



**Investigating the effects of vividness of consumer generated online content on
company reputation and purchase intention during a crisis situation**

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Abstract

The present study examines whether vividness of consumer generated online content and company crisis influence one's perception of company reputation and one's purchase intentions. To test the hypotheses, a 3 x 2 between-subject design experiment ($N = 253$) was performed. Online content on Facebook was manipulated and presented three different levels of vividness (low, medium, high), as well as two levels of company crisis (yes and no). Low levels of vividness were associated to texts, medium levels to pictures and high levels to videos. Respondents took part in an online experimental survey and were exposed to only one of the six conditions. The results showed that no levels of vividness have an effect on one's purchase intention. However, high and medium levels of vividness were found to positively influence corporate reputation. The findings further showed that medium levels of vividness led to a more positive company reputation, consequently strengthening purchase intention. Finally, the effect of levels of vividness on company reputation and purchase intention were downgraded in the presence of a company crisis: High vivid content led to a negative company reputation, diminishing, in turn, purchase intention. This research is a valuable addition to prior literature, as to our knowledge, no other research focused on the effects of vividness of consumer generated content in combination with a company crisis. Hence, the results of this thesis help broadening the literature concerning online content on Facebook and suggests for future research.

Keywords: social media, vividness, company crisis, user generated content, company reputation, purchase intention

1. Introduction

In recent years, social media has turned into a crucial asset for both organizations and consumers, becoming a key factor in developing social communication and online communities (Jansen, Zhang, Sobel, & Chowdury, 2009). On social media, consumers are able to interact both with others and organizations, sharing their personal opinions about companies or products (Jansen et al., 2009). However, this type of information present online can influence important elements of the company-consumer relationship, such as purchase intentions (Jansen et al., 2009).

Social media plays an important role in strengthening one's intention to purchase (Lin, Swarna, Bruning, 2017). Prior to engage in buying behaviors, consumers rely on the information shared in online contents to reduce the perceived risk related to the purchase (Hung & Li, 2007; Saboo, Kumar, & Ramani, 2016). In particular, individuals' cognitive behaviors are strongly influenced by online content generated and shared by other consumers, perceived as more trustworthy (Utz, Kerkhof, & van den Bos, 2012; Goh, Heng, & Lin, 2013). However, purchase intention itself is influenced by others factors, one of those being one's beliefs concerning the company reputation. In fact, company reputation has been identified as one of the antecedents on which one's willingness to engage in purchase behaviors is based on (Yoon, Guffey, & Kijewski, 1993). In other words, individuals' intention to buy is driven by positive reputational beliefs regarding a company.

However, the rise of social media has shifted how consumers perceive the reputation of a company, consequently influencing one's buying decisions (Paniagua, Korzynski, & Mas-Tur 2017). Being highly interactive, social media give consumers the possibility to create content and share and their experiences with a broader audience (Waters, Burnett, Lamm, & Lucas, 2009).

Thanks to technology improvements individuals can create and share content on social media adding a video or a picture to a simple text. This would refer to increase vividness in different levels in the content (Coyle & Thorson, 2001; de Vries, Gensler, & Leeflang, 2012; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013).

Vividness comprehends those elements, such as breadth and depth, which intensify a message content (Steuer, 1992). Literature already showed the effects of vividness on consumers' behaviors and perceptions. For example, Jiang and Benbasat (2007) showed that an increase in vividness on websites positively influences consumers' willingness to return to that website and purchase a product. Furthermore, Williamson, King, Lepak and Sarma's (2010) found that vividness on a company's website, led prospective employees to develop more positive reputational beliefs towards that specific organization. This is also in line with the Media Richness Theory (Daft & Lengel, 1986): The more vivid the message, the more perceptual systems are stimulated, and therefore, the stronger the impact on one's behaviors and perceptions. Although this assumption, strengthened by prior literature, could be considered true in most of the cases, we cannot assume that more vivid messages always lead to positive outcomes.

Consumers' intention to purchase is based on how the reputation of a firm is perceived (Yoon et al., 1993). Thus, if negative reputational beliefs arise due to the crisis events, one's buying behaviors would be negatively affected (Jae-Sin & Dae-Yul, 2015). Individuals' use of social media increases during company crises (Jin, Liu, & Austin, 2014), and high levels of credibility are attributed to the content by others (Sweetser & Metzgar, 2007). In fact, for some individuals the information available online are crucial to understand the circumstances of a crisis and form an opinion concerning the situation (Cheng, Mitomo, Otsuka, & Jeon, 2016).

This is enhanced by the richness of social media, also referred as vividness (Steuer, 1992). Thus, it could be questioned whether the previously discussed positive outcomes provided by richer online content on one's behaviors and perceptions, would be reversed in a crisis situation.

To our knowledge no prior studies examined the effects of vividness of consumers' generated online content during a company crisis on both one's perceptions and one's behaviors. Hence, to fill this knowledge gap it is important to examine the effects that the combination of these two factors can have on consumers. It is crucial for companies to understand whether consumers' reputational beliefs and purchase decisions are strengthened (e.g. in a neutral situation) or downgraded (e.g. in a crisis situation) by an increase in vividness in the online content.

This paper differs from prior research as it integrates together the vividness of the online consumers' generated content and the presence of a company crisis. Therefore, the findings of this paper will represent a valuable insight in the context of social media, since it will show how one's behaviors and perceptions can be influenced by the vividness of social media content both in a neutral and in a crisis situation. The aim of the present study is to examine the following research questions:

To what extent does vividness of consumers' generated content and one's perception of company reputation influence purchase behavior? Moreover, to what extent does the presence of a company crisis moderate these effects?

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Social media

The rise of Web 2.0 has introduced new technological development, revolutionizing the way people communicate their experiences and collaborate with each other (Enders,

Hungenberg, Denker, & Mauch, 2008). In particular, this technological revolution has facilitated the ascent of social media platforms. Kaplan and Haenlein (2009, p. 61) defined social media as “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content”. In other words, social media gives individuals a common place where to communicate or share their thoughts with others.

Social media platforms have enhanced consumers’ online engagement, which resulted in the digitalization of word-of-mouth (WOM) (Dellarocas, 2006). In referral to this, Hennig-Thurau et al. (2004, p.39) explained the phenomenon of electronic WOM (eWOM) as “any positive or negative statement made by potential, actual or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet”. eWOM can be considered as the outcome of consumers’ engagement on social media, which results in the creation of users’ generated content (Goh et al., 2013). Consumers look for and rely on the presence of this online content, to reduce their perceived risks (e.g. when making a purchase) (Hung & Li, 2007). People have the possibility to share online their opinions by posting a text, a picture or a video (Sohn, 2014). Riegner (2007) already examined the significant impact that the presence of user generated content has on others purchase decisions. However, little is known about the effectiveness of the characteristics of the online content. More precisely, characteristics of the content can be referred as the vividness of it. The concept of vividness will be further explained in the present paper.

In this study, consumer generated content posted on organizations’ Facebook pages is used as an example of how consumers can interact on social media platforms, creating and sharing their own content. Facebook gives the possibility to its users to easily connect with

others and generate, share, like or comment each other's contents online (Ellison, Steinfield, & Lampe, 2007). Additionally, Facebook's features allow consumers to post and share content not only with text, but also including pictures and videos. Finally, the popularity of Facebook and its characteristics, make this social media platform suitable to fulfill the objectives of the current investigation.

2.2 Purchase intention

Purchase intention can be defined as individuals' cognitive behavior that represents the intention to buy a specific product or brand (Ling, Chai, & Piew, 2010). Social media has been related as one of the factors that strengthen one's purchase intention (Lin, Swarna, & Bruning, 2017). In fact, in order to reduce the perceived risk (e.g. when buying a product), people look for and rely on user generated content present on online platforms (Hung & Li, 2007). In their study, Saboo, et al. (2016) showed that consumers rely on social media to base their purchase decisions and purchase a product after sharing it on social media. Additionally, Beukeboom, Kerkhof, and de Vries (2015) showed that Facebook updates concerning a company enhance individuals' thoughts about the firm and whether or not there is the willingness to buy a product. This influence on one's purchase intention can be explained by social media-related activities, which include like, sharing, and commenting online content with relevant others (Lin et al., 2017). Therefore, particular attention should be posted on how purchase intention can be influenced by the presence of online content generated by consumers.

Consumers are willing to obtain relevant information and/or suggestions from others' concerning products or brands (Godes, Mayzlin, Chen, Das, Dellarocas, & Pfeiffer, 2005). Compared to traditional media, consumer generated content is perceived as a more trustworthy

form of information by stakeholders (Utz et al., 2012; Goh et al., 2013). On social media platforms, consumers are exposed to content (e.g. text, picture or video) created by other consumers, concerning their personal experiences, with a product or a brand they purchased. The consumer intent would be to share the occurrence publicly, to make current or potential consumers aware of their opinion. Furthermore, in order to maximize others' perceptions towards their own experience, one could include, together with the text, a picture or a video of the product. This can be referred as increasing the vividness of the content.

As mentioned, prior to engage in purchase behaviors, consumers base their decisions on what other consumers share online (Hung & Li, 2007; Utz et al., 2012; Goh et al., 2013). However, as it is possible on social media to make the content more vivid (e.g. with texts, pictures, videos), it seems plausible that enriching the content might play a role in others purchase decisions. Therefore, it is necessary to explore the concept of vividness and how it can contribute to shaping other people's behavioral intentions when increased in consumer generated content online.

2.3 Vividness

On social media it is possible to share content with different levels of vividness. Steuer (1992, p.11) defines vividness as “the representational richness of a mediated environment as defined by its formal features, that is, the way in which an environment presents information to the senses”. In other words, vividness represents the enrichment of the features of a message, increasing the level of realism. Vividness is based on the capacity of the content to represent a situation as close as possible to reality, increasing the richness of one's experience (Fortin & Dholakia, 2005; Tafesse, 2015). For instance, video messages are perceived higher in vividness

compared to pictures as they stimulate different senses, such as sight and hearing (de Vries et al., 2012). Two important elements characterize vividness, namely breadth and depth. Breadth refers to the ability of a communication medium to represent different sensory dimensions simultaneously, whereas depth refers to the ability of the medium to closely represent the human sensory dimensions (Steuer, 1992). Vividness can be enlarged on social media, for instance by including videos, audio or animation (Coyle & Thorson, 2001). Adding vividness to a content stimulates different senses, influencing in turn one's attitude and behavior (Petty & Cacioppo, 1989). However, this effect can be understood better by discussing a prior theory, which focuses on individuals' processing information mechanisms, that is the Media Richness Theory.

The Media Richness Theory (henceforth: MRT) was developed by Daft and Lengel (1986) and examines the mechanisms of how individuals process information. In the MRT the medium of the message determines how information is processed. Media channels may vary in the number of cues, the degree of personalization and in the language, showing the uniqueness of each medium. An example of a rich medium is face-to-face interaction, which varies in bodily cues, tone of voice, language and provides prompt feedback. E-mails, instead, are an example of low medium because few cues are involved and there is no immediate feedback provided (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Therefore, the richness of the medium is based on the number of cues used. De Vries et al. (2012) referred to media richness as the vividness of the online content. On social media, the content can be enriched by adding, for example, a picture or a video, which can influence individuals' perceptions and behaviors. The MRT is relevant for this study because high levels of media richness (e.g. more cues involved) can be linked to high levels of vividness.

Prior studies already focused on vividness, operationalizing it on different levels. Scholars investigated the effects of vividness on one's attitude, focusing on adding audio and

animations on commercial websites (Coyle & Thorson, 2001) and in online advertising (Sundar & Kim, 2005). Vividness was operationalized in two levels in both studies: absent and present (Coyle & Thorson, 2001) and static and dynamic (Sundar & Kim, 2005). Consumers who saw animated or moving animations on website and on advertisements developed strong and positive attitudes towards the site and the advertising themselves.

Other scholars operationalized vividness distinguishing more levels. De Vries et al. (2012) investigated how vividness of the online content has an impact on the number of likes and comments of posts. The authors distinguished low levels of vividness (e.g. photo or image), medium levels of vividness (e.g. events), high levels of vividness (e.g. video) and a condition with no vividness. Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) investigated the effects of vividness of the content on brand post popularity. The authors categorized vividness in no vividness (e.g. status), low vividness (e.g. photos), medium vividness (e.g. links) and high vividness (e.g. videos). Similarly, Brookes (2010) investigated the success of Facebook posts, distinguishing vividness in low levels (e.g. text), medium levels (e.g. images) and high levels (e.g. videos).

However, contradicting findings were presented in the abovementioned literature. Both de Vries et al. (2012) and Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) found that higher levels of vividness increased the likeability (de Vries et al., 2012) and enhanced the numbers of shares (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013) of the online content. Brookes (2010), in contrast, concluded that, even though, high and medium levels of vividness were better than low levels, medium vivid content (images) led to the highest influence on the success of posts. The contradicting results could be explained by the fact that both de Vries et al. (2012) and Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) distinguished four different levels of vividness, whereas Brookes (2010) focused only on three levels. Moreover, even though high levels of vividness were in line in all the aforementioned

studies, the authors presented differences concerning the other levels. It could be that de Vries et al. (2012) and Cvijikj and Michahelles' (2013) operationalization of the levels of vividness was broader and sharper in terms of the theory. By adding events or links as the operationalization of medium levels of vividness, the difference between low and high levels increases. Therefore, Brookes (2010) might have found inconsistent results as the gap between medium vivid content and high vivid content was not noticeable enough to provoke an effect.

The majority of the aforementioned research shows that an increase in vividness on websites, advertisements or online content has a positive effect on one's attitude as well as on one's knowledge of a product. This is supported by the MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986) as this theory reasons that the richer and the more vivid messages might influence one's information processing and one's attitude. As already mentioned, Saboo et al. (2016) found that prior to purchase a product, consumers rely on the information present on social media. This is supported by Lin et al. (2017) who showed how social media strengthen one's willingness to engage in purchase behaviors. However, little is known about the effects of vivid social media consumers' generated content on others behavioral intentions. Thus, the first aim of this paper is to examine whether levels of vividness of consumer generated content influence one's purchase intention. Content on Facebook will be investigated, as on this social media platform users can post and share texts, pictures or videos.

This thesis follows the conclusion from de Vries et al. (2012) who found that higher levels of vividness increases the popularity of the online post. This is also in line with the MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986), which reasons that messages that appeal to a multiple of perceptual senses, are better perceived than those that call on single perceptual senses. Therefore, even though presenting some differences, the degrees of vividness used in the current paper are based

on the ones used by de Vries et al. (2012). Low levels of vividness only include online content with text, medium levels include photos, and high levels of vividness are associated with a video. Although, this categorization is similar of the one of Brookes (2010), in her study it was not clear on which theory the operationalization was based on. Moreover, in contrast with de Vries (2012), events were not included in the levels of vividness as in this thesis the focus is on consumer' generated online content. Taking the prior mentioned literature, and the MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986) into consideration, this study assumes that higher levels of vividness of the online content shared by consumers positively influence one's behavior, leading to stronger purchase intention. Thus, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H₁: An increase in vividness in the shared online content influences purchase intention. Precisely, high vivid content leads to a stronger purchase intention than medium vivid content, which in turn leads to a stronger purchase intention than low vivid content.

2.4 Company reputation

2.4.1 Company reputation and vividness

The previous paragraph describes that one's purchase intention is strengthened by the increase in vividness of the online content, in particular in consumers' generated one. However, consumers' willingness to buy is prior influenced by their perceptions of the reputation of a company (Yoon et al., 1993). The vividness of the message is assumed to influence individuals' information processing, triggering an attitude change. As Yoon et al. (1993) postulated company reputation is one of the antecedents which leads to stronger purchase intentions. Hence, it seems plausible that prior to strengthen one's purchase intentions, the vividness of the content can

affect one's perceptions towards the company, such as its reputation. Which in turn, then, would lead to stronger behavioral intentions.

Company reputation has been assessed as one of the most important assets for a company's welfare (Jung & Seock, 2016). Gotsi and Wilson (2001, p. 29) defined company reputation as "a stakeholder's overall evaluation of a company over time." Company reputation reflects the evaluation of the organization's performances of a diverse public, whose expectations need to be fulfilled (Freeman as cited in Fombrun & Shanley, 1990). In other words, reputation combines the cognitive representation of the company's current and future actions, determining the extent to which a company is able to deliver valuable outcomes to its stakeholders, both internal and external (Dijkmans, Kerkhof, Buyukcan-Tetik, & Beukeboom, 2015). A positive reputation not only plays an important role in the consumers' selection process, but also strengthens the firm's position on the market (Fombrun, Gardberg, & Sever, 2000; Walsh, Mitchell, Jackson, & Beatty, 2009).

With the emergence of social media, the way companies are perceived by consumers has changed (Paniagua et al., 2017). Social media can be considered the "venue" where consumers co-create and shape the nature and reputation of companies (Fournier & Avery, 2011). Online platforms have become highly interactive, giving the possibility to consumers and to the community to create content, share and discuss their experiences, real-time updates and give voice to their opinions (Waters et al., 2009). In the present study, the focus is on the effects of vividness of consumer-generated online content on others' behaviors and perceptions. Based on the prior elaborated MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986), consumers elaborate and process information depending on whether different cues are used and provided in the message (Daft & Lengel, 1986). By providing a higher number of cues, and therefore, enhancing the vividness of the

message, different senses are stimulated (e.g. acoustic, visuals etc.), and an attitude change might be experienced.

Prior literature showed that increasing vividness on companies' websites can lead to a more positive perception of the reputation of the organization. For example, Cober, Brown and Levy (2004) investigated how vividness on a company's website can influence job seekers' perception of the reputation of that specific company. The authors found that an increase in vividness in the website stimulated positive emotional states, generating positive affective reactions towards the company. In a similar vein, Williamson et al.'s (2010) findings showed that vividness of the recruiting company's website, helped prospective applicants in strengthening their beliefs concerning the reputation of the company.

Prior research also focused on the effects that online content, created and shared by consumers, has on the perception of a company's reputation. For example, Utz et al. (2012) found that consumer generated online content is perceived as remarkably trustworthy by other users, having an impact on others' perception of the reputation of the company.

As it has been shown in prior studies, vividness in a company's website as well as the high trustworthiness of consumers' generated content online, increase one's positive beliefs toward the firm's reputation (Cober et al., 2004; Williamson et al., 2012). However, to our knowledge, no earlier studies exist that investigate the causal effects of different levels of vividness of consumer generated content on one's company reputation. The MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986) reasons that a higher number of cues in a message interferes with the processing of information, leading people to experience attitudes change. This was supported by Cober et al. (2004) and Williamson et al. (2010), who found that increasing vividness in a company's website positively influences the perceived reputation of that specific organization. However, it is already

assumed that an increase in the levels of vividness of the online content, operationalized based on the study of de Vries et al. (2012), will strengthen one's purchase intention. As consumers' willingness to buy is based on their perception of company reputation (Yoon et al., 1993), it is necessary to examine whether an increase of the same levels of vividness will lead to a better perception of the company. It can be reasoned that content higher in vividness, by stimulating different senses, might lead others to experience stronger beliefs in terms of company reputation. Therefore, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H₂: An increase in vividness in the shared online content increases company reputation. Precisely, high vivid online content leads to more positive company reputation than medium vivid online content, which in turn leads to a better company reputation than low vivid online content.

2.4.2 The mediation role of company reputation on the effect of vividness on purchase intention

Companies should not underestimate the importance of having a good reputation, as it is the result of the ability to deliver valuable outcomes to its stakeholders, for example by offering high-quality products (Dijkmans et al., 2015). It is important to understand that consumers do not only base their purchase decisions on the values or principles communicated by the product brand itself. In their decision-making process, they also take into consideration the organization's name and reputation (Knox, 2004). Prior studies have shown that the reputation of a company has an important role in influencing one's purchase intention. For instance, Keh and Xie (2009) showed that corporate reputation enhances consumers' trust, commitment, and identification with a company, in turn, resulting in a stronger purchase intention. More precisely, consumers' perceptions of a good corporate reputation, increase satisfaction, loyalty, and trust, positively

influencing one's willingness to make a purchase. Additionally, the findings of the study of Arikan, Kantur, Maden, and Telci (2016) indicated that corporate reputation has a positive and strengthening effect on purchase intention. In particular, their findings showed how one's attitudinal reactions, such as purchase intention, are shaped and influenced by the perceptions of the reputation of a company.

Based on the above, it seems that company reputation plays an important role in influencing one's attitudinal and behavioral intentions. In fact, the majority of the studies indicated how one's positive perception of a company reputation leads, in turn, to a stronger intention to purchase products of that specific company. The present study aims to examine the effects of vividness of consumer generated online content on both individual's perception and behavior. The preceding argumentation suggests that corporate reputation is an important strategic asset in determining one's behavioral intention. In this study, it is already assumed that different levels of vividness of consumer generated content are expected to positively influence one's perception of the company's reputation. As Yoon et al. (1993) found, company reputation represents one of the antecedents on which one's willingness to purchase is based on. Thus, it seems plausible that a more positive corporate reputation as a result of an increase in vividness of the online content, might lead to stronger purchase intentions. In other words, a better corporate reputation has the potential to mediate the effects of different levels of vividness of consumer generated content on purchase intention. Based on these arguments, this study hypothesized that:

H₃: The effects of vivid online content on one's purchase intention is mediated by one's perceived company reputation. Precisely, an increase in vividness of the online content leads to a more positive company reputation, which in turn results in a stronger purchase intentions.

2.5 Vividness and company crisis on purchase intention and company reputation

Purchase intention represents one's willingness to buy a specific product or brand (Ling et al., 2010). However, this cognitive behavior is based on the beliefs that consumers have about a company (Yoon et al., 1993). In the case of negative beliefs, individuals are less willing to buy a product from that specific company (Jae-Sin & Dae-Yul, 2015). Social media plays an important role in shaping one's reputational beliefs towards a company and, consequently, one's behavior (Paniagua et al., 2017). Negative consumer-generated content about a brand or a company can reach other individuals and companies via the Internet (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2004). Having the possibility to enrich the content they are creating, it could be plausible that consumers would add a picture or a video to present more vivid information to others. Then, an interesting question arises: Would the vividness of the consumer-generated online content still play a positive role in strengthening one's purchase behavior and the perception of the company's reputation? The MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986) postulates that more vivid messages have a stronger impact on one's behaviors and perceptions. However, we cannot assume that these effects result always in positive outcomes.

Organizational crisis can be defined as "the perception of an unpredictable event that threatens important expectancies of stakeholders [...] and can seriously impact an organization's performance and generate negative outcomes" (Coombs, 2014, p.3). These effects are enhanced online: Social media platforms are a determinant tool in spreading the pattern of negative events (Park, Cha, Kim, & Jeong, 2012). When crises events occur, social media have the potential to impact one's thoughts, behaviors and reactions (Schroeder, Pennington-Gray, Donohoe, & Kioussis, 2013). For instance, a crisis might violate one's personal beliefs and perceptions of a company, especially when consumers believe that the negative event could have been prevented

(Gross & D'Ambrosio, 2004). Moreover, on social media, negative news are not only spread faster and to a large scale, but are also less prone to mutation compared to positive news (Park et al., 2012). Individuals rely on the information available online to understand the circumstances of the crisis and develop an opinion about the situation (Cheng et al., 2016). Thus, the role that social media plays during a company crisis should not be ignored.

Internet and social media have given consumers the possibility to express their opinions on interactive communicative online platforms (Sandoval & Fuchs, 2010). In particular, during a crisis, consumers can share, post, comment, and discuss the events online with other users, participating in the crisis communication (Lin et al., 2017). Utz, Schultz and Glocka (2013) refer to this phenomenon as Secondary Crisis Communication. That is the extent to which users' online participation on social media during a crisis event creates new problems and enhances social influence (Utz et al., 2013; Hu, 2008 as cited in Luo & Zhai, 2017; Zhou, 2009). In his study, Lee (2004) argued that when a crisis occurs, the active participation of social media users create a "symbolic reality" (e.g. the organization and participants related to the crisis event), which will lead to the process of responsibility attribution and evaluation of the crisis itself. In other words, the online audience has a strong and powerful voice in developing the crisis communication, actively participating in the news process.

Literature showed how purchase intention is affected by the presence of a crisis situation. For example, both Vassilikopoulou, Chatzipanagiotou, Siomkos, & Triantafillidou (2011) and Hegner, Beldad and Kraesgenberg (2016) investigated consumers' purchase intention towards a company affected by a product-harm crisis. Precisely, the authors showed that during a company crisis, consumers' negative emotions (e.g. anger) increased, resulting in a less strong intention to purchase. Avnet and Laufer (2015) examined that organizational crises, specifically in the airline

and tires industries, significantly reduced one's purchase intention. Consumers' negative reactions arose due to their enhanced feeling of being harmed because of the provided insights concerning the crisis. Finally, Maher and Mady (2010) investigated consumers purchase intention regarding companies' international crisis caused by offending products. In detail, their findings indicated that not only one's emotions, stimulated by the crisis itself, led to a less willingness to buy a product, but also social pressure played a crucial role in explaining one's purchase intention. As it can be concluded from the above, the presence of a company crisis can influence one's purchase intention.

The mentioned studies indicated how a crisis situation enhances feelings of anger or negative emotions towards the company, resulting in a less strong intention to purchase. In referral to the Secondary Crisis Communication (Utz et al., 2013), the effects of a crisis can be enhanced by the nature of social media and the active participation of its users. When negative events are spread online, the reputation of the targeted company is threatened because of the inherently public nature of social media platforms (Coombs & Holladay, 2012; Roh, 2017). Furthermore, the MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986) describes how the presence of external cues in messages plays a role in how individuals process information. However, in the presence of a crisis situation the effects of vividness on purchase intention, as well as on company reputation might be reversed. For instance, a consumer could post online a video of a purchased harmed product and share his/her experience with others. How would other consumers react towards the product or the company based on the content they are exposed to? And more important, would a video have a stronger impact than a simple picture or a text? As negative beliefs would arise, purchase intention would be less strong (Jae-Sin & Dae-Yul, 2015).

Park et al. (2012) already showed how bad news about a company influence the public's sentiments and, in turn, damage its reputation. In particular, the authors examined the case of a vulgar prank video, recorded by two employees of a famous restaurant chain, which went viral on social media and resulted in a severe reputational damage for the company. The negative sentiments that consumers spread online resulted not only in lower perceived company reputation, but also led to less strong purchase intents. Hence, we could assume that the effects of vividness of consumer generated content during a crisis would have a stronger negative impact on purchase intention and reputation.

To our knowledge no prior studies examined the effects of vividness of consumer generated content on purchase intention in combination with the presence of a company crisis. Hence, little is known whether the effects of different levels of vividness are reversed by the arise of a company crisis. Thus, based on the above the following hypotheses were formulated:

H4a: In a crisis situation, content that is high in vividness leads to a less strong purchase intention than medium vivid content, which in turn leads to a less strong purchase intention than low vivid content.

H4b: In a crisis situation, the higher the vividness of the consumers generated content the more negative the company reputation and, in turn, the less strong the purchase intention.

3. Method

3.1 Pretest

In order to assess whether the used stimuli were clear and understood by participants and accurate for the main study, a pretest was conducted. The pretest, as well as the main study, were part of a collaborative survey, in which other two researchers investigated the effects of

vividness and crisis on brand attitude and brand credibility. The pretest, developed in *Qualtrics*, had the aim to investigate: The perception of crisis, perception of vividness and the degree of involvement towards the products shown.

Two fictitious companies, which produce low involvement products, were created by the researchers themselves. The fictitious companies were: Breadelicious, a bakery, and the Chocolicious, a chocolate brand. The stimuli for the crisis condition was gathered from existing posts on social media, whereas for the non-crisis condition the researchers created and manipulated the stimuli themselves. In total, 42 respondents (8 male and 34 female) aged between 22 and 53 years old ($M = 27.07$, $SD = 6.74$) were gathered to take part in the pretest and were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions.

3.1.1 Pretest material

Participants were shown Facebook consumers generated posts, published on the timeline of one of the two fictitious companies. The tested stimuli were: Four texts (2 for the low vividness-no crisis condition and 2 for the low vividness - crisis condition); four pictures (2 for the low vividness-no crisis condition and 2 for the low vividness - crisis condition); four videos (2 for the low vividness-no crisis condition and 2 for the low vividness - crisis condition). The pretest stimuli can be found in Appendix A. For both the fictitious companies, the texts for the low vividness conditions differed whether a crisis was present or not. For the no crisis condition the text stated “*I have never tried [this cracker/this chocolate] before, but I am curious and I want to try it.*”, whereas for the crisis condition the text stated “*So disgusting! I just opened your [Breadelicious package/ Chocolicious chocolate bar] and it was full of worms! This is unacceptable eeeuuw!!!*”. Likewise, for the medium vividness the consumer generated pictures were different whether the crisis was present. For both the fictitious companies, the pictures in

the no crisis condition only displayed the purchased product, either crackers or a chocolate bar, whereas in the crisis condition the picture showed the purchased product with the presence of maggots on it. Similarly, for the high vividness condition the videos displayed either a video of crackers or a chocolate bar for the no crisis condition, and either a video of crackers or a chocolate bar with the presence of maggots on it for the crisis condition. Researchers found the videos for the crisis conditions online and used a frame of them as pictures for the crisis condition. The videos and pictures for the no crisis condition were self-made by the researchers using the same products shown in the videos of the crisis condition. The complete pretest can be found in Appendix B.

3.1.2 Pretest procedure

The respondents for the pretest were gathered via social media platforms (e.g. Facebook), emails or via instant messaging tools (e.g. Whatsapp). After clicking on the link provided with the request to participate in the pretest, participants were redirected to the test on *Qualtrics*. At first, participants were shown an introduction text, which contained general information about the pretest. Subsequently, two questions regarding Facebook (use and frequency of access), as well as two questions concerning how many times either bread or chocolate were consumed in a week were asked.

Consequently, after a second brief explanatory text about the displayed content, participants were shown three posts, corresponding to the three levels of vividness, of either the company Breadelicious or Chocolicious, either in a crisis or in a non-crisis condition. For each post, questions concerning the perception of crisis, brand involvement and perception of vividness were asked. Finally, participants were asked some demographic questions about their gender, age, nationality and educational level, and thanked for the participation in the pretest.

3.1.3 Reliability of the measurements

To examine the degree of involvement of participants to the displayed products, their product involvement was measured. The item *product involvement* consisted of one scale with four items, which were measured on a 7-point bipolar scale (important-unimportant, trivial-fundamental, not needed-needed, useless-useful) (Zaichkowsky, 1985). A reliability analysis was conducted for each condition, and presented a good reliability (in most of the conditions Cronbach α were above .60). A complete overview of the reliability analyses for each condition can be found in Appendix C. Due to the presence of two invalid responses, 40 out of 42 participants were included in the analysis.

To analyze whether the products used in the pretest (Breadelicious or Chocolicious) differed in levels of product involvement, a paired samples t-test was conducted. On average, Breadelicious ($M = 3.57$, $SD = 1.03$) had a higher brand involvement than Chocolicious ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.23$). This difference was significant, $Mdif = 1.96$, $t(41) = 9.71$, $p = .001$. The difference represents a medium-sized effect $r = .83$.

To investigate to which degree participants perceived a crisis in the shown content, their perception of crisis was assessed. The item *perceived crisis* consisted of one scale with two items, which were measured on a 7-point bipolar scale (no crisis-extreme crisis, no impact-a lot of impact) (Billings, Milburn, & Schaalman, 1980). A reliability analysis was conducted for each condition, and presented a good reliability (in most of the conditions Cronbach α were above .60). However, in the non-crisis conditions, the scale had a poor reliability. Due to the presence of two invalid responses, 40 out of 42 participants were included in the analysis.

To investigate whether the perceived crisis differed between the two companies, a paired samples t-test was conducted. On average, the perception of crisis for Breadelicious ($M = 4.01$,

$SD = 1.95$) was higher than the perceived crisis for Chocolicious ($M = 3.60$, $SD = 1.96$). The analysis showed a significant difference in perception of crisis for both Breadelicious ($Mdif = 2.58$, $t(22) = 5.07$, $p < .001$, $r = .73$) and for Chocolicious ($Mdif = 2.13$, $t(18) = 3.89$, $p = .001$, $r = .68$).

Finally, participants' perception of vividness was measured to investigate whether their perceptions differed towards the three different levels of vividness of the displayed content. The item *vividness* was assessed with two measures from Krishnamurthy and Sujana (1999), which consisted of one scale with the three items, measured on a 7-point bipolar scale (abstract-concrete; boring-vivid; vague-clear), and one item measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 - "Completely disagree", 7 - "Completely agree"). The scale presented a good reliability in almost each condition (Cronbach's α were mostly above .60). Due to the presence of two invalid responses, 40 out of 42 participants were included in the analysis.

To analyze whether there was a difference in participants' perception of vividness, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted. For Breadelicious, the ANOVA showed a significant main effect of vividness, $F(1.49, 32.68) = 16.85$, $p < .001$. A repeated contrast was performed to compare the three levels of vividness. The analysis showed no significant difference between high levels and medium levels of vividness, $F(1, 22) = 0.13$, $p = .721$. Whereas, the difference was significant between medium levels and low levels of vividness, $F(1, 22) = 38.06$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .63$. In particular, for Breadelicious the perception of vividness was only perceived slightly higher for videos ($M = 4.71$, $SE = 0.36$) than pictures ($M = 4.62$, $SE = 0.32$). In turn, texts were perceived the least in vividness ($M = 3.32$, $SE = 0.31$).

For Chocolicious, the ANOVA showed a significant main effect of vividness, $F(1.81, 32.63) = 7.86$, $p = .002$. A repeated contrast was performed to compare the three levels of

vividness. The analysis showed no significant difference between high levels and medium levels of vividness, $F(1, 18) = 0.94, p = .346$. However, the difference was significant between medium levels and low levels of vividness, $F(1, 18) = 18.52, p < .001, \eta^2 = .51$. For Chocolicious, videos ($M = 4.32, SE = 0.35$) were not perceived more vivid than pictures ($M = 4.65, SE = 0.26$), whereas texts were still perceived as the least vivid ($M = 3.29, SE = 0.37$).

Based on the results of the pretest, Breadelicious was the fictitious company chosen to be used in the main study. As the operationalization of vividness was only partially succeeded, the decision was based on the fact that Breadelicious had a higher brand involvement and better perception of crisis compared to Chocolicious.

3.2 Main study

3.2.1 Participants and design

In the current study the effects of different levels of vividness and the presence of a company crisis on both one's purchase intention and perceived company reputation were examined. Based on the research question, in this study the independent variables were vividness, which included 3 levels (high vs. medium vs. low) and company crisis, which had also a moderating role, which comprehended 2 levels (yes vs. no). The dependent variables were company reputation, which also had a mediation role, and purchase intention. As shown in Table 1, six different conditions were used to test the hypotheses, resulted in the development of a 3x2 between - subject design, since participants were exposed to only one condition.

Table 1

Overview of the six conditions.

	Vividness	Company crisis	N
Condition 1	Low	Yes	41
Condition 2	Low	No	35
Condition 3	Medium	Yes	45
Condition 4	Medium	No	40
Condition 5	High	Yes	48
Condition 6	High	No	44

In total, 253 participants (78 male, 175 female) between 17 and 77 years old ($M = 29.02$, $SD = 10.16$) participated in the study. The mean age of men was 32.55 ($SD = 12.14$), whereas the mean age of women was 27.45 ($SD = 8.73$). The distribution of the educational level was varied, with the majority of higher professional education (35.2%) and university (44.7%). Most participants indicated that they access Facebook more than 5 times per day (55.3%). The complete survey can be found in Appendix D.

3.2.2 Materials

In order to investigate the effects and avoid biased results, the fictitious company Breadelicious was used. In fact, consumers might have an emotional involvement, prior knowledge and impressions about existing companies or brands (Park & Lessig, 1981). Hence, the use of an existing company could have produced opinionated results. Furthermore, in the main study the same materials used in the pretest for Breadelicious were used.

All the conditions were displayed through a Facebook interface, to increase the reality of the comments posted on the timeline. The Facebook page of the fictitious company was created

for the study, including the company's logo, cover picture and prior posts. Additionally, all the elements that could have distracted participants from the experiment and biased their response were darkened, such as the name and picture of the consumer who posted the comment.

However, the design of the stimuli was aligned to reality since respondents saw the post as they would see it by using their personal profile on Facebook. All the versions for the six conditions can be seen in Appendix E.

3.2.3 Measurements

In the main study, the dependent variables were measured through a survey, developed with the online tool *Qualtrics*. First, *vividness* of the content was assessed as manipulation check with three items on a 7-point bipolar scale (abstract content - concrete content; lean content - rich content; vague content - clear content). The items were based on prior studies conducted by Krishnamurthy and Sujana (1999). The reliability of the scale was good ($\alpha = .79$, $M = 4.45$, $SD = 1.46$).

Second, *purchase intention* was measured with three items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly disagree" to 7 = "Strongly agree"). The items were based on prior study conducted by Moon, Chadee and Tikoo (2008), Xia and Bechwati (2009) and Maxham (2001), who measured purchase intentions in their research. The reliability of the scale was high ($\alpha = .92$, $M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.40$).

Finally, *company reputation* was measured with six items on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = "Strongly disagree" to 7 = "Strongly agree"). The items were based on existing scales from a study conducted by Hsu (2012). The reliability of the scale was high ($\alpha = .93$, $M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.15$). The existing scale was adapted for the purpose of this study.

3.2.4 Procedure

Participants were collected via social media platforms (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn), emails or via instant messaging tools (e.g. Facebook messenger, Whatsapp) between November 13th and November 22nd, 2017. Respondents were gathered via both a randomized and a snowball sampling. Together with the question to participate in the survey, a link to the experiment was provided. After clicking on the link, respondents were redirected to the online survey on *Qualtrics*, and shown an introductory text, which contained information about the study and the consensus form. After accepting the consensus form, participants could continue through the survey.

Firstly, respondents were asked to indicate whether they have a Facebook account and how many times per day they access to it. Subsequently, participants were shown a text, which provided information about the fictitious company Breadelicious, and notified that they were going to see a Facebook post. After that, respondents were automatically and randomly redirected to one of the six conditions.

After being exposed to the online content of one of the conditions, participants were asked to rate their perception of vividness of the content, their willingness to buy the product, and to rate their perceived reputation of the company.

Finally, respondents were asked to answer some demographic questions about their gender, age, nationality and educational level. When respondents answered all the questions, they could end the survey just by clicking the button at the bottom of the page and thanked for their participation.

4. Results

4.1 Manipulation check

In order to test whether the manipulation for vividness in the different types of content was successful, a one-way ANOVA was conducted. The independent variable was the manipulated vividness, whereas the dependent variable was participants' perception of vividness of the content. The analysis showed that vividness, indeed, differed over the three levels, $F(2, 250) = 4.53, p = .012, \eta^2 = 0.03$. Although, high vivid content scored slightly less in perceived vividness ($M = 4.48, SD = 1.53$) compared to medium vivid content ($M = 4.76, SD = 1.33$), planned contrasts revealed that there was no significant difference in perceived vividness between high vivid content and medium vivid content, $t(250) = -1.31, p = .193$. Furthermore, both high and medium vivid content were perceived more vivid than low vivid content ($M = 4.07, SD = 1.44$). In fact, the planned contrasts revealed that there was significant difference in perceived vividness between medium vivid content and low vivid content, $t(250) = 3.00, p = .003$. Therefore we can conclude that the manipulation of vividness was partially succeeded.

A manipulation check to assess whether the manipulation of crisis was successfully executed, was not conducted. Hence, this can represent a limitation to the study, which will be discussed further in the current paper.

4.2 Hypotheses testing

Two factorial ANOVA were conducted to test hypotheses 1, 2 and 4a, a mediation analysis using PROCESS model 4 (Hayes, 2013) was conducted to test hypothesis 3, and a moderated mediation analysis using PROCESS model 8 (Hayes, 2013) was conducted to test hypothesis 4b.

4.2.1 The effects of vividness and crisis on purchase intention

To examine whether, both in a crisis and in a non-crisis condition, an increase in vividness in the shared online content influences purchase intention (H_1 and H_{4a}), a factorial ANOVA was conducted. In the analysis vividness and company crisis were the independent variables, whereas the dependent variable was purchase intention. The assumption of normality was not met as purchase intention was not normally distributed ($Z_{\text{skewness}} = 2.65$; $Z_{\text{kurtosis}} = -2.48$). The assumption of homogeneity of variances was not met. Levene's test was significant: $F(5, 247) = 2.34, p = .042$. For this reason, the ANOVA may not be completely reliable. The means and standard deviations can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

Means and standard deviations for vividness and company crisis on purchase intention measured on a 7 point Likert scale.

	Crisis	Vividness	Mean (SD)	N
Purchase intention	No	High	3.23 (1.45)	44
		Medium	3.47 (1.56)	40
		Low	2.88 (0.98)	35
	Yes	High	2.21 (1.38)	48
		Medium	2.45 (1.30)	45
		Low	2.94 (1.34)	41

The analysis revealed no significant main effect of vividness on purchase intention, $F(2, 247) = 0.80, p = .454$. High vivid content ($M = 2.69, SD = 1.49$) led to an equal purchase intention as medium vivid content ($M = 2.93, SD = 1.49$), which both in turn led to an equal purchase intention as low vivid content ($M = 2.91, SD = 1.15$). Therefore, hypothesis 1 is not

supported. However, there was a significant main effect of the presence of crisis on purchase intention, $F(1, 247) = 15.20, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$. The presence of a company crisis led to a less strong purchase intention ($M = 2.53, SD = 0.12$) than in a non-crisis condition ($M = 3.19, SD = 0.12$). Finally, there was a significant interaction effect, $F(2, 247) = 4.38, p = .014, \eta^2 = .03$.

Additional simple effect analyses were conducted to further explore the statistical difference among the levels of vividness on purchase intention, in both crisis and non-crisis condition. Although in a crisis condition high vivid content ($M = 2.21, SE = 0.19$) led to a less slightly stronger purchase intention than medium vivid content ($M = 2.45, SE = 0.20$), the simple effect analysis showed no significant difference between high vivid content and medium vivid content on purchase intention, $Mdif = -0.24, SE = 0.28, p = .383$. However, the analysis showed a significant difference between high vivid content and low vivid content on purchase intention, $Mdif = -0.74, SE = 0.28, p = .011$. In fact, in the presence of a company crisis, high vivid content ($M = 2.21, SE = 0.19$) led to a to a less strong purchase intention compared to low vivid content ($M = 2.94, SE = 0.21$). Furthermore, although medium vivid content ($M = 2.45, SE = 0.20$) led to a less strong purchase intention compared to low vivid content ($M = 2.94, SE = 0.21$), there was no significant difference between medium vivid content and low vivid content on purchase intention in a crisis situation, $Mdif = -0.49, SE = 0.29, p = .091$. Hence, H_{4a} is partially supported.

The additional simple effects analysis showed that there was a significant difference between high vivid content in both a non-crisis and a crisis condition on one's purchase intention, $Mdif = 1.03, SE = 0.28, p < .001$. Furthermore, the simple effect analysis showed a significant difference between medium vivid content both in a non-crisis and in a crisis condition on purchase intention, $Mdif = 1.02, SE = 0.29, p < .001$. Finally, the simple effect analysis

showed a no significant difference between low vivid content on both in a non-crisis and in a crisis condition on one's purchase intention, $Mdif = -0.07$, $SE = 0.31$, $p = .829$.

Additionally, in a non-crisis condition, there was no significant difference between both high vivid content and medium vivid content on purchase intention ($Mdif = -0.24$, $SE = 0.29$, $p = .413$), and between high vivid content and low vivid content on purchase intention ($Mdif = 0.36$, $SE = 0.30$, $p = .239$). Finally, the simple effect analysis showed no significant difference between medium vivid content and low vivid content on purchase intention in a non-crisis condition, $Mdif = 0.60$, $SE = 0.31$, $p = .055$.

As can be seen in Figure 1, the effect of vividness was more outspoken among vividness in the non-crisis condition than among vividness in a crisis condition. Surprisingly, low vividness content in a non-crisis condition led to a slightly less strong purchase intention compared to content low in vividness in a crisis condition.

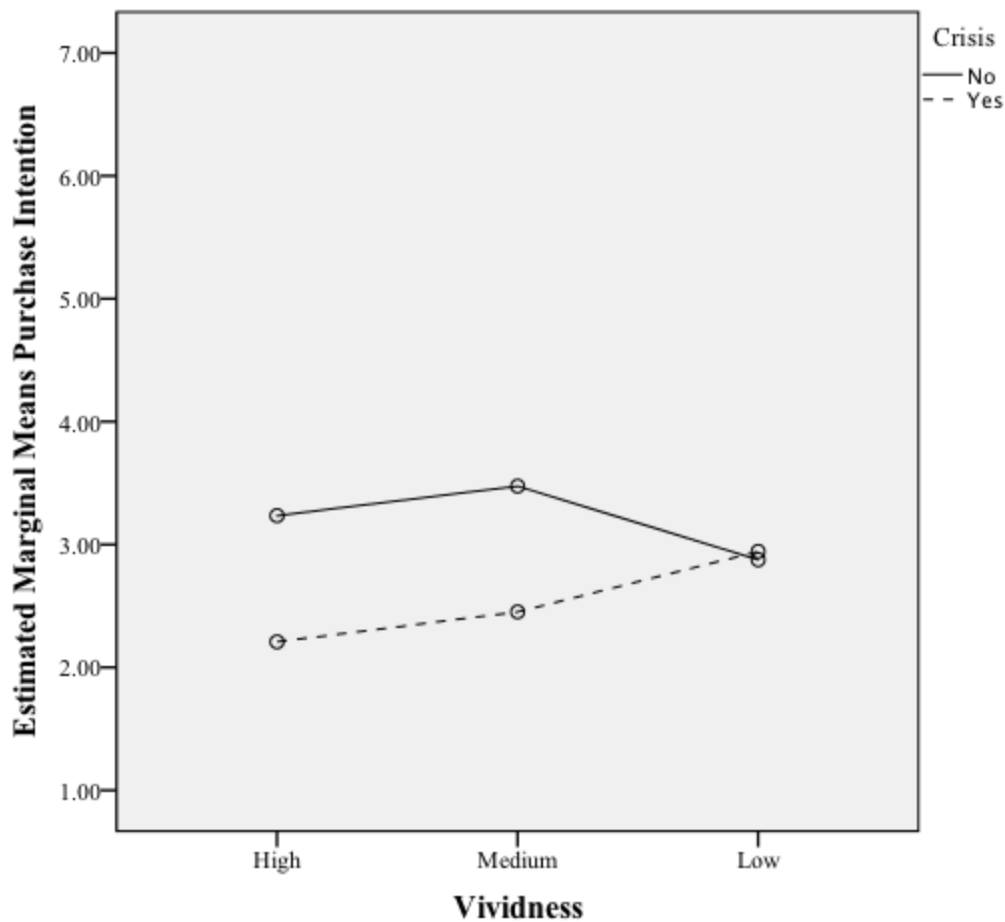


Figure 1. Purchase intention for both vividness in crisis and non-crisis condition.

4.2.2 The effects of vividness and company crisis on company reputation

To examine whether, both in a crisis and in a non-crisis situation, an increase in vividness in the shared online content increases company reputation (H₂), a factorial ANOVA was conducted. In the analysis the independent variables were vividness and company crisis and the dependent variable was company reputation. The means and standard deviations can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Means and standard deviations for vividness and company crisis on company reputation measured on a 7 point Likert scale.

	Crisis	Vividness	Mean (SD)	N
Company reputation	No	High	3.88 (1.10)	44
		Medium	3.86 (1.17)	40
		Low	2.99 (0.96)	35
	Yes	High	2.76 (1.01)	48
		Medium	3.30 (1.13)	45
		Low	3.11 (1.10)	41

The analysis revealed a significant main effect of vividness on company reputation, $F(2, 247) = 3.23, p = .041, \eta^2 = .02$. Although, high vivid content ($M = 3.31, SE = 0.11$) led to a slightly less positive company reputation than medium vivid content ($M = 3.58, SE = 0.12$), a simple effect analysis showed no significant difference on company reputation between high vivid content and medium vivid content in a non-crisis situation, $Mdif = 0.02, SE = 0.24, p = .942$. Moreover, both high vividness and medium vividness, in turn, led to a more positive company reputation than low vivid content ($M = 3.15, SE = 0.12$). In fact, a simple effect analysis showed a significant difference between low vividness and both high vividness ($Mdif = -0.89, SE = 0.24, p < .001$), and medium vividness ($Mdif = -0.55, SE = 0.23, p = .001$) Therefore, hypothesis 2 is partially supported. Moreover, there was a significant main effect of the presence of crisis on company reputation, $F(1, 247) = 10.98, p = .001, \eta^2 = .04$. The presence of a company crisis, led to a less positive company reputation ($M = 3.12, SD = 0.09$) compared to the non-crisis situation ($M = 3.57, SD = 0.10$). In addition, there was a significant interaction effect, $F(2, 247) = 9.29, p < .001, \eta^2 = .07$.

A simple effect analysis showed a significant difference on company reputation between high vivid content in both a non-crisis and a crisis situation, $Mdif = 1.12$, $SE = 0.23$, $p < .001$. Moreover, the analysis showed a significant difference between medium vivid content in both a non-crisis and a crisis situation, $Mdif = 0.56$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = .017$. Finally, the simple effect analysis showed no significant difference on company reputation between low vivid content in both a non-crisis and a crisis situation, $Mdif = -0.32$, $SE = 0.25$, $p = .194$.

In a crisis situation, the simple effect analysis showed a significant difference on company reputation between high vivid content and medium vivid content, $Mdif = -0.54$, $SE = 0.22$, $p = .017$. Additionally, there was a significant difference on company reputation between high vivid content and low vivid content, $Mdif = -0.55$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = .017$. Finally, the analysis showed no significant difference on company reputation between medium vivid content and low vivid content, $Mdif = -0.01$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = .951$.

As can be seen in Figure 2, the effect of vividness was more outspoken among vividness in the non-crisis condition than among vividness in a crisis condition. Surprisingly, low vividness content in a non-crisis condition led to a more negative company reputation compared to content low in vividness in a crisis condition.

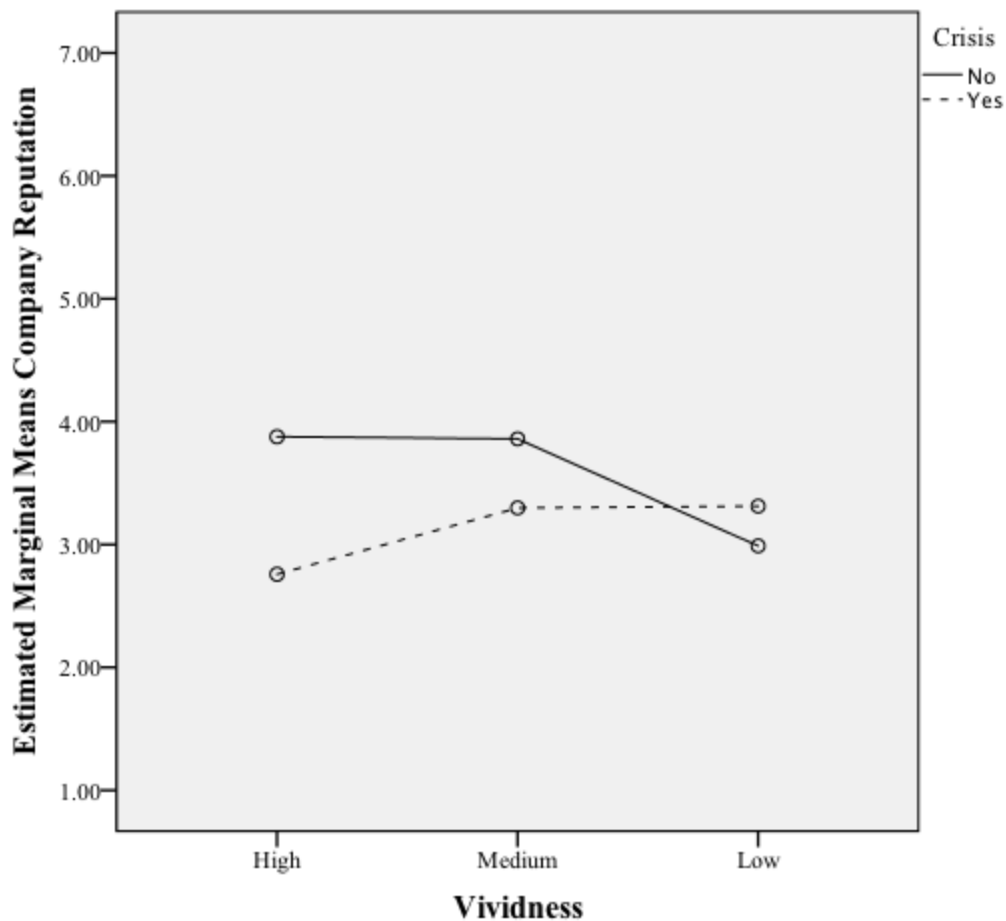


Figure 2. Company reputation for both vividness in crisis and non-crisis condition.

4.2.3 Mediation effect of company reputation on vividness and purchase intention

To investigate whether company reputation mediates the relationship between vividness and purchase intention (H₃), a mediation analysis was performed using PROCESS model 4 (Hayes, 2013). In this analysis, vividness was entered as a predictor to purchase intention, and company reputation was entered as a mediator. Moreover, vividness, which consisted of three levels, was treated as a multicategorical variable and compared using a sequential coding method. The first dummy variable (D1) compared high vivid content to medium vivid content, whereas the second dummy variable (D2) compared medium vivid content to low vivid content.

The model explaining the comparison of the first dummy variable (D1) is displayed in Figure 3. As can be seen, high vividness did not lead to a more positive company reputation compared to medium vividness, as it was not significantly related. Moreover, company reputation was significantly related to purchase intention. There was no significant total effect of high vividness compared to medium vividness on purchase intention, ($b = 0.23$, $SE = 0.23$, $p = .302$). This effect remained almost the same when adding the mediator to the model: The direct effects of high vividness compared to medium vividness ($b = 0.05$, $SE = 0.18$, $p = .778$) was not significant. The total indirect effect was not significant for high vividness compared to medium vividness ($b = 0.18$, $SE = 0.12$, 95% BCa CI [-.06, .42]).

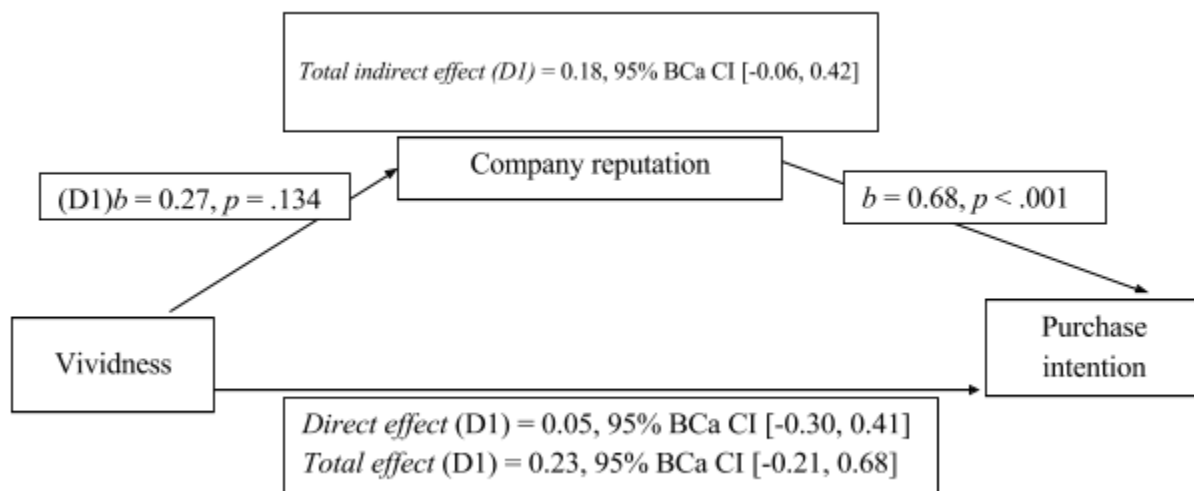


Figure 3. Mediation role of company reputation on vividness (high vs. low) and purchase intention.

The model explaining the comparison of the second dummy variable (D2) is displayed in Figure 4. As can be seen, medium vividness led to a more positive company reputation compared to low vividness. Moreover, company reputation was significantly related to purchase intention. There was no significant total effect of medium vividness compared to low vividness on purchase intention, ($b = -0.02$, $SE = 0.21$, $p = .920$). This effect remained almost the same when adding the mediator to the model: The direct effects of medium vividness compared to low

vividness ($b = 0.25$, $SE = 0.17$, $p = .150$) was not significant. The total indirect effect was significant for medium vividness compared to low vividness ($b = -0.27$, $SE = 0.13$, 95% BCa CI [-.53, -.04]). Given these results we can conclude that high vividness did not lead to a more positive company reputation, and in turn, to a stronger purchase intention, compared to medium vividness. In contrast, medium vividness led to a more positive company reputation, and in turn, to a stronger purchase intention compared to low vividness. Hence, H_3 is partially supported.

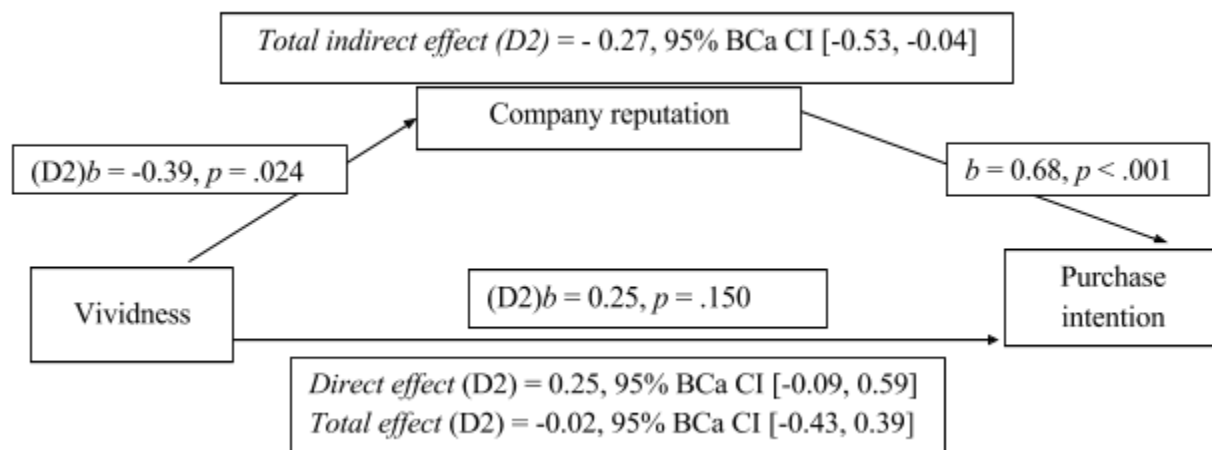


Figure 4. Mediation role of company reputation on vividness (medium vs. low) and purchase intention.

4.2.4 Moderating effect of company crisis on the mediation role of company reputation on vividness and purchase intention

To examine whether in a crisis situation, the higher the vividness of the consumers generated content the more negative the company reputation and, in turn, the less strong the purchase intention (H_{4b}) a moderated mediation analysis using PROCESS, model 8 (Hayes, 2013) was conducted.

In the analysis the independent variable were the different levels of vividness, purchase intention was the outcome variable, with company reputation as a mediator and company crisis as a moderator. To perform the analysis the variable vividness, which consisted of three levels,

was transformed into three dummy variables in order to compare the different levels among each other. The first dummy variable included the comparison between high vivid content and medium vivid content, which was coded as 0 = medium and 1 = high. The second dummy variable included the comparison between medium vivid content and low vivid content and was coded as 0 = low and 1 = medium. Finally, as an additional check, the third dummy variable included the comparison between high vivid content and low vivid content, and it was coded as 0 = low and 1 = high. Model 8 was used to analyze the data, with 5,000 bootstrapping samples and 95% bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals to evaluate the indirect effects.

The results of the first dummy analysis (high vividness vs. medium vividness) showed that this model explained 37 percent of the variance in purchase intention, $F(4, 172) = 22.72, p < .001$. The analysis revealed that, in a company crisis situation, there was a significant indirect effect of company reputation on purchase intention, $b = -0.37, SE = 0.16, \text{BCa } 95\% \text{ CI } [-.70, -.09]$, because the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals do not cross zero. This indicates that, in the presence of a company crisis, high vividness led to a more negative company reputation, which in turn, led to a less strong purchase intention, than medium vividness.

The results of the second dummy variable analysis in which medium vividness was compared to low vividness, showed that this model explained 34 per cent of the variance in purchase intention, $F(4, 156) = 21.85, p < .001$. The analysis revealed that, in a company crisis situation, there was no significant indirect effect of company reputation on purchase intention, $b = -0.01, SE = 0.15, \text{BCa } 95\% \text{ CI } [-.32, .29]$, because the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals do cross zero. This indicates that, in a company crisis situation, medium vividness did not lead to a more negative company reputation and, in turn, to a less strong purchase intention compared to low vividness. Given these results, we can conclude that H_{4b} was partially supported.

Although it was not the main focus of the hypothesis, an additional moderated mediation analysis was performed to analyze whether there was a difference between high vividness and low vividness on the moderated mediation role of company crisis and company reputation on purchase intention. The analysis of the third dummy variable (high vs. low vividness) showed that this model explained 27 percent of the variance, $F(4, 163) = 11.11, p < .001$. The analysis showed that, in a company crisis situation, there was a significant indirect effect of company reputation on purchase intention, $b = -0.31, SE = 0.13, \text{BCa } 95\% \text{ CI } [-.61, -.08]$, because the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals do not cross zero. This indicates that, in the presence of a company crisis, high vividness led to a more negative company reputation, and in turn to a less strong purchase intention than low vividness.

5. Conclusion and discussion

This thesis examined whether vividness and company crisis influence one's perceived company reputation and, consequently, one's purchase intention. To answer the research questions: "To what extent does vividness of consumers' generated content and one's perception of company reputation influence purchase behavior? Moreover, to what extent does the presence of a company crisis moderate these effects?", four hypotheses were formulated and an experiment was conducted.

5.1 Summary of the findings

In this paper, we found that no levels of vividness increased one's purchase intentions, which is in contrast with our expectations of H₁. However, partial support for H₂ was found. In fact, medium vivid content led to a more positive company reputation compared to low vivid content. Furthermore, our expectations of H₃ were partially supported. It was found that medium

vivid content led to a more positive company reputation and, in turn, to a stronger purchase intention compared to low vivid content.

From this study it emerged that both purchase intentions and company reputation were directly influenced by a company crisis. In particular, during a crisis situation, purchase intention was less strong and company reputation was more negative than in a neutral situation. However, H_{4a} was partially supported as high vivid content led to a less strong purchase intention only compared to low vivid content. Finally, it was found that content high in vividness led to a more negative company reputation, and consequently, to a less strong purchase intention than medium vivid content. Therefore, our expectations for the hypothesis H_{4b} were partially supported.

5.2 Theoretical implications

5.2.1 Vividness on purchase intention

From a theoretical perspective, the current thesis adds valuable insights to the existing research in the context of social media, and sheds light on how consumers' attitudes and behaviors can be influenced by the vividness of the online content, both in a neutral and in a crisis situation. Prior literature already evaluated the effects of different levels of vividness on brands' post popularity on social media (Brookes, 2010; de Vries et al., 2012; Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013), and on consumers' attitudes (Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Sundar & Kim, 2005). However, this thesis found that an increase in vividness in the content did not strengthen the intention to purchase (H₁). This is inconsistent with existing findings and theory. The MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986) postulates that messages higher in vividness stimulates multiple senses simultaneously, increasing the intensity with which the information is presented. Literature (Coyle & Thorson, 2001; Sundar & Kim, 2005; Brookes, 2010; de Vries et al., 2012; Cvijikj &

Michahelles, 2013) found support in this theory, showing that more vivid messages had the higher impact on consumers' behaviors and perceptions towards a company. The different operationalization of vividness between this study and prior literature might explain the contradicting results. It could be that the levels of vividness distinguished in prior papers were broader than the ones used in this thesis. Coyle and Thorson (2001) only distinguished two levels of vividness, which could have resulted in a sharper difference and enhanced the effects of higher levels on one's attitude. In addition, de Vries et al. (2012) distinguished four levels of vividness. However, in comparison to the current study, the gap between their operationalization of low vivid content and high vivid content was broader in terms of vividness. In fact, in their study, events were associated to medium vivid content, in between pictures (low levels) and videos (high levels). In contrast, Brookes (2010) found that medium vivid content were the most compelling in terms of increasing brand posts' popularity. As in the current thesis, Brookes (2010) also distinguished three levels of vividness, operationalizing low levels as texts, medium levels as pictures and high levels as videos. However, the author's findings concerning vividness were still in contrast with the ones of the present study. It could be that consumers require more cognitive efforts to revise their purchase intentions.

This study also presents contradicting results in comparison to a theory closely related to the MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986), that is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (henceforth: ELM) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). According to this theory, information can be processed either via the central route or via the peripheral route. Consumers with a high product involvement are less attentive for other cues presented in the message, and will process the information via the central route. With a low product involvement, the consumer processes the information based on the presence of external cues (e.g. visual cues), without a proper examination of the message itself.

In this case, the message is processed via the peripheral route. In this study, the effects of vividness were measured with a low involvement product. However, no support was found for this theory as vividness did not show any influence on purchase intention. Both the MRT and the ELM focuses more on the message rather than on the person who receives the information. However, purchase intention represents one's personal cognitive behavior, influenced by a broader number of factors than just an online content (e.g. company reputation). This could explain why the findings of this study do not find support in these theories.

5.2.2 Vividness on company reputation

Despite the current study could not detect an effect of different levels of vividness on one's purchase intentions, an effect was found on one's perception of company reputation. Precisely, one's perception of company reputation was more positive when exposed to medium vivid content than low vivid content (H₂).

Existing literature already showed that an increase in vividness in a company's website, led to the development of more positive reputational beliefs towards that specific company (Cober et al., 2004; Williamson et al., 2012). However, the hypothesis as well as the manipulation of vividness, reasoned from the study of de Vries et al., (2012) and from the MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Hence, the effects of vividness were limited compared to expectations. Again, an explanation for not finding a full effects of vividness on company reputation might be due to the difference in operationalization between the current and prior studies. De Vries et al. (2012) found an effect of an increase in vividness probably due to the sharper difference among their operationalization of the levels. Apparently, in the current study the difference between high levels and medium levels of vividness was not broad and sharp enough to produce an effect. This is supported by the analysis of this study, which showed that the manipulation of vividness

was partially succeeded as no difference in vividness was perceived between high levels and medium levels. Hence, this could further explain the fact that high levels of vividness were not more compelling than medium levels on company reputation.

In support of the partial effect of vividness (medium against low levels) on reputation, the prior elaborated ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) could provide an explanation. With a low involvement product, individuals might process the information based on the external cues presented in the message. As in the current study a low product involvement was used, the increase in vividness with the message interfered with the information processing, consequently leading to perceive differently the organization's reputation.

5.2.3 Vividness on company reputation and, in turn, on purchase intention

In the current study, it was found that content with medium levels of vividness led to a more positive company reputation and to a stronger purchase intention than content low in vividness (H₃). This is in line with both the ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) and with the MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986). In the online content a low involvement product was shown. Therefore, the processing of the information via the peripheral route, in combination with the superior in richness of a picture compared to a text, might explain the found effect. One's perception of company reputation and one's purchase intention are closely related (Yoon et al., 1993), being strongly affected by consumer generated content, perceived as more trustworthy (Ji et al., 2017). Hence, it could be that the high trustworthiness attributed to the content, as well as the higher number of senses stimulated, might lead to more positive judgements of a company and enhanced trust beliefs, in turn, strengthening one's purchasing behaviors.

However, also in this case the effects of vividness were limited compared to our expectations. This is in contrast with the assumptions based on the MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986)

and prior literature. As already elaborated, it could be that the operationalization of vividness in prior studies (e.g. de Vries et al., 2012), was sharper compared to the operationalization used in the current study. In fact, as previously mentioned the manipulation of vividness in this study was only partially successful. Whereas it can be intuitive that images are superior to texts, this might not be the case between videos and pictures. Although, in contrast with the MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986), it could be that, since the content was consumer generated, the video resulted less appealing than a simple picture, and less senses were stimulated. This could be related to one of the features that characterizes vividness that is depth. Depth refers to the resolution of the perceptual channels (Steuer, 1992). This means that a message with higher depth, will be perceived of higher quality and, consequently, resulting more appealing. Hence, it might be that as the information was not processed via the peripheral route (e.g. due to external cues) (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), no trust beliefs were enhanced. This might have induced an issue-relevant thinking, which in combination with the displayed low involvement product, did not lead to trust-based purchase intentions (Keh & Xie, 2009). This could explain why in the current study, an effect of company reputation on purchase intention was not found among all the levels of vividness.

5.2.4 Vividness on company reputation and on purchase intention during a company crisis

Finally, this study assumed that, in a company crisis situation, the effects of vividness on both company reputation and purchase intention would have been reversed compared to a neutral situation (H_{4a} and H_{4b}). Concerning one's purchase intention, a reversed effect of vividness of the content during a company crisis was found only among the two extreme levels of vividness: High and low. In particular, during a crisis, content high in vividness led to a less strong purchase intention compared to low vivid content. Based on the MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986)

higher levels of vividness were expected to have a more compelling effect on lower levels of vividness. This can also be explained by the Framing Theory (Entman, 1993). By framing a message, one can increase the salience and vividness of the message, highlighting problems, interpretations and noticeability of a perceived reality. Thus, especially during a crisis situation, a high vivid and framed message stimulates more senses and emotions, such as anger, resulting in a less willingness to buy a product (Maher & Mady, 2010). Moreover, for some individuals the information available online represents an important resource to understand the circumstances which led to a crisis situation (Cheng et al., 2016). In fact, during a crisis, social media provide support to consumers, enabling them to band together and share information (Choi & Lin, 2009; Stephens & Malone, 2009). This could explain why in a crisis situation, the ability of a richer message to present the information to the senses leads to a stronger negative influence on one's cognitive behaviors than less rich content. However, as assumed by the MRT (Daft & Lengel, 1986), this should also apply when comparing medium vivid content to low vivid content. This contradicting finding could be explained by the non-successful manipulation of vividness in this study, which showed no perceived difference between high and medium vivid content.

Additionally, this study revealed that in a company crisis situation, high vivid content led to a less positive company reputation and, in turn, to a less strong purchase intention compared to medium vivid content (H_{4b}). It is interesting to notice how the effects of the levels of vividness during a crisis situation differs for purchase intention and for company reputation. The reality of an event is better presented by messages with higher levels of vividness rather than static media (Lipofsky, 1993). This means that contents high in vividness are easily processed by the viewer and attract his/her attention much longer. Therefore, it could be that the consumer had the time to form a judgment towards the company and experience both an attitude and a cognitive

behavioral change, as these factors are closely related (Yoon et al., 1993). This explanation is further supported by the ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Since a low involvement product was shown in the content, consumers processed the message via the peripheral route. Thus, it seems logical that an increase in the levels of vividness was more compelling and produced an effect. Although the above supports part of the findings of our hypothesis H_{4b}, it also contradicts them.

No effects of medium vivid content were found on both company reputation and on purchase intention compared to low vivid content. Based on the ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) a low involvement product should induce the consumer to process the message based on the external cues of the content. However, as prior mentioned, a video better represents a reality to the senses compared to static media, because of the number of cues it conveys (Lipofsky, 1993). Moreover, individuals rely on the information available online to further understand the circumstances of a crisis (Cheng et al., 2016). It could be that an effect of medium vivid content was not found on low vivid content, as pictured were perceived excessively static. Therefore, it might be that the reality of the crisis was not represented better than low vivid content and consumers could not form judgments as their understanding of the situation was not exhaustive.

5.3 Practical implications

Besides theoretical implications, this thesis also presents practical implications. In this study, it has been shown that the content consumers are exposed to has an influence on their attitudes and intentions. Thus, social media marketers should focus, in particular, on consumers' videos and images online as they play an important role in defining the reputation and willingness to buy. Furthermore, companies should encourage their customers to share their experiences with the company online. Additionally, companies should consider to start

collaborations with influencers (e.g. bloggers) who could create vivid online content to promote products.

Moreover, it has been shown that even when consumers are not familiar with a brand or a product, the online content they are exposed to still influences their attitudes and intentions. Thus, marketers can be advised to constantly monitor the online environment to be aware of the content shared by consumers concerning the company. This is particularly relevant for startups or for organizations which plan to enter in new markets. Firms which are trying to rebuild a damaged reputation are also advised to do so, as content higher in vividness can strengthen one's perception of the company reputation.

As the effects of vividness of the consumers' online content are more outspoken when a crisis situation arises, marketers are further advised to monitor the online environment to identify potentially harmful content before a crisis can escalate. Particular attention should be paid to high vivid content, such as videos, as it represents a great threat for the reputation of the company. Marketers should develop crisis strategies to be prepared for a possible emerging crisis.

5.4 Limitations and future research

This study presents some limitations. First of all, the manipulation check for vividness showed that there was no difference between high vivid content and medium vivid content, as the two versions were equally perceived in vividness. An explanation could be given by the fact that the picture showed in the medium vivid content was just a screenshot from the video presented in the high vivid condition. One of the characteristics of vividness is depths, which refers to the quality of the message (Steuer, 1992). Images higher in depth are perceived of

having a better quality than images which are lower in depth. Even though it can be argued that the vividness of a screenshot is still intense, the manipulation could be intensified by providing more clear images than just a screenshot captured from the video.

Moreover, the different levels of vividness were presented through posts on Facebook. However, on this online platform there are more posting possibilities rather than just a video, a picture or a text. Hence, different effects could arise by operationalizing vividness of consumers' generated content differently. For instance, results might change when using links as an operationalization of vividness, as Cvijikj and Michahelles (2013) did. In fact, links would redirect the user to additional texts and images. This could lead consumers to experience stronger emotions, further influencing the effects of vividness on attitudes and behaviors.

In this study, videos were unintentionally shown without sounds due to a problem arose during the uploading on *Qualtrics*. This could have strongly affected the results as it is not in line with the theories discussed in this study. It has been described how higher levels of vividness can simultaneously stimulate different senses (e.g. visuals and auditory). However, not showing the sound of videos represents a large limitations, as well as a contradiction with the theories discussed in this paper. Thus, future research could replicate the study by showing videos with sound to improve the results of the current study.

Furthermore, a manipulation check for the crisis condition was not assessed. Therefore, it was not possible to examine whether participants perceived the manipulation as a crisis condition. This could be a further explanation for the fact that only partial effects of company crisis were found in the current study. Therefore, future research should improve the results of this study by assessing whether a company crisis situation was perceived from the consumer generated content on social media platforms.

In addition, the crisis condition was presented as a singular event as only one post from a consumer, with different levels of vividness, was shown in the crisis condition. However, on online platforms consumers can share, post, and engage in discussions concerning the events with other consumers (Lin et al., 2017). Thus, it would be interesting for future research to investigate the effects of crisis situations in vivid posts, in which more than just a single opinion (e.g. presenting comments of other consumers who experienced the same) is presented to others. In fact, other consumers could provide further meanings and points of views concerning a crisis, amplifying its impact and generating negative word-of-mouth (Pace, Balboni, & Gistri, 2017). Thus, this could extend the crisis and have a stronger influence on one's attitudes and behaviors.

The current paper focused on the online platform Facebook. Trefzger et al. (2016) stated that different platforms generate different reactions due to the variety of communication mechanisms. Thus, generalizing the emerged findings to other social media is not possible. In fact, on Facebook it is possible to share different types of content. However, other social media (e.g. Instagram) do not present the same features. For instance, content shared on Instagram can be perceived as more vivid than content shared on Facebook. In fact, on Instagram users can only post pictures or videos. Thus, even texts can be shared only with the features of a picture or a video. Therefore, the operationalization of low vividness used in this study cannot be applied on every social media, since as just argued, they would not be suitable, for example, on Instagram. Thus, future research should focus on investigating on how different levels of vividness can be implement in content on different social media platforms to examine if the results can be generalized across other social media channels.

Moreover, the neutral product Breadelicious was a bread-related one. However, as we cannot assume that everyone consumes bread-related goods, prejudices about the products might

have influenced the results. Therefore, future research could replicate the study by showing different low involvement products, to exclude the possibility that the one used in this study might have affected the findings. For example, toothpaste could be used in future studies as an example of low involvement product.

To our knowledge, no prior research focused on the effects of different levels of vividness in combination with a company crisis on one's attitudes and behaviors. The findings provided in this paper provide interesting insights in the social media context and contribute to fill the knowledge gap. Hence, future research is advisable as it is interesting to further investigate the examined relationships and their effects to present a clearer and broader overview on the topic.

5.5 Conclusion

In this study, the effects of different levels of vividness of consumer generated online content on one's perception of company reputation and on one's purchase behavior were analyzed. Moreover, it was examined how the above mentioned relationship is influenced by the presence of a company crisis. In conclusion, it can be said that, despite the limitations, this study showed that the vividness of the message only influence one's purchase intention when it conveys information regarding a crisis situation. Especially during a crisis situation, a video, which represents a high vivid content, seems to heavily influence one's willingness to buy. In contrast, one's perception of company reputation is affected by the vividness of the message both in a neutral and in a crisis condition. In a neutral situation, it seems that pictures, which represent medium vivid content, influence the most how the reputation of the company is perceived. In contrast, during a crisis situation the most negative effect is given by the presence of videos

online. Hence, this thesis offers valuable addition to the existing studies about the vividness of the online content. The combination of vividness of the online content and company crisis represent important factors, which should be carefully and more in depth examined in future research as well as in practice. Future studies might enrich the findings of the present study.

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APPENDIX A

Pretest stimuli

Facebook posts Breadelicious



Figure 5. Pretest material: Low levels of vividness in a no crisis condition

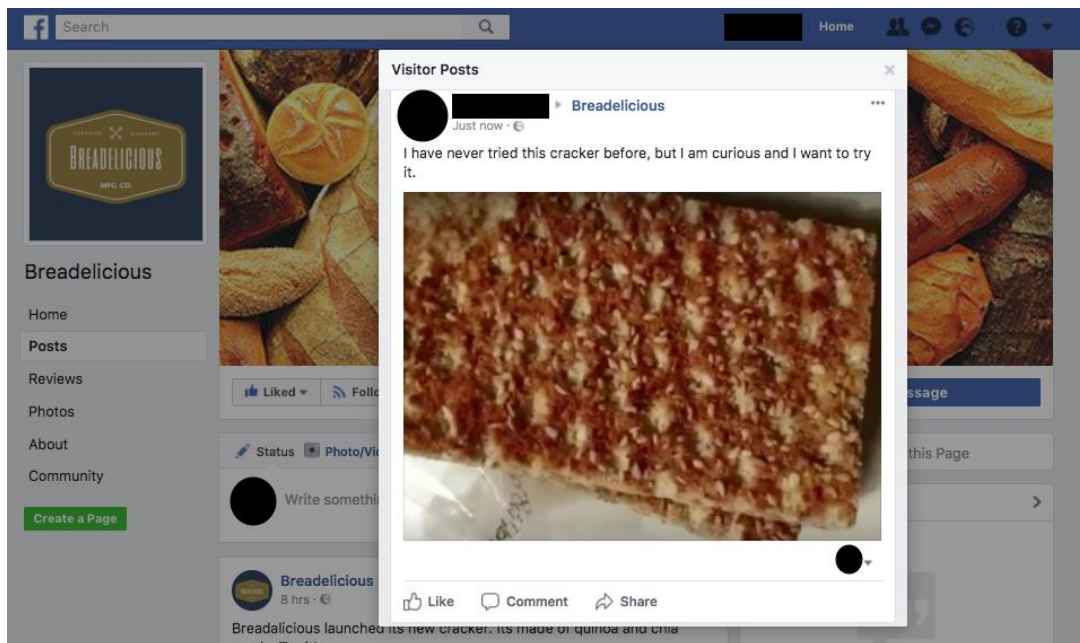


Figure 6. Pretest material: Medium levels of vividness in a no crisis condition

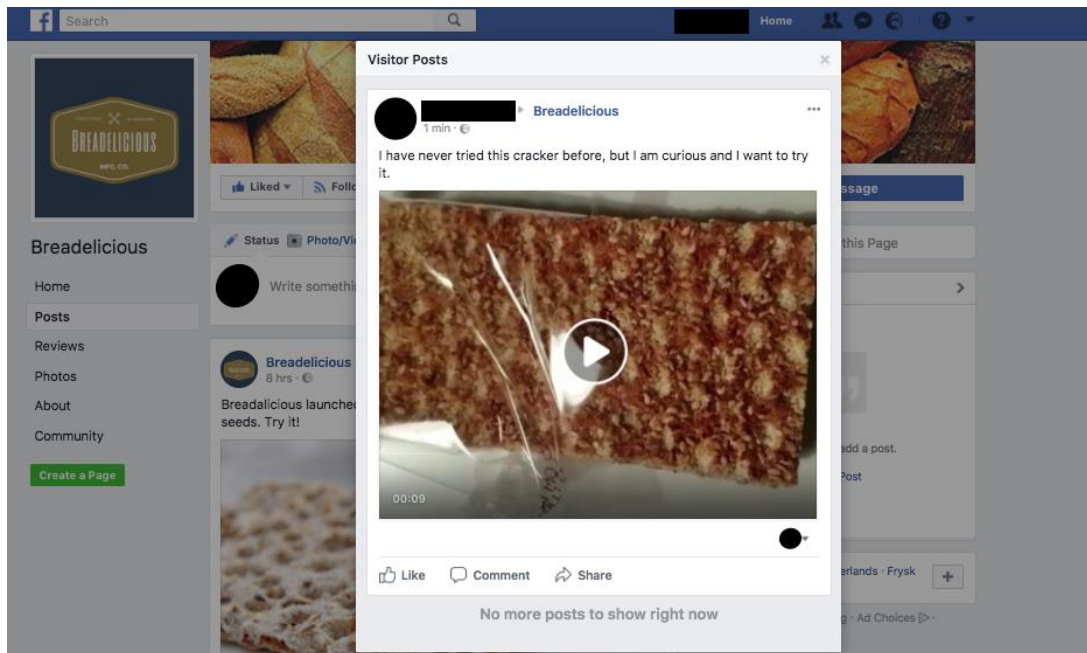


Figure 7. Pretest material: High levels of vividness in a no crisis condition. (The complete video can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Hs4szkfhO5y30OsNve7SKYEFnDWp7yz7>)



Figure 8. Pretest material: Low levels of vividness in a crisis condition.



Figure 9. Pretest material: Medium levels of vividness in a crisis condition.



Figure 10. Pretest material: High levels of vividness in a crisis condition. (The complete video can be found here: https://tilburghumanities.eu.qualtrics.com/ControlPanel/File.php?F=F_b93ygSP6J3Je9WR)

Facebook posts Chocolicious



Figure 11. Pretest material: Low levels of vividness in a no crisis condition.

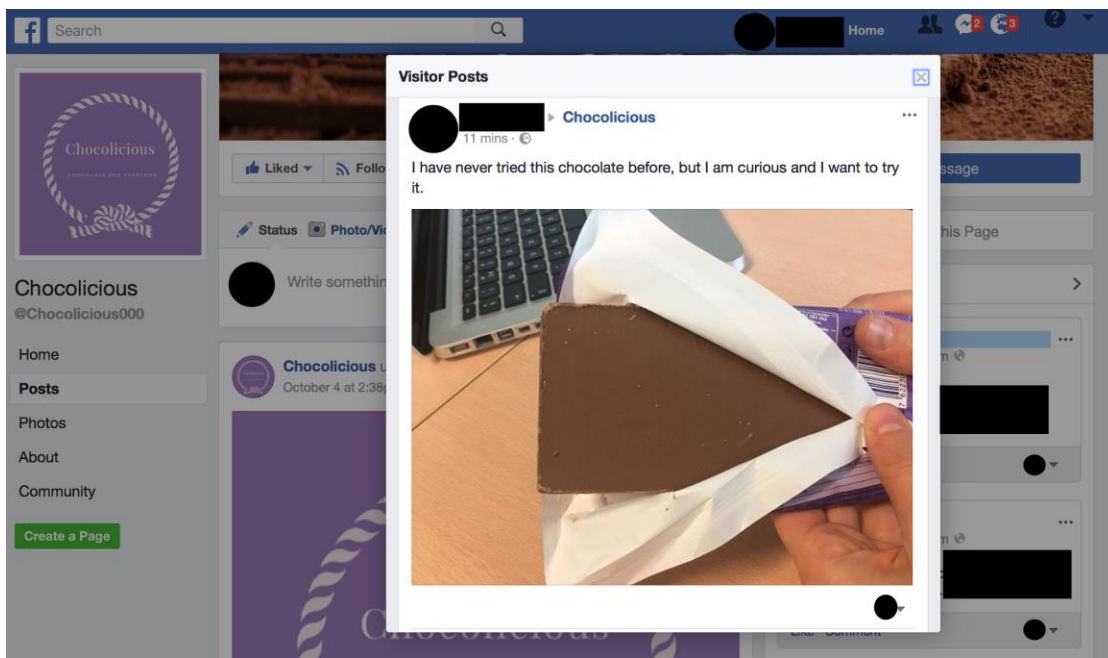


Figure 12. Pretest material: Medium levels of vividness in a no crisis condition.

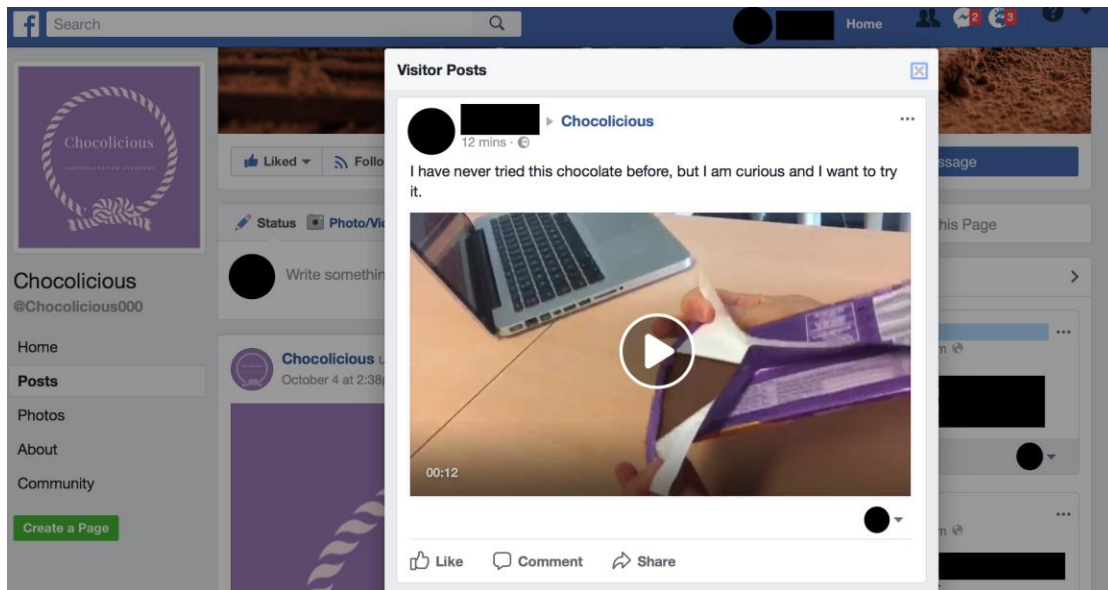


Figure 13. Pretest material: High levels of vividness in a no crisis condition. (The complete video can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B4VuvxnQaNAuMk5UZVlhYU5IS3c>)

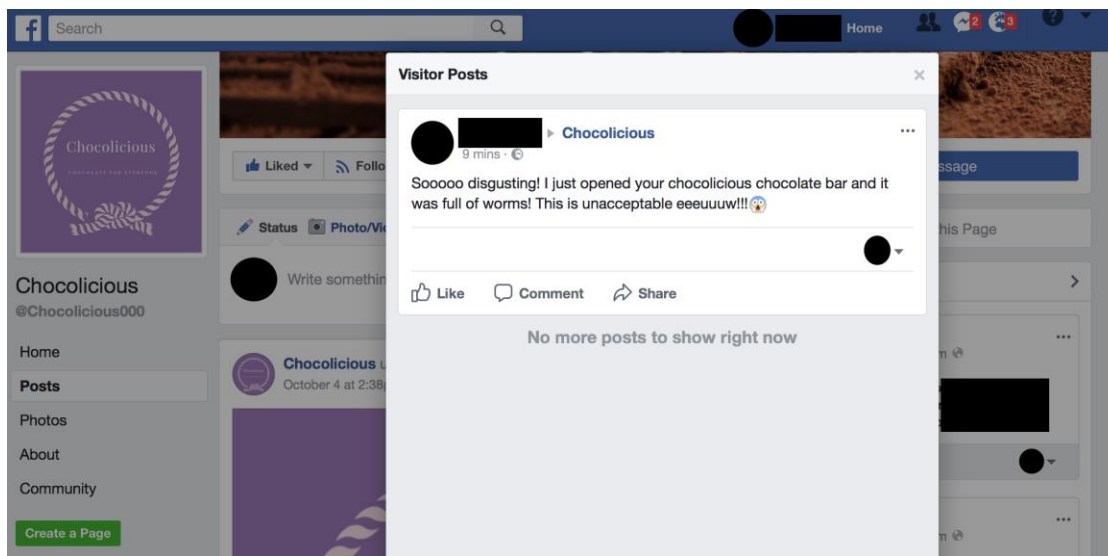


Figure 14. Pretest material: Low levels of vividness in a crisis condition.

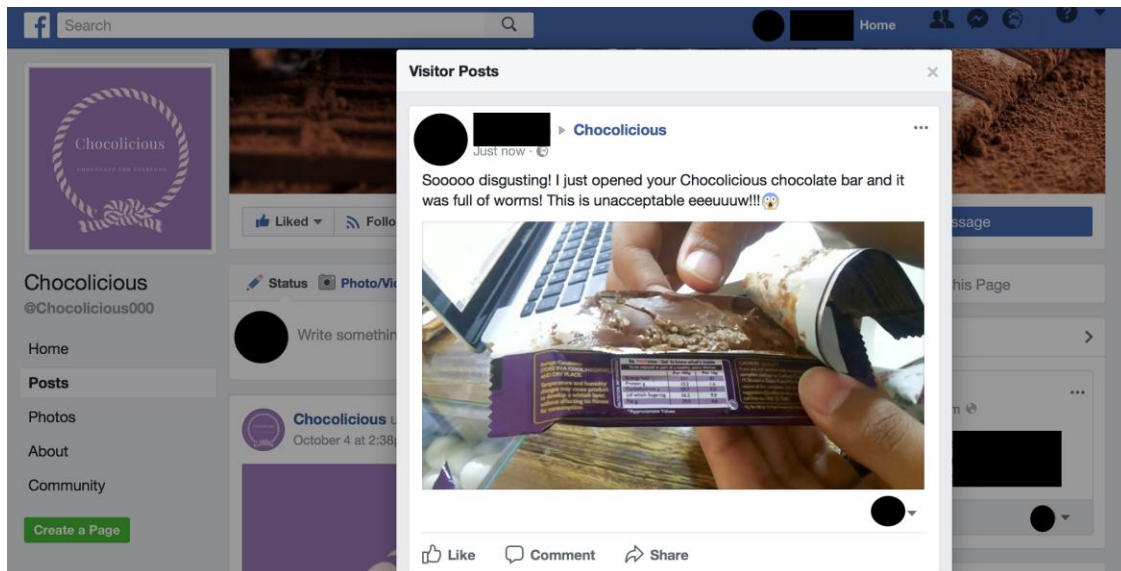


Figure 15. Pretest material: Medium levels of vividness in a no crisis condition.

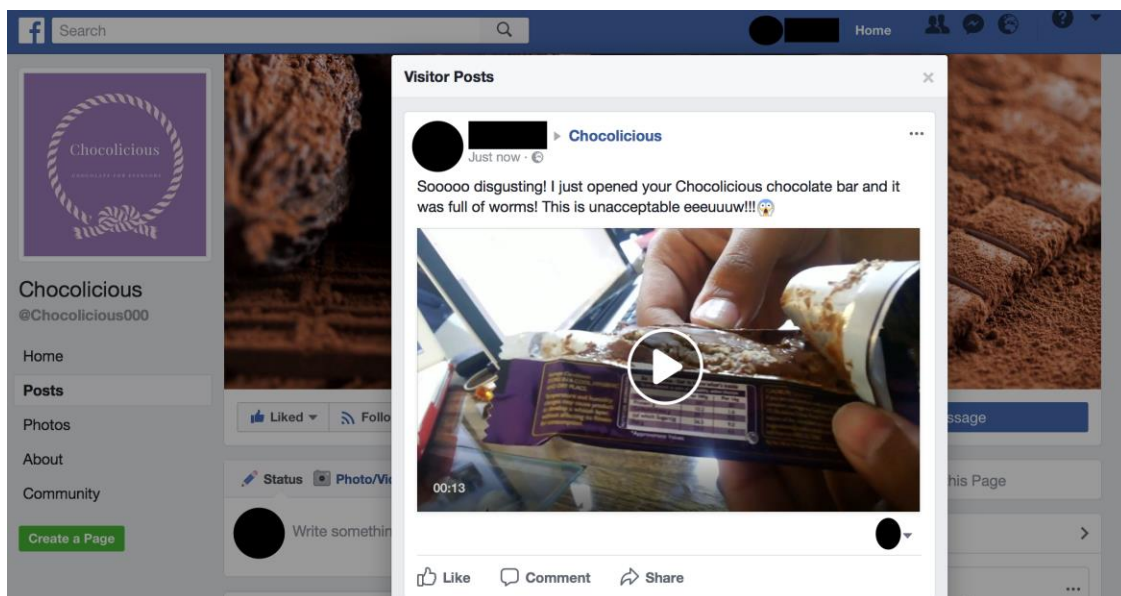


Figure 16. Pretest material: High levels of vividness in a crisis condition. (The complete video can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=0B4VuvxnQaNAudGhURnVwQWxFOFODQ>)

APPENDIX B

Pretest

Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking part in this survey and helping us with our master thesis! It will take you approximately 5 minutes to complete it.

In this survey, you will see Facebook posts of consumers on a company's timeline. Then you will be asked to rate the posts, on a 7-point scale (from totally disagree to totally agree).

Your answers will be recorded anonymously and used only for the purpose of this test.

Please click on the arrow below to start the survey and earn your karma points :)

Best,

Laura Redaelli

How many times a week do you eat chocolate?

Never

Less than 3 times

3 to 5 times per week

More than 5 times a week

How many times a week do you eat bread (or something related)?

Never

Less than 3 times

3 to 5 times per week

More than 5 times a week

(Briefing)

You are now going to see three Facebook posts. Please look at them carefully and answer the questions.

How would you rate the crisis for this organization?

No crisis 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 extreme crisis

How would you rate the impact of this crisis?

No impact 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 a lot of impact

Please rate the brand on the following traits:

Important 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Unimportant

Trivial 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Fundamental

Not needed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Needed

Useless 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Useful

Please rate your perception of the Facebook post:

Abstract 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concrete

Boring 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Vivid

Vague 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Clear

The post is stimulating my senses

Completely disagree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Completely agree

(Demographics)

What is your gender?

X Male

X Female

What is your age?

* Please insert*

What is your nationality?

* Please insert*

What is your highest level of education? (Completed or still attending)

X Primary or basic education

X High school diploma

X University of applied sciences/ Bachelor's degree

X Master's degree

X PhD

X Others

APPENDIX C

Reliability of the measurements for each conditions in the pretest

Reliability analyses for product involvement

	Crisis			No Crisis		
	Vividness level			Vividness level		
	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
<i>Breadelicious</i>	$\alpha = .45$	$\alpha = .49$	$\alpha = .68$	$\alpha = .89$	$\alpha = .93$	$\alpha = .80$
<i>Chocolicious</i>	$\alpha = .83$	$\alpha = .65$	$\alpha = .93$	$\alpha = .80$	$\alpha = .51$	$\alpha = .80$

Reliability analyses for perception of crisis.

	Crisis			No Crisis		
	Vividness level			Vividness level		
	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
<i>Breadelicious</i>	$\alpha = .77$	$\alpha = .86$	$\alpha = .04$	$\alpha = -.44$	$\alpha = .17$	$\alpha = -1.42$
<i>Chocolicious</i>	$\alpha = .89$	$\alpha = .68$	$\alpha = .96$	$\alpha = .81$	$\alpha = .71$	$\alpha = .59$

Reliability analyses for perception of vividness.

	Crisis			No Crisis		
	Vividness level			Vividness level		
	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>	<i>low</i>	<i>medium</i>	<i>high</i>
<i>Breadelicious</i>	$\alpha = .83$	$\alpha = .90$	$\alpha = .60$	$\alpha = .93$	$\alpha = .83$	$\alpha = .89$
<i>Chocolicious</i>	$\alpha = .37$	$\alpha = .35$	$\alpha = .74$	$\alpha = .61$	$\alpha = .65$	$\alpha = .68$

APPENDIX D

Survey

Dear participant,

Thank you for participating in this research of Tilburg University. This survey will take approximately 5 minutes of your time.

In this research, we are interested in investigating the relationship of Facebook messages on consumers. During this survey, a media content will be displayed and below the content, some questions will occur.

Please, look at the content very carefully and answer the questions.

All your data will be treated anonymously and used only for the purpose of this study. You can end the survey at any time. If you have any questions about this research please contact us via email at:

l

Please click the arrow below to start the survey.

Thank you very much in advance for helping us,

Laura Redaelli

Do you have a Facebook account?

X Yes

X No

How often do you use Facebook?

X More than 5 times per day

X 3 to 5 times per day

X Less than 3 times per day

X Never

(Briefing)

Please, read the text below carefully and then click the arrow to continue:

Breadelicious is a well-known company, which makes and sell different kinds of bread and related products. They are really active in the European market. Moreover, the company has an international Facebook page where consumers can post messages on the timeline.

(Randomization of the conditions)

(Manipulation check for vividness)

Please rate your perception of the Facebook content according to the following traits:

1. Abstract content	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Concrete content
2. Lean content	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Rich content
3. Vague content	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Clear content

Purchase Intention

Based on the Facebook content that I just saw, I would:

1. Consider buying the product

Do not agree at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Agree completely
---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------------

2. Consider purchasing the product at this company

Do not agree at all	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	Agree completely
---------------------	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	------------------

3. Consider making an(other) purchase at the company:

Do not agree at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree completely

Company Reputation

Based on the Facebook post you saw, please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with the following statements about your perception of the company:

1. The company has a good reputation

Do not agree at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree completely

2. The company is well respected

Do not agree at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree completely

3. The company is well thought of

Do not agree at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree completely

4. The company has status

Do not agree at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree completely

5. The company is reputable

Do not agree at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Agree completely

(Demographics)

What is your gender?

X Male

X Female

What is your age?

* Please insert*

What is your nationality?

* Please insert*

What is your highest level of education? (Completed or still attending)

X Primary or basic education

X High school diploma

- X University of applied sciences/ Bachelor's degree
- X Master's degree
- X PhD
- X Others

APPENDIX E

Survey materials



Figure 17. Pretest material: Low levels of vividness in a no crisis condition

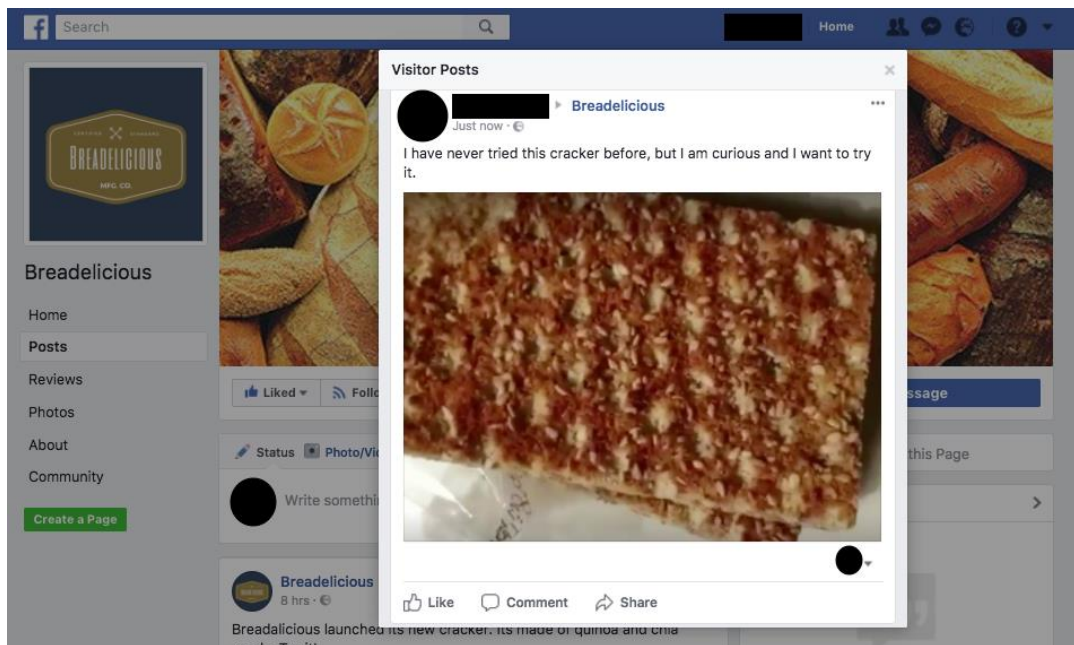


Figure 18. Pretest material: Medium levels of vividness in a no crisis condition

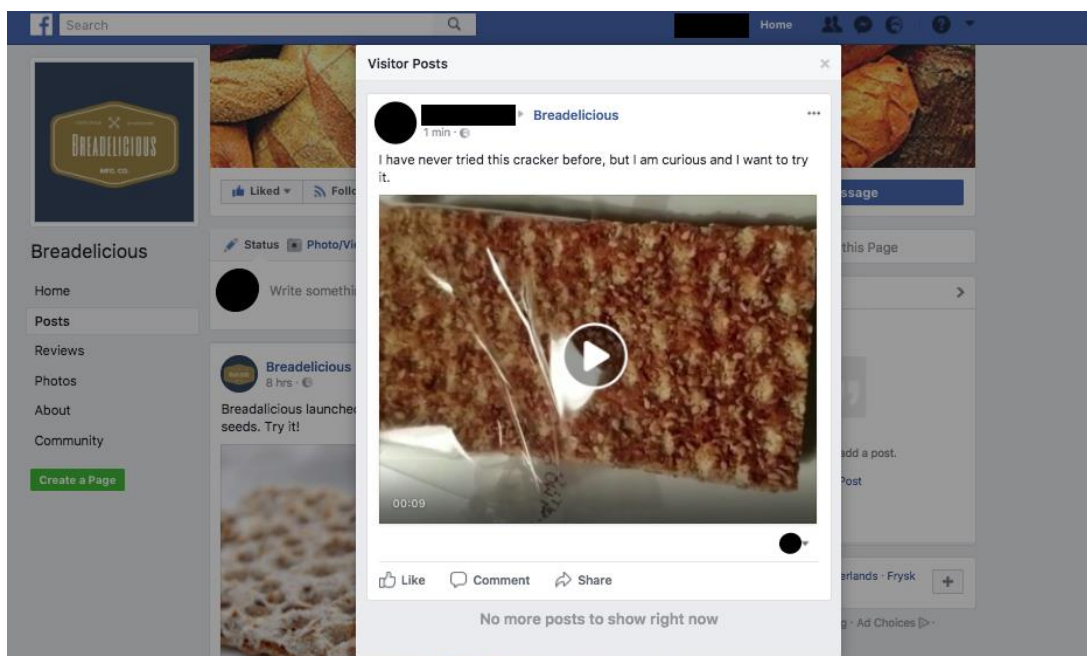


Figure 19. Pretest material: High levels of vividness in a no crisis condition. (The complete video can be found here: <https://drive.google.com/open?id=1Hs4szkfhO5y30OsNve7SKYEFnDWp7yz7>)



Figure 20. Pretest material: Low levels of vividness in a crisis condition.



Figure 21. Pretest material: Medium levels of vividness in a crisis condition.

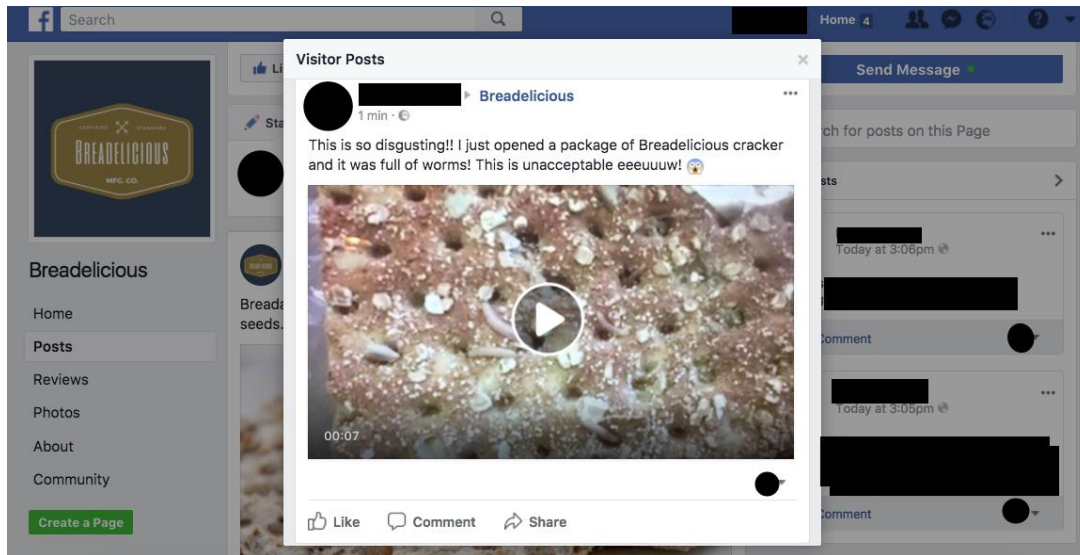


Figure 22. Pretest material: High levels of vividness in a crisis condition. (The complete video can be found here: https://tilburghumanities.eu.qualtrics.com/ControlPanel/File.php?F=F_b93ygSP6J3Je9WR)