refute. This was investigated in separate online quasi-experiments with self-imposed and external paracrisis origins. The election and definitions of these variables were based on the reviewed literature, mainly by Coombs and Holladay (2012), Martin (1996), and Kim, Zhang and Zhang (2016).

In both experiments the results showed that the response strategy had a significant effect on participants' evaluations of organisational reputation and behavioural intentions. Overall, a reform strategy was the most recommendable, and a humorous strategy was the least recommendable, to reach the highest reputation scores for this paracrisis situation. This study adds to the state of the art paracrisis research and is supported by research in PR strategies, SNS, and the psychology of users. This research contributes to preventing potential real-world crises and protecting organisations' reputations.

This study has various limitations. The variable perceived organisational reputation could not be investigated for non-existing organisations, as it establishes in the long-term. Therefore, the results for organisational reputation are limited on the proxy

variable's short-term perspective and could vary for real organisations. Furthermore, the indexes of the variable behavioural intentions may only be regarded separately, because there was no clear pattern of the scores achieved. This could be due to the items' different degrees of involvement and engagement. These should be regarded on an individual level, taking into account the users' willingness to interact with organisations on social media, so-called social vigilantism (Roh, 2017). In different cases for various or broader audiences and sectors, the other strategies may be more effective for crisis prevention, and consequently issue management. In addition, respondents' perceptions could vary strongly in the same experiments for organisations with prior reputations or crisis histories. For example, the reform strategy might be less favourable and a humorous response could be more effective for an organisation with a matching reputation. The respondents' scores of organisational reputation and behavioural intentions may have differed from this study in the four strategies for different situations, sectors, well-known organisations, and other publics.

These results and limitations should be kept in mind for the construction of future scales and item order. The action likelihood scale should be reinforced to find out which would be the adequate strategy to minimise the interaction. Adding further items to the scale could help achieving more significant results. Social vigilantism should be controlled by a scale regarding respondents' general SNS interaction. Moreover, future studies should investigate if the humorous response also arouses positive behavioural intentions, such as leaving a positive reaction or interacting out of interest. In a different paracrisis situation for another sector, there may be more positive results for a humorous response strategy. In accordance with Martin's definition of humour being multi-faceted (1996), a variety of humorous strategies should be tested for various situations. For example the effects of friendly, ironic, and sexual forms of humour in

different degrees of user accusations could be analysed. Future research should test the paracrisis response strategies for different situations, further sectors, well-known organisations, and other publics.

A generalised academic paracrisis evaluation guide for each SNS could be developed to support PR practitioners in preventing crises by combining further empirical experiments with content analyses on real paracrises of various sectors, situations, and responses. This guide should be reviewed regularly to correspond with social change and SNS behaviour, which could have an effect on the perception of paracrises and their impact. This study contributed to the suggested paracrisis evaluation guide. This research concludes that for these samples, in response to a paracrisis of self-imposed or external origins in the IT sector without a prior reputation, a reform strategy is the most appropriate and a humorous strategy is the least appropriate.

7. References

Ajzen, I. (2005). *Attitudes, personality and behavior*. New York, NY: Open University Press.

Ajzen, I. (2006). *Behavioural interventions based on the theory of planned behavior*. Retrieved from http://people.umass.edu/aizen/pdf/tpb.intervention.pdf [2017, June 7]

Anagani, S. K. (2016). *Sai-kiran-anagani-61187.jpg*. Retrieved from https://unsplash.com/photos/5Ntkpxqt54Y [2017, May 30]

Benoit, W. L. (1995). *Accounts, excuses, and apologies: A theory of image restoration strategies*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Benoit, W. L. (1997). Image repair discourse and crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, *23*(2), 177-186.

Bierhoff, H. W. (2006). *Sozialpsychologie: Ein Lehrbuch*. W. Kohlhammer Verlag.

Brosius, H.-B., Haas, A., & Koschel, F. (2012). *Methoden der empirischen Kommunikationsforschung*. Wiesbaden: Springer.

Cheng, Y. (2016). How Social Media Is Changing Crisis Communication Strategies: Evidence from the Updated Literature. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 1-11.

Coombs, W. T. (1998). The Internet as potential equalizer: New leverage for confronting social irresponsibility. *Public Relations Review*, *24*(3), 289-303.

Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate reputation review*, *10*(3), 163-176.

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (1996). Communication and attributions in a crisis: An experimental study in crisis communication. *Journal of public relations research*, *8*(4), 279-295.

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2006). Unpacking the halo effect: Reputation and crisis management. *Journal of Communication Management*, *10*(2), 123-137.

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2008). Comparing apology to equivalent crisis response strategies: Clarifying apology's role and value in crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, *34*(3), 252-257.

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2009). Further explorations of post-crisis communication: Effects of media and response strategies on perceptions and intentions. *Public Relations Review*, *35*(1), 1-6.

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, J. S. (2012). The paracrisis: The challenges created by publicly managing crisis prevention. *Public Relations Review*, *38*(3), 408-415.

Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, J. S. (2014). How publics react to crisis communication efforts: Comparing crisis response reactions across sub-arenas. *Journal of Communication Management*, *18*(1), 40-57.

Denis-Remis, C., Lebraty, J.-F., & Philippe, H. (2013). The 2008 anti-French demonstrations in China: Learning from a social media crisis. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, *21*(1), 45–55.

Dutta, S., & Pullig, C. (2011). Effectiveness of corporate responses to brand crises: The role of crisis type and response strategies. *Journal of Business Research*, *64*(12), 1281-1287.

eMarketer (2013). *The Year of Social?* Retrieved from https://www.emarketer.com/Article/Year-of-Social/1010386 [2017, April 5]

Einwiller, S. A., & Steilen, S. (2015). Handling complaints on social network sites–An analysis of complaints and complaint responses on Facebook and Twitter pages of large US companies. *Public Relations Review*, *41*(2), 195-204.

Feldman, J. M., & Lynch, J. G. (1988). Self-Generated Validity and Other Effects of Measurement on Belief, Attitude, Intention, and Behavior. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 73*(3), 421-435.

Fiederer, S., & Ternès, A. (2017). Krisenmanagement nach Entwicklungsphasen. In Fiederer, S. & Ternès, A. (eds.), *Effiziente Krisenkommunikation–transparent und authentisch* (57-64). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien.

Freberg, K. (2012). Intention to comply with crisis messages communicated via social media. *Public Relations Review*, *38*(3), 416-421.

Goolsby, R. (2010). Social media as crisis platform: The future of community maps/crisis maps. *ACM Transactions on Intelligent Systems and Technology (TIST)*, *1*(1), 7:1-11.

Hansson, L., Wrangmo, A., & Solberg Søilen, K. (2013). Optimal ways for companies to use Facebook as a marketing channel. *Journal of Information, Communication and Ethics in Society*, *11*(2), 112-126.

Huber, O. (1997). *Das psychologische Experiment: Eine Einführung*. Bern: Verlag Hans Huber.

Jin, Y., Liu, B. F., & Austin, L. L. (2014). Examining the role of social media in effective crisis management: The effects of crisis origin, information form, and source on publics' crisis responses. *Communication research*, *41*(1), 74-94.

Kim, S., Zhang, X. A., & Zhang, B. W. (2016). Self-mocking crisis strategy on social media: Focusing on Alibaba chairman Jack Ma in China. *Public Relations Review, 42*, 903-912.

Lenhart, A. et al. (2010). *Social Media & Mobile Internet Use among Teens and Young Adults*. Washington, DC: Pew Research Center.

Lim, J. S. (2016). How a paracrisis situation is instigated by an online firestorm and visual mockery: Testing a paracrisis development model. *Computers in Human Behavior, 67,* 252–263.

Liu, B. F., Austin, L., & Jin, Y. (2011). How publics respond to crisis communication strategies: The interplay of information form and source. *Public Relations Review*, *37*(4), 345-353.

Martin, R. A. (1996). The situational humor response questionnaire (SHRQ) and coping humor scale (CHS): A decade of research findings. *Humor-International Journal of Humor Research*, *9*(3-4), 251-272.

Möhrle, Hartwin (2004). Plädoyer für ein erweitertes Krisenverständnis. In Möhrle, H. (ed.), *Krisen-PR. Krisen erkennen, meistern und vorbeugen - ein Handbuch von Profis für Profis* (12-29). Frankfurt am Main: F.A.Z.-Inst. für Management- Markt- und Medieninformationen.

Müller, M. (2017). *Marc-mueller-210523.jpg* [modified]. Retrieved from https://unsplash.com/@seven11nash?photo=Lg8xTZjs6Lg [2017, May 30]

Myers, K. K., & Sadaghiani, K. (2010). Millennials in the workplace: A communication perspective on millennials' organizational relationships and performance. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *25*(2), 225-238.

Pang, A., Begam Binte Abul Hassan, N., & Chee Yang Chong, A. (2014). Negotiating crisis in the social media environment: Evolution of crises online, gaining credibility offline. *Corporate Communications: An International Journal*, *19*(1), 96-118.

Pavlov, I. (2016). *Ilya-pavlov-87438.jpg.* Retrieved from https://unsplash.com/photos/OqtafYT5kTw [2017, May 30]

Pfeffer, J., Zorbach, T., & Carley, K. M. (2014). Understanding online firestorms: Negative word-of-mouth dynamics in social media networks. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, *20*(1-2), 117-128.

Research Council UK (2015). *RCUK Common Principles on Data Policy*. Retrieved from http://www.rcuk.ac.uk/research/datapolicy/ [2017, May 30]

Resnick, P., Kuwabara, K., Zeckhauser, R., & Friedman, E. (2000). Reputation systems. *Communications of the ACM*, *43*(12), 45-48.

Roh, S. (2017). Examining the paracrisis online: The effects of message source, response strategies and social vigilantism on public responses. *Public Relations Review*, 1-10.

Salzborn, (2015). *Phänomen Shitstorm. Herausforderung für die Onlinekrisenkommunikation von Unternehmen. Academic dissertation*. Stuttgart: Universität Hohenheim.

Schultz, F., Utz, S., & Göritz, A. (2011). Is the medium the message? Perceptions of and reactions to crisis communication via twitter, blogs and traditional media. *Public Relations Review*, *37*(1), 20-27.

Seibold, D. R. (2010). Organizational Reputation Scale. In Rubin, R. B. et al. (eds.), *Communication research measures II: A sourcebook* (235-238). NY and London: Routledge.

Shan, L. C., et al. (2015). Interactive Communication With the Public: Qualitative Exploration of the Use of Social Media by Food and Health Organizations. *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior, 47*(1), 104-108.

Sony Corporation (2017). *Our exclusive new VR experience with The Chainsmokers is coming to the Playstation Store soon. Find out more at http://lostinmusic.sony/ #LostInMusic.* Retrieved from https://www.facebook.com/Sony/photos/a.121553481996.114524.56232316996/101547 93378716997/?type=3 [2017, May 30]

Spiske, M. (2017). *Markus-spiske-207946.jpg.* Retrieved from https://unsplash.com/photos/Skf7HxARcoc [2017, May 30]

Statista (2016). *Number of monthly active Facebook users worldwide as of 4th quarter 2016 (in millions).* Retrieved from https://www.statista.com/statistics/264810/number-of-monthly-active-facebook-users-worldwide/ [2017, March 30]

Tække, J. (2015). Crisis Communication in a Systems- and Medium Theoretical Perspective. Paper to the conference '15: *Conflicting Systems Observed with Social Systems Theory.* Dubrovnik: International University Centre.

Taylor, M., & Kent, M. L. (2007). Taxonomy of mediated crisis responses. *Public Relations Review*, *33*(2), 140-146.

The British Psychological Society (2010). *Code of Human Research Ethics.* Leicester: The British Psychological Society.

Valenzuela, S., Park, N., & Kee, K. F. (2009). Is there social capital in a social network site? Facebook use and college students' life satisfaction, trust, and participation. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, *14*(4), 875-901.

8. Appendices

Figure 2 Country of Origin SIPO

Paracrisis origin: self-imposed

Country of Origin
- Argentina
- Austria
- Belgium
- Brazil
- Bulgaria
- Denmark
- Egypt
- Estonia
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- Indonesia
- Italy
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Peru
- Scotland
- Serbia
- Slovakia
- Spain
- Sweden
- Switzerland
- The Netherlands
- Turkey
- United Kingdom
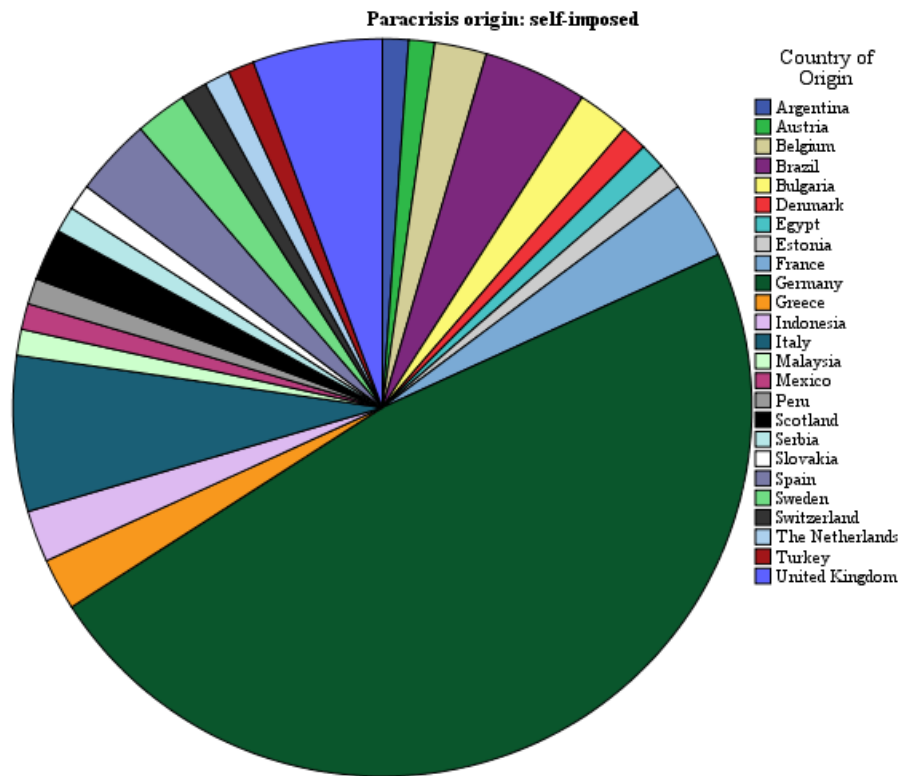
Figure 3 Country of Origin EPO

Paracrisis origin: external

Country of Origin
- Argentina
- Belgium
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile
- China
- Cyprus
- Czech Republic
- Denmark
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Greece
- India
- Indonesia
- Ireland
- Italy
- Lithuania
- Netherlands
- Peru
- Scotland
- Spain
- Switzerland
- The Netherlands
- USA
- Vietnam

Figure 4 Age SIPO

Paracrisis origin: self-imposed

Figure 5 Age EPO

Paracrisis origin: external
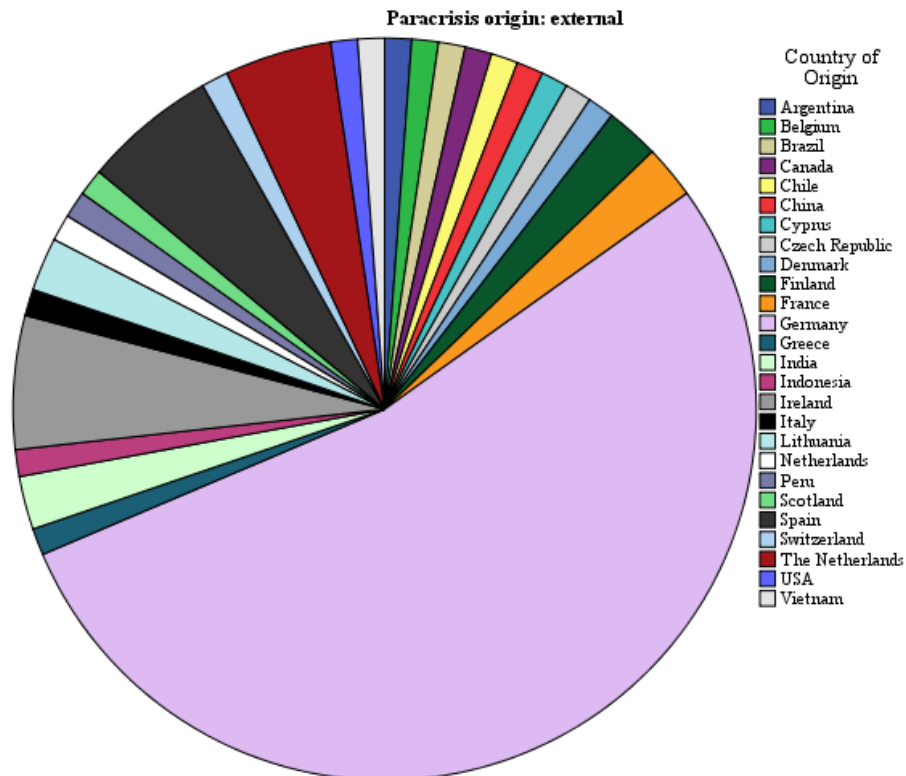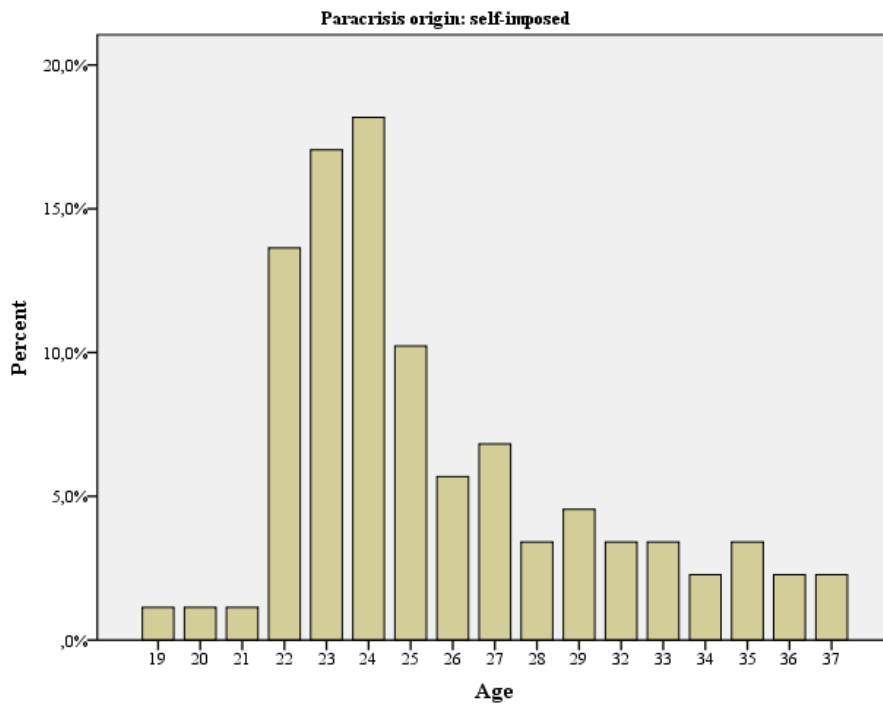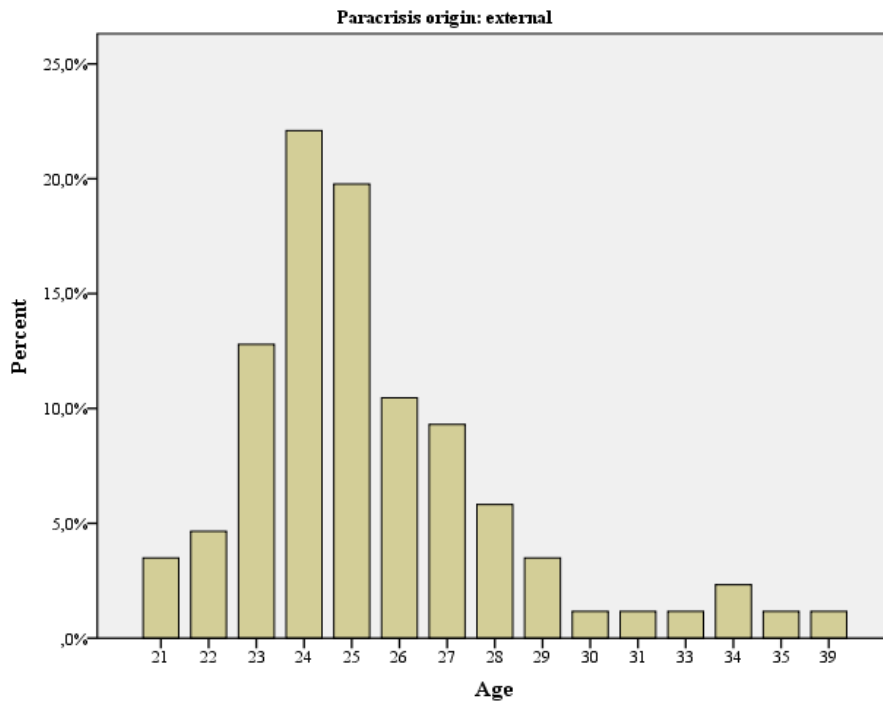
Figure 6 Inspiration for Facebook Posts (Original Case)

(Sony Corporation, 2017)

Questionnaire Part 1

Introduction and informed consent form

upf. **Universitat Pompeu Fabra** *Barcelona*

Thank you in advance for taking part in this short study for my Master's dissertation at Universitat Pompeu Fabra (Barcelona) and University of Stirling. It is university research about digital communication which will take about 5 minutes. Please follow the instructions in the questions.

We don't anticipate that there are any risks associated with your participation, but you have the right to stop the participation or withdraw from the research at any time. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail svh00005@students.stir.ac.uk.

This informed consent is necessary for us to ensure that you understand the purpose of the project and your involvement, and that you agree to the conditions of your participation. Proceeding to the survey will ensure that you are clear on the terms of the research and you approve the following:

- Your participation is voluntary and you will be free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.
- The data received will be analysed by Sophia Honisch as research investigator and access to the dataset will be limited to her and her supervisor Lluís Mas.
- Your data will be kept confidential, anonymous and stored securely under password, not disclosed to third parties without your prior consent and used exclusively for the purposes of this project.
- You will not receive any benefit or payment for your participation.

This research has been reviewed and approved by the General University Ethics Panel (GUEP) at the University of Stirling. If you have any further questions or concerns about this study, please contact: guep@stir.ac.uk

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

Continue

Questionnaire Part 2

Socio economic questions and Facebook use

Question 1:
How old are you?
Please type in a number.

Question 2:
Are you male or female?
Please select one box.

male ▼

Question 3:
Which country are you from?
Please type in the country you come from.

Question 4:
What is the highest educational degree you currently have?
Please select one of the options.

○ High school graduate
○ Secondary school graduate
○ Graduate degree (for example, Bachelor)
○ Apprenticeship degree
○ Postgraduate degree (for example, Master)
○ Doctorate (PhD)
○ None of the above, but:

Question 5:
On a typical day, about how much time do you spend on Facebook?
Please choose one duration.

○ No time at all
○ Less than 10 min
○ 10 to 30 min
○ More than 30 min, up to 1 hr
○ More than 1 hr, up to 2 hrs
○ More than 2 hrs, up to 3 hrs
○ More than 3 hrs

Continue

Questionnaire Part 3a

Self-imposed paracrisis origin stimulus (randomised)

Question 1:
Now you will be shown Facebook posts of four international IT suppliers operating in Europe. They provide big IT companies with IT components.

Each of the companies contracted a production partner that exploits workers in India. They had unethical contracts with these producers and still collaborate with them.

Continue

Questionnaire Part 3b

External paracrisis origin stimulus (randomised)

Followed each by (randomised for each Facebook post):

Questionnaire Part 4

(Image: Anagani, 2016)

Question 2:

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale from 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE to 5 = STRONGLY AGREE?

	1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	3	4	5 = STRONGLY AGREE
The organization is basically honest.	O	O	O	O	O
The organization is concerned with the well-being of its publics.	O	O	O	O	O
I do trust the organization to tell the truth about the incident.	O	O	O	O	O
I would prefer to have NOTHING to do with this organization.	O	O	O	O	O
Under most circumstances, I WOULD NOT be likely to believe what the organization says.	O	O	O	O	O

Question 3:

How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale from 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE to 5 = STRONGLY AGREE?

	1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	3	4	5 = STRONGLY AGREE
I would encourage friends or relatives NOT to buy products from BAEL.	O	O	O	O	O
I would say negative things about BAEL and its products to other people.	O	O	O	O	O
I would recommend BAEL products to someone who asked my advice.	O	O	O	O	O
I would sign an online petition to boycott BAEL.	O	O	O	O	O

Question 4:

Please indicate, on a scale from 1 = VERY UNLIKELY to 5 = VERY LIKELY, how likely you would be to…

	1 = VERY UNLIKELY	2	3	4	5 = VERY LIKELY
…share the message of the incident with other people.	O	O	O	O	O
…tell your friends about the incident.	O	O	O	O	O
…leave a reaction.	O	O	O	O	O

Question 5:

Did you know the IT supplier BAEL before?

No ▼

Question 6:

If you knew BAEL before, please indicate how positive or negative your image of the organization is. If you DID NOT KNOW the IT supplier before, please select NOT APPLICABLE.

1 = VERY NEGATIVE	2	3	4	5 = VERY POSITIVE	9 = NOT APPLICABLE
O	O	O	O	O	O

Continue

Questionnaire Part 5

(Image: Pavlov, 2016)

Question 2:
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale from 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE to 5 = STRONGLY AGREE?

	1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	3	4	5 = STRONGLY AGREE
The organization is basically honest.	O	O	O	O	O
The organization is concerned with the well-being of its publics.	O	O	O	O	O
I do trust the organization to tell the truth about the incident.	O	O	O	O	O
I would prefer to have NOTHING to do with this organization.	O	O	O	O	O
Under most circumstances, I WOULD NOT be likely to believe what the organization says.	O	O	O	O	O

Question 3:
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale from 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE to 5 = STRONGLY AGREE?

	1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	3	4	5 = STRONGLY AGREE
I would encourage friends or relatives NOT to buy products from BLAE.	O	O	O	O	O
I would say negative things about BLAE and its products to other people.	O	O	O	O	O
I would recommend BLAE products to someone who asked my advice.	O	O	O	O	O
I would sign an online petition to boycott BLAE.	O	O	O	O	O

Question 4:
Please indicate, on a scale from 1 = VERY UNLIKELY to 5 = VERY LIKELY, how likely you would be to…

	1 = VERY UNLIKELY	2	3	4	5 = VERY LIKELY
…share the message of the incident with other people.	○	○	○	○	○
…tell your friends about the incident.	○	○	○	○	○
…leave a reaction.	○	○	○	○	○

Question 5:
Did you know the IT supplier BLAE before?

No ▾

Question 6:
If you knew BLAE before, please indicate how positive or negative your image of the organization is. If you DID NOT KNOW the IT supplier before, please select NOT APPLICABLE.

1 = VERY NEGATIVE	2	3	4	5 = VERY POSITIVE	9 = NOT APPLICABLE
○	○	○	○	○	○

Continue

Questionnaire Part 6

(Image: Spiske, 2017)

Question 2:
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale from 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE to 5 = STRONGLY AGREE?

	1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	3	4	5 = STRONGLY AGREE
The organization is basically honest.	O	O	O	O	O
The organization is concerned with the well-being of its publics.	O	O	O	O	O
I do trust the organization to tell the truth about the incident.	O	O	O	O	O
I would prefer to have NOTHING to do with this organization.	O	O	O	O	O
Under most circumstances, I WOULD NOT be likely to believe what the organization says.	O	O	O	O	O

Question 3:
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale from 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE to 5 = STRONGLY AGREE?

	1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	3	4	5 = STRONGLY AGREE
I would encourage friends or relatives NOT to buy products from NEAL.	O	O	O	O	O
I would say negative things about NEAL and its products to other people.	O	O	O	O	O
I would recommend NEAL products to someone who asked my advice.	O	O	O	O	O
I would sign an online petition to boycott NEAL.	O	O	O	O	O

Question 4:
Please indicate, on a scale from 1 = VERY UNLIKELY to 5 = VERY LIKELY, how likely you would be to…

	1 = VERY UNLIKELY	2	3	4	5 = VERY LIKELY
…share the message of the incident with other people.	O	O	O	O	O
…tell your friends about the incident.	O	O	O	O	O
…leave a reaction.	O	O	O	O	O

Question 5:
Did you know the IT supplier NEAL before?

No ▼

Question 6:
If you knew NEAL before, please indicate how positive or negative your image of the organization is. If you DID NOT KNOW the IT supplier before, please select NOT APPLICABLE.

1 = VERY NEGATIVE	2	3	4	5 = VERY POSITIVE	9 = NOT APPLICABLE
O	O	O	O	O	O

Continue

xii

Questionnaire Part 7

(Image: Müller, 2017 [modified])

Question 2:
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale from 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE to 5 = STRONGLY AGREE?

	1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	3	4	5 = STRONGLY AGREE
The organization is basically honest.	O	O	O	O	O
The organization is concerned with the well-being of its publics.	O	O	O	O	O
I do trust the organization to tell the truth about the incident.	O	O	O	O	O
I would prefer to have NOTHING to do with this organization.	O	O	O	O	O
Under most circumstances, I WOULD NOT be likely to believe what the organization says.	O	O	O	O	O

Question 3:
How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements on a scale from 1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE to 5 = STRONGLY AGREE?

	1 = STRONGLY DISAGREE	2	3	4	5 = STRONGLY AGREE
I would encourage friends or relatives NOT to buy products from TRAE.	O	O	O	O	O
I would say negative things about TRAE and its products to other people.	O	O	O	O	O
I would recommend TRAE products to someone who asked my advice.	O	O	O	O	O
I would sign an online petition to boycott TRAE.	O	O	O	O	O

Question 4:
Please indicate, on a scale from 1 = VERY UNLIKELY to 5 = VERY LIKELY, how likely you would be to…

	1 = VERY UNLIKELY	2	3	4	5 = VERY LIKELY
…share the message of the incident with other people.	○	○	○	○	○
…tell your friends about the incident.	○	○	○	○	○
…leave a reaction.	○	○	○	○	○

Question 5:
Did you know the IT supplier TRAE before?

No ▼

Question 6:
If you knew TRAE before, please indicate how positive or negative your image of the organization is. If you DID NOT KNOW the IT supplier before, please select NOT APPLICABLE.

1 = VERY NEGATIVE	2	3	4	5 = VERY POSITIVE	9 = NOT APPLICABLE
○	○	○	○	○	○

Continue

Questionnaire Part 8

Closing page

100%

upf. Universitat Pompeu Fabra *Barcelona*

Thank you again for participating in this survey, which is a quasi-experiment testing the reactions of the participants to organisational response strategies in critical situations depending on the organisation's responsibility. The organisations of subject and the situations are completely fictional and were only invented for this research.

Finishing this survey will ensure again that you are clear on the terms of the research and approve them as explained in the introduction.

If you have further questions on the research design and outcomes, please do not hesitate to contact me via e-mail svh00005@students.stir.ac.uk.

UNIVERSITY OF STIRLING

Table 7 Means and Standard Deviations of the Different Variables

Dependent measures	Paracrisis origin																				
	Self-imposed										External										
	Reform		Humour		Refuse		Refute				Reform		Humour		Refuse		Refute			
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	df	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	F	df
Perceived organisational reputation	3.143	.856	2.325	.772	2.761	.728	2.757	.809	15.166***	3	3.265	.791	2.274	.799	2.742	.798	2.57	.772	24.407***	3
The organisation is basically honest.	3.30	1.084	2.27	1.025	2.84	.958	2.76	1.039	16.112***	3	3.44	1.013	2.38	1.139	2.71	.981	2.72	1.092	13.188***	3
The organisation is concerned with the well-being of its publics.	3.33	1.111	2.11	1.066	2.84	1.113	2.82	1.246	22.162***	3	3.5	1.071	2.12	1.121	2.83	1.14	2.47	1.155	21.949***	3
I do trust the organisation to tell the truth about the incident.	2.92	1.116	2.03	.964	2.66	.958	2.73	1.09	15.065***	3	3.03	1.1	2.12	1.1	2.66	1.069	2.45	1.102	10.778***	3
I would prefer to have something to do with the organisation.	3.171	1.085	2.523	1.184	2.773	.881	2.796	.984	6.033***	3	3.186	1	2.395	1.181	2.767	1.037	2.593	1.131	11.101***	3
Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the organisation says.	3	1.017	2.682	1.189	2.773	.881	2.796	.984	2.802*	3	3.163	1.05	2.361	1.147	2.744	.984	2.616	1.086	7.994***	3
Paracrisis behavioural intentions	2.432	.785	2.921	1.008	2.614	.85	2.58	.854	6.924***	3	2.488	.904	2.861	.922	2.512	.778	2.721	.89	6.506**	3
Negative word-of-mouth intentions	2.466	.742	3.034	.988	2.818	.838	2.773	.84	6.691***	3	2.593	.817	3.058	.899	2.721	.777	3	.907	7.492***	3
I would encourage friends or relatives not to buy products from the company.	2.52	.994	3.06	1.216	2.82	1.023	2.78	1.098	4.058*	3	2.74	1.02	3.15	1.09	2.83	.972	3.07	1.176	4.326**	3
I would say negative things about the company and its products to other people.	2.35	.935	2.98	1.164	2.68	1.045	2.64	1.019	8.435***	3	2.52	1.037	3.07	1.104	2.69	.961	2.94	1.088	7.729***	3
I would not recommend the company's products to someone who asked my advice.	3.5	.971	4.034	.809	3.75	.9	3.727	.893	6.411**	3	3.326	.939	3.756	1.028	3.454	.877	3.674	1.011	5.663**	3
I would sign an online petition to boycott the company.	2.19	1.004	2.57	1.133	2.42	.991	2.45	1.016	3.42*	3	2.23	1.081	2.52	1.234	2.38	1.065	2.58	1.203	2.359	3
Action likelihood	2.216	1.108	2.546	1.212	2.284	1.103	2.193	1.143	3.182*	3	2.291	1.094	2.395	1.211	2.081	1.008	2.314	1.161	3.14*	3
I would share the message of the incident with other people.	1.95	1.071	2.36	1.288	2.18	1.14	2.15	1.14	4.639***	3	2.34	1.08	2.51	1.263	2.1	1.018	2.42	1.212	4.53***	3
I would tell my friends about the incident.	2.68	1.264	3.07	1.211	2.68	1.218	2.67	1.266	4.289**	3	2.64	1.137	2.8	1.225	2.52	1.124	2.76	1.264	2.664	3
I would leave a reaction.	2.09	1.1	2.36	1.233	2.19	1.071	1.99	1.04	4.779***	3	2.12	1.152	2.14	1.229	1.92	1.008	1.99	1.132	2.493	3

Note: Significance for the multivariate F is based on estimates of the marginal means for the Wilk's Lambda statistic. *p < .05. **p < .01. ***p < .001.

Table 8 Results Mauchly's Test of Sphericity

| | Paracrisis origin | | | | | | | |
| Dependent measures | Self-imposed | | | | External | | | |
	X^2	df	p	ε	X^2	df	p	ε
Perceived organisational reputation	9.388	5	.095	.931	12.222	5	.032	.915
The organisation is basically honest.	7.399	5	.193	.943	14.767	5	.011	.888
The organisation is concerned with the well-being of its publics.	3.398	5	.639	.975	19.65	5	.001	.875
I do trust the organisation to tell the truth about the incident.	5.434	5	.365	.961	14.857	5	.11	.896
I would prefer to have something to do with the organisation.	6.141	5	.293	.955	6.085	5	.298	.953
Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the organisation says.	13.250	5	.021	.899	21.255	5	.001	.842
Paracrisis behavioural intentions	12.689	5	.026	.917	14.187	5	.014	.91
Negative word-of-mouth intentions	14.551	5	.012	.903	8.758	5	.119	.936
I would encourage friends or relatives not to buy products from the company.	7.164	5	.209	.953	3.782	5	.581	.973
I would say negative things about the company and its products to other people.	2.564	5	.767	.981	7.098	5	.214	.944
I would not recommend the company's products to someone who asked my advice.	3.956	5	.556	.971	8.724	5	.121	.944
I would sign an online petition to boycott the company.	14.268	5	.014	.917	10.488	5	0.63	.931
Action likelihood	4.998	5	.416	.962	13.403	5	.02	.903
I would share the message of the incident with other people.	5.616	5	.345	.958	9.925	5	.077	.924
I would tell my friends about the incident.	9.206	5	.101	.940	13.09	5	.023	.913
I would leave a reaction.	3.812	5	.577	.972	14.588	5	.012	.896