A crisis on Facebook: freeze, flight or fight?

A study into the effects of the level of vividness and a crisis situation on corporate credibility and

the purchase intention of customers on Facebook

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Abstract

This study has gained insight into the effects of the level of vividness and the presence of a crisis situation on corporate credibility and the purchase intention of consumers on Facebook. The effects were measured via manipulated Facebook messages about a fictional company, called Breadelicious. The independent variables: levels of vividness (low, medium and high) and the presence or absence of a crisis (a crisis situation and a 'normal' situation) were manipulated. This resulted in a between-subjects design. The research contained six different conditions, whereas each participant who filled in the survey saw only one of the conditions. After viewing a consumer-generated Facebook post the participants had to answer questions about corporate credibility and purchase intention towards the product. The results showed that within a crisis situation, purchase intention is influence by perceived corporate credibility, although only when a video versus a photo was investigated and not when a photo and a text were compared. This study is valuable for marketers, communication specialists, and companies when they face a rapidly spreading crisis. They can use the results as a guide towards facing different levels of vividness in customer posts. Besides that, it is of added value to the theoretical field, because the aim of this research is to construct a theoretical and practical framework in order to interpret consumer-generated content within a crisis on Facebook.

Keywords: Vividness, crisis, social media, corporate credibility, purchase intention, crisis communication, eWOM, consumer-generated content.

Introduction

In February 2016, Mars was facing one of their worst-case scenarios: A Snickers produced by them was found with a piece of plastic in it. The woman who found the piece posted a video online and sent the Snickers back to the factory. The spokesman said: "We cannot be sure that the plastic was only in that particular Snickers. We do not want any products on the market that may not meet our quality requirements, so we decided to take them all back" (New York Times, 2016). The crisis was picked up online by news sites as well as several social media platforms. Social media gave other customers the opportunity to see the video of the Snickers and to express their opinions towards the company via posts on social media, which had an effect, because information generated by consumers is perceived to be more trustworthy than information generated by the company (Gaines-Ross, 2010). If you were a consumer and had seen the video online would you still buy any products from Mars?

A lot of research has focused on how electronic Word of Mouth (henceforth: eWOM) has an impact on purchase intention. Social media makes it possible to exchange opinions and experiences about products or services with people all over the world (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Credibility, usefulness, and adoption of information, needs of information and attitude towards information are the key factors for eWOM in social media which influence consumers' purchase intentions (Erkan & Evans, 2016). Purchase intention is a strong indicator of the buyer's behavior and ultimately has an impact on the financial situation of the company. Besides that, corporate credibility appears to have a positive effect on purchase intention, which means, for example, that higher perceived credibility will lead to higher purchase intentions (Lafferty & Goldsmith,1999).

A factor that influences the attitude and behavior of the consumer is the vividness of social media content. It is possible to share content on social media with different levels of vividness (Liu & Shrum, 2002). The vividness of media content is defined by Steuer (1992, p.81) as: "the representational richness of a mediated environment as defined by its formal features". Due to the fact that people can use rich media, it is possible to control the customization of information and the level of vividness of content they communicate (Fortin & Dholakia, 2005). Prior research from Griffith and Gray (2002) examined that a website design that is high in vividness appears to be more professional and more credible than in a website design which is low in the vividness of content. Coyle and Thorson (2001) found that a higher level of vividness leads to a more positive attitude towards the content, and a greater consistency between the attitude of a consumer and their actual behavior. This means that the positive attitude a customer has about the company will sooner turn into positive behavior according to that attitude, then when a content with a lower level of vividness is shown.

A negative post - as the Snicker example - about a product can have an effect on the credibility and the purchase intention of the company, which could lead to a crisis. But also the vividness, as explained above, plays an important role in this. It is possible that a high vivid content in a crisis situation could lead to more negative attitudes and a lower purchase intention, and will have the opposite effect of vividness with neutral content. The timeframe of a crisis is mostly limited and carries the potential for an outcome that is not in favor of the company, such as a negative attitude of customers towards a company, or a lower perceived credibility (Zdziarksi, Dunkel, & Rollo, 2007). The way in which companies receive eWOM in a crisis situation is important for the outcomes on reputation, credibility, and brand attitude but also the purchase intention of their products. A negative attitude from one customer can quickly lead to a

lot of other negative customers if the customer shares their experiences online (Mitroff, Diamond, & Alpaslan, 2006). When a dissatisfied consumer engages in a discussion about their negative experience online, this may soon change into a negative eWOM (Van Noort, Willemsen, Kerkhof, & Verhoeven, 2015). Therefore, especially during a crisis situation, it is important to look at the vividness of the media content that is posted. The video of the Snicker that was shared would probably had a more negative effect on purchase intention than when a customer only wrote a text about the incident, because consumers will have a more visual image of what happened.

Until now, no study has systematically examined how negative consumer-generated Facebook messages and their level of vividness could influence credibility and purchase intention. The insights are mainly focusing on vividness, but no research has been taken crisis in mind. Therefore, this study will investigate the combined and separate effects of these variables on purchase intention. This is of great interest to companies who are facing a crisis, because a company crisis might influence both judgement of vivid online content and corporate credibility, which in turn have an impact on consumers' purchase intention. The central research question in this study will be: *To what extent do vividness and crisis influence purchase intention, and does credibility mediate this effect?* The aim of this experimental study is to examine the psychological insights of consumers in a theoretical and practical way, by evaluating the vividness of media content when facing a crisis. Vividness and crisis together are not investigated before, which is an added value for the theoretical field because this study can be the first to fill this gap in the research. Clearly, the outcome of this study will be a valuable addition to current crisis communication strategies in social media, as it will assist companies to optimize the effects the vividness of media content.

Theoretical framework

Due to the web 2.0, technological advances are transforming how crisis management professionals see, interact, and spread information during a crisis situation (Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011). As Johnson (2009) argued: "the philosophy that social media and crisis communications are two separate segments of a communication practitioner's career simply doesn't work anymore" (p. 23). A vital challenge for companies is to find the right balance between social media interaction and controlling information in order to have effective communication with their customers. As the Snicker example showed, what consumers are expressing towards a company might have an impact. If social media is used in a tactful and thoughtful manner, it might improve crisis communication efforts.

Social media and eWOM

These days, 90% of Dutch citizens use social media platforms on a daily basis (Marketingfacts, 2016). Facebook is still the largest of numerous social media platforms. During June 2017, 2.01 billion people worldwide were actively using Facebook each month (The Telegraph, 2017). Social media platforms are mobile and web-based technologies which make it possible for individuals and communities to share, co-create, discuss, and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Within this online environment consumers are able generate content about brands or products, which enhances eWOM (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh, & Gremler, 2004). The internet has facilitated eWOM conversations, because in a short period of time, information about a brand can be spread among a huge number of users. This eWOM is a powerful way in which consumers and their purchase behavior can be influenced. This might not always be positive, because especially negative eWOM can influence the financial outcomes of an organization (Balakrishnan, Dahnil, & Yi, 2014). This is in line

with Barwise and Meehan (2010) who state that consumers spread eWOM mostly in very positive or very negative circumstances with a company. Besides that, they state that eWOM is mostly studied in combination with a crisis.

Since Facebook is a well-known and very popular platform, it can be used by companies for marketing purposes, and because it has a lot of users it provides the opportunity to spread content to a wide range of people. Therefore, companies see this social media platform as a good way to promote their products and to raise awareness, but also as a medium where consumers can influence each other. By communicating eWOM on social media sites, may be influence consumers' purchase intentions more than the eWOM communicated on other online platforms (Erkan & Evans, 2016). This intention to purchase depends largely on the way consumers write about a brand online and how the eWOM is spread, since what another consumer says about a product is always more credible and trustworthy than what a company says about their own products (Erkan & Evans, 2016). This study will use a consumer-generated Facebook post about a product to present the stimuli, so the formulated posts are closest to reality.

Purchase intention

A company's existence depends largely on its financial situation, the perceived corporate credibility, and also the purchasing behavior of its customers is a crucial factor. Purchase intention can be formulated as: "the probability that the consumer will purchase the product" (Sam, Fazli, & Tahir, 2009, p. 20). This probability is a pillar when it comes to the actual purchase of a customer. The behavior of a consumer is determined by their intention to perform this behavior, which is stated in the *Theory of Planned Behavior* (Ajzen, 1991). The intention to purchase is influenced by factors such as attitudes towards the behavior, subjective norms about engaging in the behavior, and perceptions of whether the individual will be able to successfully

engage in the target behavior (Ajzen, 1991). As a rule, Ajzen states that the stronger the intention to engage in a certain behavior, the more likely it is to be carried out. The attitude of the consumer towards a company has a major impact on their intention to buy a company's product. First of all, a consumer needs to have the intention to purchase a company's product, otherwise, no real or actual purchase will occur (Ajzen, 1991). This intention will only be transformed into actions when the customer is willing to make an effort to perform the behavior.

When looking at the purchase intentions in combination with eWOM, Wangenheim and Bayón (2004) state that eWOM affects consumers' decision-making process and can lead them to change their decisions. Leskovec, Adamic, and Huberman (2007), add that eWOM is the most trustworthy source of information for consumers and therefore it has a major impact on consumers' purchase intentions and preferences. Likewise, Wang et al. (2012) also showed that eWOM on social media positively affected the purchase intention of consumers in two different ways. They had an effect on conformity and on consolidating product involvement. Chang and Wildt (1994), explain this effect, by stating that purchase intentions are formed under the assumption of a pending transaction and consequently are seen as indicators of actual purchases. Therefore, purchase intention is an important measurement for real transactions and ultimately for a company's income. Whether purchase intention will lead to actual purchases or not is of great interest to the marketing department and a company's financial situation. If consumers have the intention to buy a product then they are more willing to actually do it, which generates more revenues for the company. Erkan and Evans (2016) found that this is also the case when consumers see an online post or review about a product. The behavior of consumers towards a company will be influenced by the information they see online. This is interesting since eWOM might be an indicator for consumers purchase intentions.

Corporate credibility

Another important factor in this study is the mediator credibility, due to the fact that perceived corporate credibility might influence purchase intention. Corporate credibility can be described as a company's reputation for honesty, and expertise (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000). This is a particular type of source credibility that can influence consumers' reactions to advertisements and shape brand attitudes (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000). Source expertise, trustworthiness and honesty are important dimensions when trying to conceptualize and understand the term credibility. These factors are especially important when it comes to persuading consumers (Goldsmith, Lafferty, & Newell, 2000). The expertise of the message source refers to the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions (Pornpitakpan, 2003). More precisely, the skills and knowledge from a company. Trustworthiness is the degree in which the audience has confidence in, and degree of acceptance of, the speaker and the message (Hovland, Janis, & Kelley, 1953), which focuses more on the ability to be relied on as honest or truthful. Whereas honesty relates to the truthful and honorable way in which the company acts, which can be seen as a part of trustworthiness (Pornpitakpan, 2003). Aaker and Keller (1990) expand that vision by arguing that the factors expertise and trustworthiness are the elements from which corporate credibility can be measured. The above-mentioned information about the three dimensions of corporate credibility will be used in this study. The construct corporate credibility will contain questions about, trustworthiness, honesty, expertise, and credibility in general.

Prior research of Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) also looked into the measurement of credibility and found that credibility is one of the most frequently used methods in advertising to influence consumers' attitudes and purchase intentions. The results showed that corporate

credibility appears to have a considerable influence on the purchase intention of a customer (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999). Likewise, the majority of the consumers state that their decision to buy a product is in part influenced by their confidence in the corporate brand and their opinion of the companies' good citizenship (Davis, 1994). Finally, Goldsmith, Lafferty, and Newell (2000) emphasize that understanding of the effect of credibility on purchase intentions is important because the information consumers evaluate is the quality of the company's products and this influences them if they want to buy the product or not. Therefore, this research will link credibility to purchase intention and investigate corporate credibility as a mediator.

Vividness

When consumers distribute content online about a company this has a major impact on other consumers' thoughts and actions. Because of the growth opportunities to share various kinds of media content online, Liu and Shrum (2002) conclude that there are different levels of content sharing. This is called the vividness of media content. It is important to investigate this variable because social media platforms enable customers to spread content in many different ways. Furthermore, the effect it might have on purchase intention make it relevant to a company's financial situation. The first websites available were mostly text-based (low in vividness), but technological developments have made it possible to share a variety of features that can enhance the richness of the interface (Fortin & Dholakia, 2005). Nowadays, companies can combine the advantages of print and electronic media, for example in the rich medium video. In this study, the vividness of content shared by consumers will be investigated. Media content might consist of different levels of vividness, in which the vividness can be low, medium, or high. The *Media Richness Theory* can be used the get a deeper understanding of the concept vividness and gives information about the richness of a content.

Media Richness Theory

The *Media Richness Theory* from Daft and Lengel (1986) proposed that media content vary in the richness of information processed. The reasons for different richnesses of media include the medium's capacity for immediate feedback, the number of cues and channels utilized, the way it can be personalized, and language variety (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Face-to-face is the richest medium because it provides immediate feedback so the interpretation can be checked by the recipient. Email is low in richness, due to the fact that no immediate feedback is possible and fewer cues are available (Daft & Lengel, 1986). Therefore, the MRT states that the way in which the reader performs the information processing depends on the medium. Consequently, richer communication channels are more effective for difficult and equivocal messages than leaner, less rich media channels (Daft & Lengel, 1986). To combine this theory with this study, the MRT explains the fact that a video about a Snicker can be seen as a richer medium in comparison with photos and text about the experience with the Snicker. Since within a video multiple cues are added, it can be personalized and language variety is possible because it provides sound. Therefore, it can be stated that the different levels of vividness in media content in this study will be high (video), medium (photo) and low (text). The assumption can be made that when a person sees a richer media content (e.g. video) the person will process the information more deeply and this will lead to greater corporate credibility, possibly resulting in more purchase intentions.

Furthermore, the *Elaboration Likelihood Model* (ELM) can be used to give an explanation about how people elaborate media content and to get a deeper understanding of of the influence of a vivid content.

Elaboration Likelihood Model

This model defines how consumers process information and the effects the way of processing has on the attitude towards a company or product, which can be an explanation of how customers process and perceive the level of vividness of media content. When a customer deeper elaborates a vivid media content, this could lead to a greater corporate credibility which might result in more purchase intentions. The ELM is about the elaboration in a persuasion context, which means: "the extent to which a person thinks about the issue-relevant arguments contained in a message" (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, p. 128). There are two types of elaborating a message. The first route is the central route, which is based on the argument and the quality of the message. When a person receives a stimulus they actively compare, balance and assess it using appropriate, previously acquired knowledge on the topic of the content (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Before the central route processing can start the recipient needs to be in a particular state of mind, there has to be a need for cognition, the capacity to process the content and an individual needs to be motivated and interested in the content that is provided. In the second route, peripheral cues are central. Within this route, the person focuses on the characteristics of the sender or the message; how attractive is it, is the person familiar with the content, and what is the length of the message (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). This way of processing is the most common way of thinking about an issue because people are not aware of this thinking behavior (Petty & Cacioppo, 1984). These peripheral cues can have an effect on the attitudes of people who process the content.

In referral to this study, the ELM shows several possibilities for processing content on different level of vividness. During the discussion, there will be elaborated why the way of processing of media content and what kind of effects this could have on the credibility and

purchase intention of a brand. Besides that, the assumption can be made that when a person experiences a deeper elaboration of media content with high vividness (e.g. video), this will result in longer and deeper elaboration and will lead to greater corporate credibility, possibly resulting in higher purchase intentions.

Previous research about vividness showed that videos engage more in comparison with plain texts, whereas pictures had a higher engagement compared to both videos and plain texts (Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Canabate, & Lebherz, 2014). This is supported by Griffith and Gray (2002), who argued that the presentation of text only is a characteristic of a low vivid website design. When a website or online content contains multimedia presentations, audio, video and also integrates animated graphical images, it has the characteristics of highly vivid website design (Kujur & Singh, 2017). Likewise, websites can be conceptualized along a continuum of high to low vividness, determined by their media elements (Hoffman & Novak, 1996; Srirojanant & Thirkell, 1998). There are also researchers who state that the level of vividness of a medium does not translate into an increased persuasion of a company (Taylor & Thompson, 1982; Walther, 1996). The study of Taylor and Thompson (1982) gained little support because higher vividly presented content is generally thought the be more persuasive, than a lower level of vividness. It suggested that the effects of the vividness of content only occur under certain conditions and fail because the absolute attention is manipulated in a lot of studies (Taylor & Thompson, 1982). Therefore, the vividness effect is difficult to find when searching for situations that are similar to the information overload which occurs in the social media landscape of today. But this study needs to be interpreted with caution because it is only based on newspapers and spoken news journals and therefore cannot be related or compared with this study. Besides that, the study is relatively old when comparing it with the upcoming field of

vividness in social media nowadays. During that time vividness was not measured with possible social media effects in mind and can therefore not be generalized into the levels of vividness on Facebook. Also because those results were measured in an offline environment, it cannot be generalized to the media landscape of today, where all content is shared online and vividness plays an important role.

Multiple researchers have looked at the vividness of media content (Liebrecht, 2015; De Vries et al., 2012; Steuer, 1992; Sabate, Berbegal-Mirabent, Canabate, & Lebherz, 2014; Griffith & Gray, 2002). De Vries et al. (2012) formulated that vividness reflects the richness of brand posts formal features, so it is the extent to which a brand post stimulates the different senses. The study looked at the vividness and interactivity of brand posts. They made a distinction between four levels of vividness, namely: no, low, medium and high. The 'no' vividness condition was a text, whereas a low vivid content was an image, a medium level message contained an event and the high vivid level message a video. De Vries states that: "A video is more vivid than a photo because the former stimulates not only sight but also hearing" (De Vries et al., 2012, p.85). In the study of Coyle and Thorson (2001) they argue that the content of a website has rich media tools such as, video, audio, and animation, which can increase the vividness by enhancing the richness of the experience. They expected that a higher level of vividness would lead to more positive attitudes towards the content, stronger feelings of telepresence and a greater consistency between the attitude and the actual behavior of a person (purchase intention). More precisely, when the level of vividness is higher this will have a stronger effect on purchase intention in comparison with a lower level of vividness, which can be the case for a high versus a medium level of vividness and medium versus low vividness. This also occurs for the behavior of consumers who saw an online post, they will be influenced by the information which might be an indicator for

consumers purchase intentions (Erkan & Evans, 2016). As expected, a higher level of vividness was associated with a more positive and more enduring attitude (and intention) towards the website of the company (Coyle & Thorson, 2001). Also, the feelings of telepresence increased when the vividness of the content was higher, which results in a higher corporate credibility. To conclude, when the level of vividness is higher (between video and photo and between photo and text) this will have a stronger effect on the corporate credibility in comparison with a lower level of vividness. The study of Coyle and Thorson (2001) formulated a hypothesis which stated that attitude-behavior consistency related to websites that are more vivid will be higher than websites that are less vivid, which can be a guideline for the formulation of the hypotheses in this study. The present study will be based on the levels of vividness on De Vries et a. (2012), but will be adapted a bit due to the fact that interactivity is not part of this study. The hypotheses are supported by literature regarding the MRT, which underlines that stronger feelings of telepresence and a greater consistency between the attitude and the actual behavior of a person will lead to a higher purchase intention and a stronger corporate credibility. Besides that, a high vivid content (e.g., video) makes it easier to process the visual content and attracts the attention much longer than content medium (e.g. picture), and low level (e.g. text) of vividness (Liebrecht, 2015). Therefore, the following hypotheses have been formulated in order to found out if vividness has an effect:

H1: Content on Facebook high in vividness will have a stronger effect on purchase intention than content low in vividness. More precisely, high vivid content (e.g., video) will lead to a stronger effect on purchase intention than medium vivid content (e.g., photo), which in turn leads to a stronger effect on purchase intention than low vivid content (e.g. text).

H2: Content on Facebook high in vividness will have a stronger effect on the perceived

corporate credibility than content low in vividness. More precisely, high vivid content (e.g.,

video) will lead to a stronger effect on corporate credibility than medium vivid content (e.g.,

photo), which in turn leads to a stronger effect on corporate credibility than low vivid content

(e.g. text).

Mediation of corporate credibility on purchase intention

Griffith and Gray (2002) found that consumers see a highly vivid website design as more professional and therefore perceive the retailer to be more credible. In addition, Liebrecht (2015) mentioned that a video (e.g. a high level of vividness) makes it easier to process the visual content and attracts the attention much longer. Paivio (1991) indicates with his *Dual Coding Theory* that pictures will be memorized better than written information because humans process is written information and pictures via different cognitive systems. This means that a customer remembers and stores a photo differently than a text and therefore the effects will also differ from each other. Consequently, it could be suggested that a higher level of vividness leads to higher memorization of the content that is communicated, which expected a mediation effect of credibility on purchase intention:

H3: Media content that is high in vividness leads to a stronger corporate credibility which in

turn enhances a stronger purchase intention than a medium vivid content and a low vivid

content.

Crisis communication

The levels of vividness in a Facebook post can have different effects, but what will happen with the effects of vividness when a negative content is posted? It is interesting to investigate whether the effect of vividness on credibility and purchase intention of customers is

affected by crisis situation, because these are important factors, mainly during and after a crisis. A crisis might influence the effects of vividness on the perceived corporate credibility of customers towards the company which might affect the purchase intention. To see if purchase intention is influenced when a crisis occurs, the moderator: crisis will be studied. "A crisis is a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization's operations and poses both a financial and a reputational threat" (Coombs, 2007, p.164). A crisis changes the way consumers view a company which might be a big threat to the reputation of the company (Coombs, 2007). Due to the aforementioned web 2.0, the internet and technological advances have a major impact on the development of a crisis (Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011). When the reputation and credibility of a company become less favorable due to a crisis, consumers might change their way of communicating and interact with the company, and it could lose out on advantages it previously had (Coombs, 2007). Moreover, consumers might even express a negative eWOM about the company.

To get a deeper understanding of a crisis and its effects, Coombs (2007) created the *Situational Crisis Communication Theory* (hereafter: SCCT). The SCCT stated that credibility and the reputation of a company after a crisis are of crucial importance (Coombs, 2007), which also is the case in this study. The SCCT gives a clear understanding of the effects and offers a framework for the understanding of the effects of crisis communication during a crisis. Besides that, it shows how consumers will react towards the company who dealt with the crisis. The SCCT is derived from the *Attribution Theory* (Coombs, 2007). This theory focuses on the inferences people make about how the crisis arose. Consumers will search for the causes of events, mainly when those are unexpected and negative (Weiner, 2006). When a person has searched for the cause of an event, they will feel emotional towards the event. The core

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emotional reactions are anger and sympathy and these serve as a motivation for a person's' subsequent actions. Weiner (2006) analyzed numerous empirical observations from different studies and theories and concluded that when a person is angry and holds another company responsible for the crisis, the behavioral responses towards the company will be negative. Under these conditions consumers develop a less favorable attitude and behavior towards the company, resulting in them buying fewer products. In contrast, when a person feels sympathy towards the company that is dealing with a crisis, the behavioral response towards the company will be positive.

In addition, when a crisis occurs this also affects the behavioral (or purchase) intention towards the company. In fact, if a crisis did not have an effect on behavior, then there would be no reason to worry about the effects of a crisis. Therefore, Coombs (2007) formulated that the more negative the reputation of the company, the less likely consumers are to intend to behave in a supportive way towards the company. This is confirmed by the experimental research of Coombs and Holladay (2001), who found that the reputation of a company is related to behavioral intentions such as purchase intention and support for an organization. Potential supportive behavior is predominantly a function of the reputation and the attitude towards an organization (Coombs & Holladay, 2001). The effect of attitude on the behavioral intention of a customer can be explained in terms of the reputation the company creates. Which has been underlined in the study of Lin, Chen, Chiu, and Lee (2011), they state that a company's crisis often leads to negative publicity which affects purchase intention. Thus, the (media) content which reveals the first part of a crisis might influence the reputation of the company and the behavioral responses. This is in line with the MRT, which states that the way in which the reader performs the information processing, depends on the medium. How richer a communication

channel or content is, the more effective it is for difficult and equivocal messages in comparison to leaner, less rich media channels (Daft & Lengel, 1986). These difficult and equivocal messages are the case within crisis communication, therefore crisis will be a moderator between the relationship of vividness on credibility and purchase intention.

Moderation of crisis on the relationship of vividness on credibility and purchase intention

   With the occurrence of a crisis and the effects it will have on purchase intention and the perceived corporate credibility of a company will be negatively related. The study of Wattegama and Qing (2014) stated that a crisis will lead to negative publicity about the product of the company and therefore generates a negative effect on the purchase intentions. However, no previous study has hypothesized the effects of the levels of vividness of content and a crisis situation together with purchase intention and corporate credibility. It seems plausible that vividness and crisis will affect each other. The assumption is that a higher level of vividness ensures people remember content better than photos or text. This means that a high level of vividness is more appealing than an image or a text and thus will have a stronger effect on corporate credibility and purchase intention. But the effect is reversed when a crisis situation is added instead of a 'normal' situation since a negative event will become more negative when people have a more vivid memorization of the event. Therefore, the following hypotheses will be examined:

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

Moderated mediation effects

When looking at the effect of a high vivid content, Coyle and Thorson (2001) stated that a higher level of vividness lead to a more positive attitude towards the content, and lead to stronger feelings of telepresence which in turn leads to more consistency between the attitude and the actual behavior of a person. It is likely that a high vivid content leads to a higher perceived credibility of the company because high vividness leads to positive attitudes. Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) found that credibility is one of the most frequently used methods in advertising to influence consumers' purchase intentions. The results showed that corporate credibility influenced the purchase intention of a customer. Moreover, they found that research has indicated that credibility substantially mediates purchase intention. As previously mentioned, eWOM is the most trustworthy source of information for consumers and therefore it has a major impact on consumers' purchase intentions and preferences. This is also the case when negative eWOM is spread online. But then the effects on purchase intention and the perceived corporate credibility of a company will be negative. This is also investigated by Wattegama and Qing (2014), who states that a crisis will lead to negative publicity (negative eWOM) about the product of the company and thereby generates a negative impact on the loyalty of the customer and their purchase intentions. When a crisis arises within a vivid content this will be visible in the negative eWOM on social media. Consumers will read these messages and give negative feedback about the product and therefore the credibility will decrease which could lead to lower purchase intentions.

The effects Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999) found where only there during a neutral situation. Till now, no study have looked at the effects within a crisis. It is expected, as Coombs (2007) stated, that within a crisis situation the effects and the way customers see the company in comparison with the 'normal' situation will change, because a crisis affects the interpretation of content negatively. A crisis influences the effect of the level of vividness negative, whereas the effect of the levels of vividness in a 'normal' situation will be more positive. Therefore, the last hypothesis in this study will look at the mediation of credibility and purchase intention with crisis situation as a moderator:

H5: In a crisis situation, the effects of the level of vividness on purchase intention is mediated by the perceived corporate credibility. The mediation role of corporate credibility on the effect of vividness on purchase intention is lowered when a company faces a crisis.

Method

To examine the hypotheses, experimental research was carried out by means of a survey. This research was part of a larger research project where reputation and brand attitude were investigated as mediators between vividness and purchase intention. Prior to the main study, a pretest was executed in order to test which stimuli worked best for the experiment.

Pretest

To test which fictional brand worked best for the experiment, a pretest with two distinct brands (Breadelicious and Chocolicious) was performed. This pretest measured whether these two low involvement products, a cracker, and chocolate, had different effects on participants' thoughts about the brand and whether this influenced the perceived vividness of the shared content. An additional reason for conducting a pretest was to find out which brand had the

highest impact on participants with regard to their brand involvement and perception of the crisis. An investigation was also carried out into whether the manipulated situational crisis was indeed perceived as a negative event. The final goal of this pretest was to see if the video, photo, and text were perceived as having different levels of vividness and as high, medium and low levels of vivid content.

In total 42 participants, of whom 8 men (19%) and 34 women (81%) participated in the pretest. They were aged between 22 and 53 years old ($M = 27.07$, $SD = 6.74$) and were randomly assigned to the conditions. Participants who had no Facebook account were excluded from the study. The stimuli contained: four texts (two for the low vividness for the 'normal' condition and two for the low vividness crisis condition); four photos (two for the low vividness for the 'normal' condition and two times for the low vividness crisis condition); four videos (two for the low vividness for the 'normal' condition and two for the low vividness crisis condition). An overview of the texts, photos, and videos used in the pretest, can be found in Appendix II.

The brand Breadelicious represented a bakery and the brand Chocolicious represented a fictional chocolate bar manufacturer. The texts that were shown were different for the crisis condition and the 'normal' condition. The crisis text stated: "*So disgusting! I just opened your* [*Breadelicious cracker/ Chocolicious chocolate bar*] *and it was full of worms! This is unacceptable eeeuuuw!!!*", whereas the 'normal' condition text stated: "*I have never tried* [*this cracker/this chocolate*] *before, but I am curious, and I want to try it*.". This distinction was also made between the photos, the crisis condition showed the product with worms and maggots on it, while the 'normal' condition just displayed the purchased product, so either a cracker or a chocolate bar. The last condition using videos showed either a video of crackers or a chocolate bar for the crisis condition which again had maggots and worms in it. The video for the 'normal'

condition just showed the product. The videos of the crackers and chocolate in the crisis condition were found online by the researchers, the 'normal' condition video and photos were self-made by researchers. To make sure the crisis situation and the 'normal' situation looked almost the same, the same products were used in both conditions. All the pretest materials can be found in Appendix I and II.

Reliability of measurements

To investigate which fictional company was best for the main test, different tests were conducted. First, product involvement was measured with 4 items on a 7-point semantic differential scale (important - unimportant, trivial - fundamental, not needed - needed, useless - useful) that was adapted from Zaichkowsky (1985). The scale had a good degree of reliability for most of the conditions (most conditions Cronbach's α were above .60). A paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to test whether the brands Chocolicious (*M* = 3.21, *SD* = 1.23) and Breadelicious (*M* = 3.57, *SD* = 1.03) differed in their levels of product involvement. The analysis showed a significant difference between the brand involvements of the two brands M*dif* = 1.96, *t*(41) = 9.71, *p* = .001, *r* = .83.

Secondly, the perceived crisis was investigated. This was also measured with two items on a 7-point semantic differential scale (no crisis - extreme crisis, no impact - a lot of impact) (Billings, Milburn, & Schaalman, 1980). The scale had a good degree of reliability for most of the crisis conditions (Cronbach's α were mostly above .60). To investigate if the perception of the crisis differed for the two brands, a paired samples *t*-test was conducted. The perception of crisis at Breadelicious (*M* = 4.01, *SD* = 1.95) was higher than the crisis perception of Chocolicious (*M* = 3.60, *SD* = 1.96). The analysis showed a significant difference in the crisis perception of Breadelicious (M*dif* = 2.58 , *t*(22) = 5.07, *p* < .001, *r* = .73). The analysis also

showed a significant difference to the perception of crisis for Chocolicious (M*dif* = 2.13, $t(18) =$ 3.89, *p* = .001, *r* = .68).

Finally, the perception of vividness was measured and adopted from Krishnamurthy and Sujan (1999). The first measure consisted of one item on the 7-point Likert scale (from 1= *"completely disagree"* to 7 = *"completely agree*") and the other contained a scale with three items on a 7-point semantic differential scale (abstract - concrete, boring - vivid, vague - clear). The scale had a good reliability for most of the conditions (Cronbach's α were mostly above .60). Because of the mixed design of the pretest, the perception of the three levels of vividness was measured with a repeated measures ANOVA. The analysis revealed that there was an main effect of vividness for Breadelicious $F(1.9, 32.68) = 16.85$, *p* < .001. After that a repeated contrast was performed to compare the three levels of vividness. This analysis showed that high versus medium level of vividness was not significant $F(1, 22) = 0.13$, *p* = .721, but the difference was significant for medium versus low level of vividness $F(1, 22) = 38.06$, *p* < .001, $\eta^2 = .63$. The manipulation for videos condition (*M* = 4.71, *SD* = 0.36) were perceived more vivid than the manipulation of photos (*M* = 4.62, *SD* = 0.32), whereas texts versus pictures were the least perceived in vividness (*M* = 3.32, *SD* = 0.31).

When looking at Chocolicious, there was a significant main effect of vividness, $F(1.81, 32.6) = 7.86$, *p* = .002. Again, a repeated contrast was conducted to compare the three levels of vividness. The analysis showed no significance for high versus medium levels of vividness $F(1, 18) = .94$, *p* = .346, whereas there was a significant difference between the medium versus low level of vividness $F(1, 18) = 18.52$, *p* < .001, $\eta^2 = .51$. For the Chocolicious condition, videos (*M* = 4.32, *SD* = 0.35) were not perceived as more vivid than photos (*M* = 4.65, *SD* = 0.26), although texts were perceived as the least vivid (*M* = 3.29, *SD* = 0.37).

Breadelicious was chosen and used in the main study because the results above showed it had a higher brand involvement and a better perception of vividness compared to Chocolicious. All the results of the pretest can be found in Appendix III.

Main study

Design and participants

The independent variables, based on the research question, in this study were vividness (low, medium, high) and crisis (crisis situation and a 'normal' situation), which resulted in a 3 x 2 between-subjects design. The dependent variable was purchase intention and the mediator corporate credibility. All levels of both variables were combined, resulting in six different conditions, as can be seen in Table 1. The study, therefore, has a between-subject design, as the participants each saw one of the six different conditions. The participants in the study were randomly assigned to one of the six conditions.

Table 1

Overview of the six conditions.

	Vividness of the Content	Crisis Situation
Condition 1	Low	Yes
Condition 2	Low	No
Condition 3	Medium	Yes
Condition 4	Medium	No
Condition 5	High	Yes
Condition 6	High	No

A total of 253 participants, 78 men (30.8%) and 175 women (69.2%), completed this online experiment. The mean age of the participants was 29 years ($SD = 10.16$) ranging from 17 to 77

years of age. The majority of the participants in this study had a University of applied sciences / Bachelor's degree (35.2%) or a Master's degree (44.7%). Finally, 241 participants had a Facebook account, and 55.3% of the participants used it more than five times a day. The participants were sampled by means of the personal network of the researchers via Email, Facebook or WhatsApp. The participants were situated throughout Europe and for this reason the online survey was in English. Finally, the participants were equally divided over the six conditions, which resulted in approximately 40 participants for each condition.

Materials

The independent variable vividness consisted of three different levels, namely: low vivid, medium vivid, and high vivid content. The second variable crisis contained two levels: a crisis situation and a 'normal' situation. The crisis situation condition consisted of posts with all the different levels of vividness and showed a Facebook post from a customer who had had a bad experience with the fictitious brand. Under the other condition, the 'normal' situation, the Facebook posts contained the different levels of vividness and related to a neutral experience of a consumer with the product of the fictitious company. To avoid biases in the experiment the fictitious brand Breadelicious, which produced bread and related products, was central to the survey. A low involvement product was chosen, this is a product people buy often and which can be bought without a long decision making process (Bech-Larsen & Nielsen, 1999). In addition, it was unlikely that people already had a (strong) opinion about the brand because it was fictional. As consumers have emotional feelings, prior knowledge and impressions about existing companies, the use of an existing company could have influenced the results (Bettman & Park, 1980).

To ensure the participants in the survey had the most realistic view of a crisis or 'normal' situation social media post, a Facebook layout was used in order to increase the reality of the posts on social media. A Facebook page was created for the fictitious company which included a fictitious company logo, a background picture showing the product and previous company posts. This was created in order to show the most realistic stimuli as respondents saw the post as they would see it when they used their personal Facebook account.

The vividness of content in a 'normal' situation

The manipulations of the independent variable vividness were operationalized based on prior studies of De Vries et al. (2012) and Zentjes (2016), who also looked at different levels of vividness. The operationalization was executed by cutting a customer video about the company into a short video, picking a photo or image about the company from the internet and writing or adjusting an existing text about the company. The low level of vividness contained a text, the medium level of vividness a photo, and a video was used as high vivid level content. As previously stated, all the created content was presented within a Facebook layout. The low vivid social media content contained a message from a customer to the company in a 'normal' situation, with the text: *"I have never tried this product before, but I am curious, and I want to try it"* (see Figure A1 in Appendix II). The medium vividness version contained a screenshot of a fragment of the video or a photo of the company's product from a customer's perspective. The photo showed a customer eating the company's product (see Figure A2 in Appendix II). The text from the low vivid content was presented above the photo. Finally, the high vividness version contained a video shown from a customer's perspective about Breadelicious crackers which were opened and eaten (see Figure A3 in Appendix II).

Company crisis situation

The crisis condition concerned the fictional company Breadelicious which was facing a crisis. The texts, photos, and videos were made by the researchers. The crisis situation text from a fictional customer towards the company included the sentence: *"Sooooo disgusting! I just opened your product and it was full of worms! This is unacceptable!!!"* (see Figure A4 in Appendix II). This text was repeated above the content showing both the photo and the video. The photo in the crisis situation showed a cracker with worms coming out of it. This photo was a screenshot of the video that was shown. The video showed the cracker with living worms slowly coming out of it. The texts in the crisis and neutral version were of the same length, as was the length of the videos. All consumer-generated content was shown on the Facebook page of the fictitious company. The condition with a 'normal' situation consisted of a neutral text, photo or video about the company. These manipulations were based on the fact that a crisis needs a comparison with content that is placed in a 'normal' situation. Otherwise, the effects of a crisis cannot be compared with a situation where the company is functioning normally.

Measurements

The online tool *Qualtrics* was used to gather the data for this study. The questions measured the variables purchase intention and corporate credibility. Some general questions about the participant's gender, age, education, and nationality were asked. As the participants were situated throughout Europe, the survey was in English. The demographic questions can be found in Appendix IV. A survey was conducted to measure the dependent variables. The survey questions measured the main dependent variable, namely purchase intention, but also the mediator corporate credibility. Purchase intention was measured with three questions. All three items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale, with 1 = *"Do not agree at all"* and 7 = *"Agree*

completely". The three items were based on Moon, Chadee, & Tikoo (2008), Xia & Bechwati (2008), and Maxham (2001), who had previously reliably measured purchase intention. The participants were asked to think about what they previously knew about the company, and based upon that to look at buying the product, to think about buying it, and to consider whether they would buy it somewhere else. In order to measure the consistency between the three questions, a Cronbach's Alpha calculated internal consistency was executed. The internal consistency of the items in this study was very high ($\alpha = .92$, $M = 2.84$, $SD = 1.40$). The three factors which measured the overall purchase intention can be found in Appendix IV.

The mediator in this study, corporate credibility, was measured by adapting existing scales developed by Newell (1993) and Beltramini (1988). The scales were adjusted to the Facebook posts in the current study. Both studies used a 7-point Likert scale with different scales that measure trustworthiness, expertise, and honesty, because they stated that credibility consists of a combination of those constructs. In this study, seven comprehensive questions about expertise, trustworthiness, honesty, and credibility were used to measure corporate credibility on a 7-point Likert scale, from (1 = *"Strongly Disagree"* to 7 = *"Strongly Agree"*). The reliability of the scale in this study was high ($\alpha = .89$, $M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.17$). An overview of the questions about credibility can be found in Appendix IV.

Procedure

Participants in the study were asked to fill in an online survey. The participants from the researchers own networks were approached through online channels, such as WhatsApp, Facebook, Facebook Messenger and email. The researchers also made use of snowball sampling, in which the participants were asked if they wanted to send the link to their contacts. When the link that was in the message was opened, participants were automatically allocated one of the six

conditions that were set. Directly after opening this link, the participants saw the introduction and an explanation of the research. They also had to agree with the terms of the consensus form (see Appendix IV). The introduction told the participants about the flow of the survey, the time it would take to fill in the survey and gave instructions about filling in questions with a 7-point Likert scale. If they agreed, the survey started after they clicked on through to the next page. First, some personal questions about gender, age, education, and background were asked. Then they there were questions whether they had a Facebook account and how many times a week they used this. Following on from this, the stimuli were shown and participants saw a text, photo or video of a crisis or a 'normal' situation. After reading the message, and viewing the photo or video, the participants could fill in the questions about corporate credibility, reputation, brand attitude and purchase intention. These questions were shown on the same page as the content allowing them to easily check the content again when filling in the questions. When the participants had completed the survey, they could click on the arrow at the end of the page. After this, the respondents were thanked for their participation and informed that their response was successfully recorded. In total the experiment lasted about three minutes.

Results

Manipulation check

To check if the manipulation of vividness in this study was successful, a one-way ANOVA was executed. There was significant skewness in the medium level vividness condition (z-score = -2.44), which indicates that the assumption of normality was not met. For this reason, the bootstrapped confidence intervals of the difference scores will be reported. The analysis showed that vividness differed over the three levels ($F(2, 250) = 4.53$, $p = .012$, $\eta^2 = .11$). The

contrasts[1] showed that there was no significant difference between the high level of vividness (*M* = 4.48, *SD* = 1.53) and the medium level of vividness (*M* = 4.76, *SD* = 1.33) conditions *t*(250) = -1.31, *p* = .196, M*dif* = -0.28, BCa 95% CI [-0.69, 0.15]. However, there was a significant difference between the medium vividness level (*M* = 4.76, *SD* = 1.33) and the low vividness (*M* = 4.08, *SD* = 1.44) conditions *t*(250) = 3.00, *p* = .003, M*dif* = 0.68, BCa 95% CI [-0.26, 1.09]. However, this effect size was small (*d* = 0.24). To conclude, the manipulation check showed no statistical differences between the high vividness condition and the medium vividness condition. The differences between medium and low vividness were perceived as expected, so the manipulation was successful, but only for photo versus text condition. Due to the fact there was no question in relation to a manipulation of crisis, no check can be conducted about the manipulation of crisis, this will be briefly considered in the discussion.

Hypothesis testing

To analyze the effects, a two-way factorial ANOVA test was performed twice. The normality was checked, to find out whether the variables were normally distributed. The purchase intention scores were not distributed normally as there was some light skewness in the high vividness condition (z- scores = 2.43). Because skewness was not severe it deviates from a normal distribution. However, no action was taken because the two-way ANOVA is a fairly robust test. Though the results need to be interpreted with caution.

Effect of vividness on purchase intention

To examine whether, high vivid content would lead to a stronger effect on purchase intention than medium vivid content, and if this in turn would lead to a stronger effect on

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[1] Because there were no bootstrapped confidence intervals available for the contrasts, a Bonferroni post-hoc test was performed to obtain the bootstrapped confidence intervals of the differences between the different groups.

purchase intention than low vivid content (H1), a two-way ANOVA was performed. Vividness

was measured at a categorical level with three independent groups (high, medium and low). The

test did not find a main effect of vividness on purchase intention $F(2, 247) = 0.80$, $p = .454$.

Therefore, hypothesis 1 is not supported. The means and standard deviations of purchase

intention can be found in Table 2.

Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations for Vividness on Purchase intention on a 7-point scale
ranging from high to low.*

	Vividness	Mean (*SD*)	*N*
Purchase Intention	High	2.70 (1.50)	92
	Medium	2.93 (1.50)	85
	Low	2.91 (1.15)	76

The effect of vividness on corporate credibility

To see whether high vivid content would lead to a stronger effect on corporate credibility

than medium vivid content, and if this in turn would lead to a stronger effect on corporate

credibility than low vivid content (H2), a separate two-way ANOVA was performed. This

second hypothesis could also not be supported, because there was no main effect of vividness on

corporate credibility $F(2, 253) = 2.09$, $p = .126$. The means and standard deviations of corporate

credibility can be found in Table 3.

Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for Vividness on Corporate Credibility on a 7-point scale ranging from high to low.

	Vividness	Mean (*SD*)	*N*
Corporate Credibility	High	3.37 (0.12)	92
	Medium	3.68 (0.12)	85
	Low	3.66 (0.13)	76

The effect of a crisis on purchase intention

To examine the hypothesis: in a crisis situation, media 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 (H4a), a two-way ANOVA was conducted. The Levene's test showed a nonsignificant result for both the dependent variables, which means that the assumption of homogeneity of variances was met. The effect of a crisis on purchase intention was measured, which proved to be a significant main effect $F(1, 247) = 15.20$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$. More specifically, a crisis content situation ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.34$) leads to weaker purchase intention than content within a 'normal' situation ($M = 3.21$, $SD = 1.38$). Moreover, there was a significant interaction effect between the level of vividness and the presence or absence of a crisis, $F(2, 247) = 4.38$, $p = .014$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Regarding the results: high vivid crisis content (e.g. video) ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 1.38$) leads to weaker purchase intention than crisis content that has a medium level (e.g. photo) ($M = 2.45$, $SD = 1.26$) or low level of vividness (e.g. text) ($M = 2.94$, $SD = 1.30$). Figure 1 below shows the interaction effect between crisis content and the level of vividness on purchase intention.

Because there was an interaction effect, a follow-up study was necessary. Therefore, an analysis of simple effects was conducted. This test showed that there was no significant

difference within the 'normal' condition between the levels of vividness $F(2, 247) = 1.87$, $p =$ .156. However, for the crisis condition there was a significant difference between the level of vividness $F(2, 247) = 3.39$, $p < .035$. More specifically, there was a significant difference between the high and low levels of vividness on purchase intention, but this was only within the crisis condition Mdif = -0.74, $p < .011$. No significant difference was found between the high and medium levels of vividness on purchase intention Mdif = -0.24, $p = .383$, and between the medium and low levels of vividness on purchase intention Mdif = -0.49, $p = .091$.

To further investigate the outcome for purchase intention when comparing the crisis condition and the 'normal' condition in terms of vividness, a simple effects test was conducted. The crisis and 'normal' condition were compared and the results indicated that the high level of vividness condition produced a difference between the two Mdif = 1.03, $F(1, 247) = 13.44$, $p <$ .001, $\eta^2 = .05$. There was also a difference between the crisis and 'normal' condition for the medium level of vividness Mdif = 1.02, $F(1, 247) = 12.32$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .05$. In contrast, in the low vividness level condition no difference was seen between the crisis condition and the 'normal' condition Mdif = -0.07, $F(1, 247) = 0.05$, $p = .829$.

Regarding the results it can be concluded that H4a, which states that within a crisis situation, media content that is high in vividness leads to weaker purchase intention than medium vivid content, which in turn leads to weaker purchase intention than low vivid content, is not supported. However, no hypothesis compared the two extremes, namely high versus low. When comparing the high level of vividness and the low level of vividness on purchase intention in a crisis situation, a significant result was found.
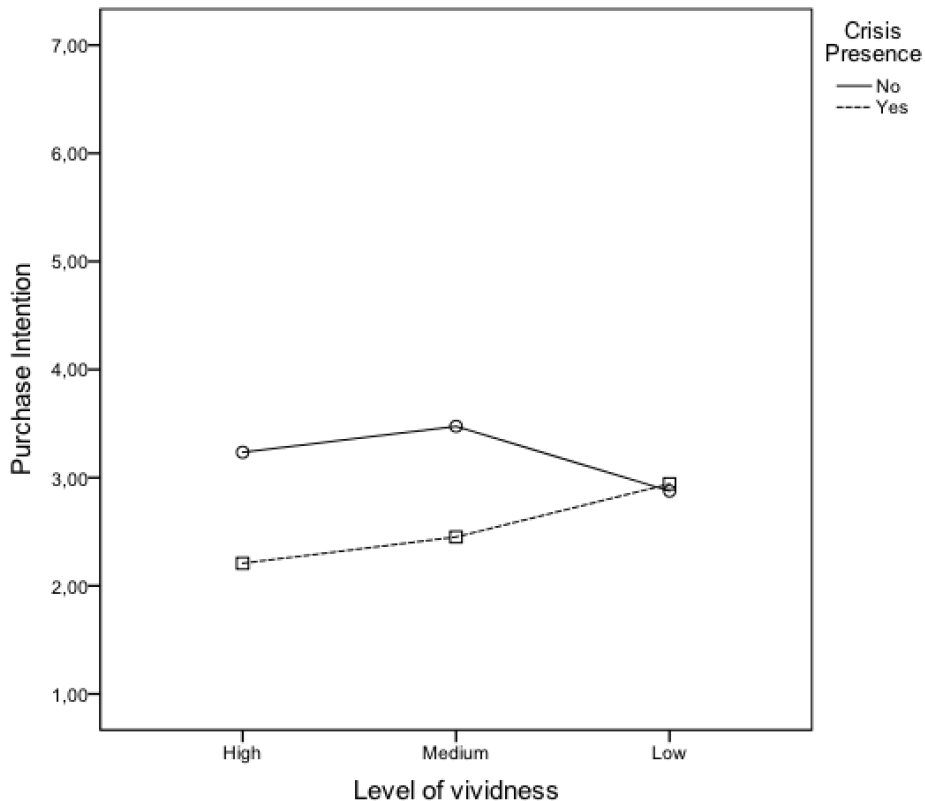
Figure 1. Interaction effect between crisis content and level of vividness on purchase intention.

Another significant interaction effect was found between the crisis condition and the level of vividness on corporate credibility $F(2, 253) = 6.15$, $p < .002$, $\eta^2 = .05$. Regarding the results, within a crisis situation high vivid content ($M = 2.86$, $SD = .89$) leads to weaker corporate credibility than a medium level of vividness content ($M = 3.45$, $SD = 1.26$) or a low level of vividness ($M = 3.75$, $SD = .79$). Figure 2 shows the mean of the corporate credibility per level of vividness and the crisis conditions.

An analysis of simple effects showed that for the 'normal' condition $F(2, 247) = 1.11$, $p = .331$ there was no significant difference between the levels of vividness $F(2, 247) = 7.48$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .06$. However, the simple effects analysis showed a significant between the specific

different levels of vividness within the crisis condition. To be more specific, there was a significant difference between high and low level of vividness on corporate credibility, but only within the crisis condition Mdif = -0.90, $p < .001$. Within a crisis situation there was an effect between the high and medium levels of vividness condition on corporate credibility, Mdif = -0.59, $p = .012$, but there was no effect between the medium and low level of vividness, Mdif = -0.31, $p = .206$ on corporate credibility.

To investigate how corporate credibility is affected when comparing a crisis condition with a 'normal' condition, again a simple effects test was conducted. When the crisis and 'normal' conditions were compared, the high level of vividness condition resulted in a difference between the two $F(1, 247) = 19.35$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .07$. However, the results did not find a difference between the crisis condition and the 'normal' condition for the medium level of vividness, $F(1, 247) = 3.62$, $p = .058$ or for the low vivid condition $F(1, 247) = .06$, $p = .457$.

Overall, the results do partially support H4b, which stated that: within a crisis situation, media content that is high in vividness leads to weaker corporate credibility than medium vivid content, which in turn leads to weaker corporate credibility than low vivid content. When comparing the high and medium level of vividness on corporate credibility in a crisis situation, a significant result was found. However, this was not the case when the medium level of vividness and the low level of vividness were compared.
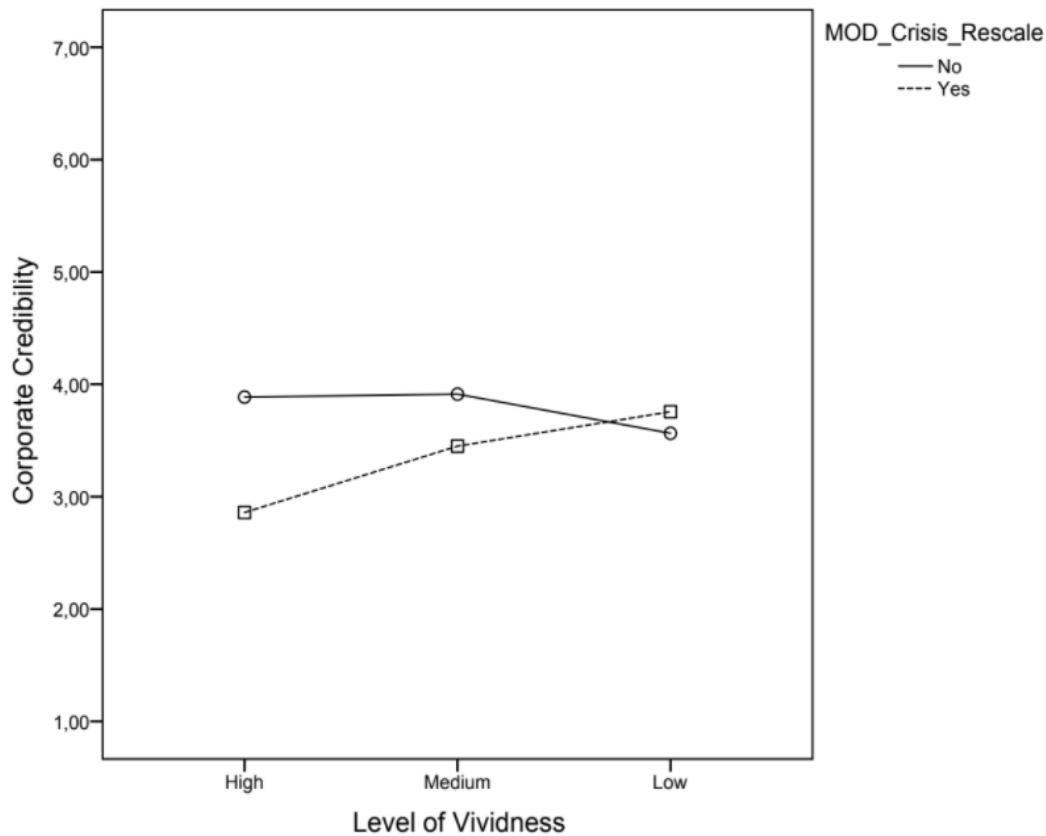
Figure 2. Interaction effect between crisis content and level of vividness on corporate credibility.

The mediating effect of corporate credibility between vividness and purchase intention

To investigate whether media content that is high in vividness leads to stronger corporate credibility which in turn leads to stronger purchase intention than medium vivid content and low vivid content (H3), a mediation analysis was performed using the procedures developed by Hayes PROCESS model 4 (2013). In this analysis, vividness was entered as a predictor of purchase intention, and corporate credibility was the mediator. This predictor was used as a dummy within the PROCESS option of sequential contrasts. The models are displayed below (Figure 3 and 4). As can be seen, a high level of vividness was not significantly related to corporate credibility as compared to the medium level of vividness. When adding the mediator to

the model, the direct effect showed no significance $(b) = .01$, $SE = .19$, $p = .994$. The indirect

effect was also not significant $b = .22$, $SE = .13$, 95% BCa CI [-0.03, 0.49], so interpreting the
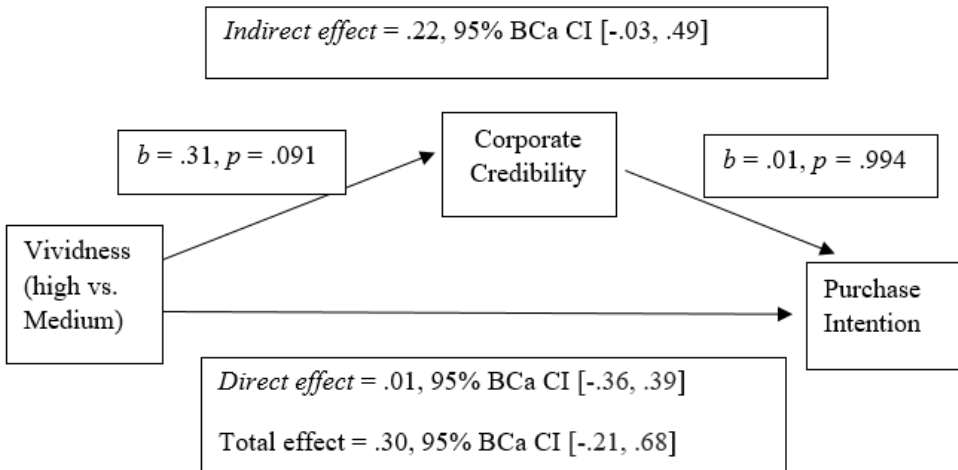
individual indirect effects is not permitted.

Figure 3. Mediation model with the mediation effect of vividness (high vs. medium) on purchase
intention with of the mediator corporate credibility.

Moreover, the medium level of vividness was not related to corporate credibility when compared

with the low level of vividness. When adding the mediator to the model, the direct effect was $b =$

$-.02$, $SE = .19$, $p = .906$. The indirect effect was not significant $b = .00$, $SE = .00$, 95% BCa CI [-

0.01, 0.03], so interpreting the individual indirect effects here is likewise not permitted.

Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no mediation effect as the first and second dummy

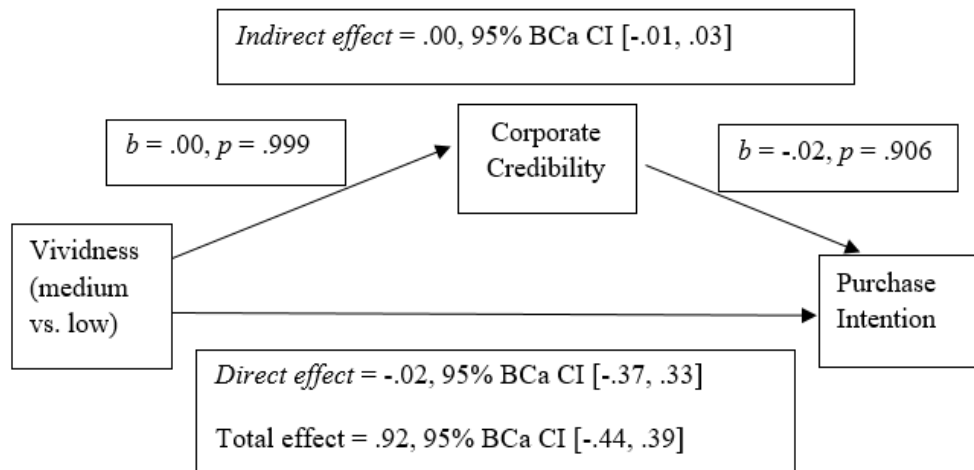variable are not significant, therefore hypothesis 3 cannot be supported.

Figure 4. Mediation model with the mediation effect of vividness (medium vs. low) on purchase intention with of the mediator corporate credibility.

Moderated-mediation effects of crisis on corporate credibility and purchase intention

To explore if within a crisis situation, the effects of the level of vividness on purchase intention are mediated by the perceived corporate credibility and to see if the mediation role of corporate credibility on the effect of vividness on purchase intention is lowered when a company faces a crisis (H5), the Hayes PROCESS model 8 (2013) was used to measure the moderated mediation effects. In this analysis, the level of vividness was the independent variable and purchase intention the outcome variable. Corporate credibility functioned as the mediator and the different crisis conditions as moderator. To perform two analyses, the variable vividness was transformed into two dummy variables where dummy 1 included $0 =$ low versus $1 =$ medium and dummy 2 contained $0 =$ medium versus $1 =$ high. To analyze the data, 5,000 bootstrapping samples and 95% bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals were used to evaluate the indirect effects. In the next paragraph, the dummy variable low versus medium will be described

and subsequently, the dummy variable medium versus high will be examined in the subsequent paragraph.

The results of the analysis (dummy variable low versus medium) showed that the model explained 2.3 percent of the variance on corporate credibility $F(3,157) = 1.05$, $p = .370$ and the other model explained 3.3 percent of the variance on purchase intention $F(4, 156) = 20.33$, $p <$ .001. Besides that, no main effects were found for the low and medium level of vividness $b =$ .40, $t(161) = 1.44$, $p = .152$, within a crisis situation ($b = -0.43$, $t(161) = -0.20$, $p = .843$) on purchase intention. There were also no main effects for the low and medium level of vividness b $= .35$, $t(161) = 1.13$, $p = .262$, within a crisis situation ($b = .19$, $t(161) = .79$, $p = .433$) on corporate credibility. Additionally, there was no interaction effect between vividness and the crisis conditions on purchase intention $b = -0.71$, $t(161) = -1.90$, $p = .060$. The indirect and direct effects can be found in Table 4.

Table 4

The Direct and Indirect Effects of vividness and purchase intention on corporate credibility.

			95% Bootstrapped Confidence Intervals			
	Estimated Mean Effect		Lower Limit		Upper Limit	
Crisis condition	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect
No Crisis	0.40	0.20	-0.15	-0.14	0.95	0.60
Crisis	-0.31	-0.18	-0.78	-0.46	0.15	0.07

The results indicate that there was no indirect effect between low and medium levels of vividness within the 'normal' condition, BCa 95% CI [-0.14, 0.60], because the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals cross zero. This indicates that within a 'normal' situation purchase intention did not differ when comparing low and medium levels of vividness because they did not differ in

the effect they had on corporate credibility. Furthermore, low and medium levels of vividness had not direct effect in the crisis condition, BCa 95% CI [-0.46, 0.07], the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals cross zero. This also indicates that within a crisis situation there was no effect of corporate credibility between the low level of vividness and the medium level of vividness on the purchase intention.

The results of the analysis (dummy variable medium versus high) showed that the model explained 12.4 percent of the variance on corporate credibility $F(3, 173) = 10.66$, $p < .001$. The analysis also showed that the model explained 37.2 percent of the variance on purchase intention $F(4, 172) = 23.77$, $p < .001$. There was no main effect between the medium and high level of vividness $b = -0.22$, $t(177) = -0.77$, $p = .440$, but there was a main effect for crisis on purchase intention $b = -0.72$, $t(177) = -2.39$, $p = .018$. Moreover, there were no main effects for low and medium level of vividness on corporate credibility $b = -0.02$, $t(177) = -0.09$, $p = .924$, and a crisis situation on corporate credibility $b = -0.46$, $t(177) = -1.56$, $p = .121$. Additionally, there was no interaction effect between vividness and the crisis conditions on purchase intention $b = 0.36$, $t(177) = 1.01$, $p = .312$. The indirect and direct effects can be found in Table 5.

Table 5

The Direct and Indirect Effects of vividness and purchase intention on corporate credibility.

| | 95% Bootstrapped Confidence Intervals | | | | | |
| | Estimated Mean Effect | | Lower Limit | | Upper Limit | |
Crisis condition	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect
No Crisis	-0.22	-0.02	-0.79	-0.38	0.35	0.33
Crisis	0.14	-0.38	-0.32	-0.73	0.60	-0.10

The results indicate that there was no indirect effect of medium and high levels of vividness within the 'normal' condition, BCa 95% CI [-0.38, 0.33]. This indicates that within a 'normal' situation the intention to purchase did not differ between the medium and the high levels of vividness because they did not differ in corporate credibility. Furthermore, an indirect effect of medium and high level of vividness in the crisis condition was found, BCa 95% CI [-0.73, -0.10]. This shows that within a crisis situation the intention to purchase did differ between the medium and high level of vividness. Therefore, that the mediation role of corporate credibility on the effect of vividness on purchase intention is lowered when a company faces a crisis (H5), can be partially supported as there was an effect of a crisis on corporate credibility and purchase intention. To be more specific, in a crisis situation, high vivid content, lowered corporate credibility and then lowered purchase intention, which is in line with H5. But this effect only occurred when the high versus the medium level of vividness was investigated and the effect was not significant when looking at the medium versus the low level of vividness.

Discussion

This thesis examined the effects of vividness and the absence or presence of a crisis in consumer-generated Facebook content on corporate credibility and purchase intention. To answer the research question, hypotheses were formulated, and an online experiment was performed. The results will be discussed in the following parts and limitations and implications will be given.

Summary of findings

We found that vividness did not generally influence purchase intention. However, a crisis did have an effect on purchase intention in that the given content in a crisis situation led to

weaker purchase intention than the content within a 'normal' situation. Vividness was found to have no effect on purchase intention within the 'normal' situation, but within the crisis situation, it did have an effect on purchase intention. When looking at corporate credibility vividness had an effect within the crisis condition, but only when comparing video and photo use and not when photo and text use were compared. The results also showed that corporate credibility did not influence purchase intention when investigating a video, a photo and a text. However, it can be concluded that a crisis had an effect on corporate credibility and purchase intention. In a crisis situation, a video lowered corporate credibility and therefore lowered purchase intention, which is in line with the last hypothesis and answers the research question. But this effect only occurred when a photo was compared to a video.

Theoretical implications

As no other study has looked at a combination of vividness and crisis, the outcome can only be partly compared with other literature. Within a crisis, the video had a more negative effect on the purchase intention than a text. This is in line with the MRT, as discussed in the theoretical framework, which explains that richer communication channels are more effective for difficult messages than leaner media channels. However, the MRT does not look at crisis and the context in which the type of content is communicated. The question arises if the 'normal' situation (in comparison with the negative crisis situation) can be based on the MRT, because the context is not part of the MRT. Therefore, this study shows that it is recommended to expand MRT in order to create a theory for the outcome of this study. This can be done by linking the richness of a medium to the context in which this richness is presented. They can include positive, neutral and negative situations as context situations, and in this way the expanded MRT can give an explanation for this new field of research. A more extensive theory might offer an

explanation of the differences between a 'normal' and a crisis situation. Another interesting finding was the effect of a crisis on corporate credibility and purchase intention, which seems a logical outcome when looking at earlier research. Due to a crisis, the reputation and credibility of a company becomes less favorable and therefore consumers will change their behavior towards the company in a negative way (Coombs, 2007). This overlaps the fact that when a person claims that the company is responsible for the crisis, the behavioral responses towards the company will be negative, the consumer develops a less favorable attitude and behavior towards the company, which results in a lower purchase intention (Weiner, 2006). Within the crisis condition, a video had a more negative effect on the perceived corporate credibility than the photo condition. Because video is a more vivid content, the effect of a crisis becomes negative and made the crisis worse than it was in the photo condition.

Although this study did not find effects of vividness on purchase intention, previous literature did. This might be because other studies used different interpretations and operationalizations of the levels of vividness. A study which used the same levels of materials as this study is Zentjes (2016). Also, other studies agreed that the high level of vividness contained multimedia presentations, audio, video and text and also integrates animated graphical images (Kujur & Singh, 2017). The contradictions were found within the medium and low levels, this needs to be taken into account when interpreting the results. To give an explanation of the different findings between the previous studies and this study on the effects of vividness on purchase intention, the literature needs to be investigated further. Several studies (e.g. Liebrecht, 2015; Zentjes, 2016; Verschueren, 2016), in comparison with this study, also found no effects of the levels of vividness on the dependent variables. There was no effect between video and photo and between photo and the text condition. For example, De Vries et al. (2012) defined a medium

vivid content as events, and images as a low level of vividness. Another study argued that the presentation of text only is a characteristic of a low level of vividness. Other studies found that a higher level of vividness lead to a more positive attitude towards the content, and a greater consistency between the attitude and the actual behavior of the consumer. But as stated in the introduction, nowadays, people can customize information and the level of vividness of content they communicate, due to that there are a lot of differences in the operationalization of vividness between studies.

When vividness with corporate credibility as a predictor of purchase intention was explored, no effects were found. There is a reason to believe that high corporate credibility is important in getting positive attitude changes towards the brand as well as influencing purchase intentions. An explanation why the outcome is contradicting with other research could be that a fictional low involvement brand was used and therefore the participants did not have very strong feelings towards the company. This could affect the way people perceived the vividness of the content and therefore the credibility and the purchase intention of the product. Which contradicts the studies from Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999), Newell (1993) and Davis (1994), who found that corporate credibility had a considerable influence on the purchase intention of a customer. They all suggested that the perceived corporate credibility had an impact on the purchase intention. An explanation why this effect could not be found in this study, might be that all the studies above did not looked at the differences in low and high involvement brands to which the post was addressed. Future research could evaluate the idea that credibility does not influence the relationship between vividness and purchase intention. It is important to investigate vividness because a conclusion can be drawn only when the fact that credibility is a predictor between vividness and purchase intention when vividness is taken into account.

Regarding the results, there was an effect when comparing the high and the medium level of vividness. During a crisis situation, the video ensured that the corporate credibility was lowered and this lead to a lower purchase intention in comparison with the photo. It is difficult to give an explanation of this, because earlier research found effects of parts of the current conceptual model, but till now no research focused on the effects between all the variables used in this model. However, we explain the outcome based on earlier studies to formulate an explanation for the results. We expected that a high vivid content would lead to a more positive attitude towards that content, and would create stronger relationships between the credibility and the intention to purchase (Coyle & Thorson, 2001). This turned out to be the case and the effect of creating stronger feelings also showed the reverse effect when a high vivid content was presented within a crisis. The high vivid content condition ensured that the crisis affected stronger feelings and made sure the crisis was more vivid than the medium or low condition.

As stated above, it is likely that a video leads to a higher perceived credibility of the company, because a video leads to positive attitudes and thus will affect the perceived corporate credibility (Lafferty & Goldsmith, 1999), which was the case for the current study. The effect of vividness was in line with the SCCT, who gives an explanation of the negative effects of a crisis on the purchase intention. When a crisis situation, as the Snickers example, occurred this changed the view of the consumers and the effect was stronger when a high vivid content is presented. The crisis turned the positive effects into negative effects, mainly when a high vivid content is shown because this creates the strongest feelings and emotions towards the company, which was also in line with the research. Consequently, the higher the level of vividness, the more negative the corporate credibility and the purchase intention within a crisis situation will be. While there was an effect between video and photo, no effect was found between photo and

text on corporate credibility and purchase intention, which is not in line with the discussed studies. This result partially contradicts with the study of Fortin and Dholakia (2005) because they showed that vivid content influenced consumer's attitude and purchase intention. But we could not find an effect of vividness (low versus medium) on corporate credibility. Therefore, the expectations regarding the variable low versus the medium level of vividness could not be met. However, when comparing the video content with the text, there was an effect of corporate credibility on purchase intention within the crisis condition, but not within the 'normal' condition. We may conclude that our operationalization of the photo was either not successful or was too close to the video and text condition to give an effect.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This study only took Facebook as a medium to investigate the effects on the dependent variables, and the outcome might have been different on other platforms. Twitter and Instagram, for example, have other characteristics in their interaction between customers and organizations (Trefzger et al., 2016). If other social media channels are taken into account a better generalization for social media as a whole can be made, which can be of added value to this field of research. While Instagram only offers pictures and videos, Twitter is more text-based and offers the option to add text, pictures, and videos, or a combination of those, in a post. Instagram can be seen as a more vivid kind of social media, because content can only be shared via a picture or video (Salomon, 2013), whereas Twitter might be perceived as a platform where conversations are more central. As Trefzger et al. (2016) state different social media platforms, create different presences of vividness. Consequently, perceived vividness on these platforms might influence the way customers see the company and how they interpret customer-generated post.

Furthermore, this study did not take the reaction of the organization into account, which might change the view of customers in a different way (Chang & Wildt, 1994). These insights can affect eWOM, corporate credibility and in the end purchase intentions. Because little was known about the effects of a crisis situation on online conversations within a Facebook environment, it can be concluded that this study is a valuable addition to existing literature. Not only because a crisis has not previously been investigated in combination with vividness, but also because eWOM plays an increasingly important role on social media and for companies who are facing a crisis it is crucial to limit any negative impact. The potentially damaging effects an online crisis might have given organizations an incentive to focus on this area. The results of this study can help organizations as they formulate strategies for dealing with crisis situations.

Additional areas which need to be investigated in the future are the ways in which the text was formulated and the video was recorded. The outcome could have differed if another kind of content was used or if the video was longer. A video which only showed the product, a video where people were talking about the product or a video that showed the product in a certain setting or context, could all have produced differing effects. Furthermore, a video in which a consumer is talking about the product (within a crisis or not) might create a more personal feeling towards the video and might cause stronger feelings towards the content and thus the product or the organization. All these different characteristics of vividness of content might have different effects and it is, therefore, recommendable to investigate these effects on social media.

As this study did not include manipulation questions about the crisis conditions, it is not possible to draw any conclusions in this area. In the future, if other researchers want to expand this study and to redo the experiment, it would be advisable to include questions about the

manipulation check. In the pretest we included questions about the manipulation of crisis, it showed that crisis was manipulated well. If those questions are included, the manipulation of the crisis can be guaranteed. Based on this limitation, further research should include questions about the perception of the independent variables and check all the manipulations of the materials.

Furthermore, it turned out that within the video condition no audio was used. This is a limitation, because in this way the manipulation of the high level of vividness was not executed as intended. As the MRT states, a video is a high level of vividness due to the moving images and the sound it provides. This might have influenced the fact that no differences between the high and medium condition were found. The results of the pretest already showed this, there was an effect between low and medium levels of vividness, but not between high and medium levels of vividness. Future research needs to make sure there is a video with sound that is working.

Follow-up studies might also focus on alternative manipulations of a crisis in Facebook messages, as this study was limited to a negative and a 'normal' situation. It would also be interesting to see if a positive situation influences the dependent variables in a different way. If content on Facebook is posted in a positive situation (and about something positive about the brand) the effects on credibility and purchase intention might be even more positive than within a neutral situation. The situation in which the content is presented can be manipulated in multiple ways, so it would be interesting to see what kind of post and level of vividness leads to which outcome.

An investigation of other behavioral variables would also be of interest, such as eWOM, to see how customers react to the post of an angry customer which is directed against a company. What effect does the reaction of other customers have? This aspect of eWOM was not taken into

account in the current study but might have an effect on the attitude of the consumers. If consumers react to a negative post, this might influence other customers more because consumer opinion is often considered more credible (Erkan & Evans, 2016). This online consumer-to-consumer eWOM might change how people view the company, which might affect the financial outcome. The reaction of the company towards the consumer's reactions might also affect the way people see the company. Follow-up studies can focus on the results of the current study with the addition of the dialogue between the company and the customer and the consumer-to-consumer eWOM, in order to find other effects of a crisis on purchase intention and corporate credibility.

Future research could focus on high and low involvement products to compare the effects of the different variables on several products. Within the current research, only Breadelicious was used to find results on purchase intention because this was a low involvement product. In comparison, De Vries et al. (2012) analyzed 355 brand posts from 11 international brands spread across six product categories, which shows that they investigated high and low involvement products. The outcome of Breadelicious can be explained by the peripheral route of the ELM. The motivation, an attractive source, and an extreme position made sure a person used this route, so people who were less interested in the topic of bread they relied more on the peripheral cues than on the quality (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). The degree of product involvement leads to a different way of processing the given information and therefore the intention to purchase the product. Because some participants are more involved regarding the product than others, this might impact the participants in the survey and in the end could affect the outcome. If the consumer did not had a strong interest in a cracker, their purchase intention might not be affected by the vividness of online content. In future research it would be advisable to not only focus on

low involvement brands and products but also on high involvement products, to investigate whether vividness has an effect on purchase intention and if high or low involvement products mediate this. In this way, the outcomes can better be generalized.

Practical implications

The outcome of this study has several implications for future research, and the practical results should be of interest to managers and professionals who are involved in the online world. The psychological insights of consumers in a theoretical and practical way were examined by evaluating the vividness of media content on Facebook when facing a crisis. An increased understanding of eWOM is of great interest to managers, because they believe that a product's success is related to the worth of mouth it generates (Chang & Wildt, 1994). Therefore, it is important for the financial situation in the end to achieve the set goals of an organization and to get a stable interaction with the customer.

The study showed that corporate credibility mediates the effect of the levels of vividness on purchase intention when facing a crisis. Moreover, this occurred when high vivid content was compared to medium vivid level content, which was partly in line with the result of Lafferty and Goldsmith (1999), who found that corporate credibility had a positive effect on purchase intention. This outcome is a valuable addition to current crisis communication strategies in social media, and with these findings in mind, organizations will be able to optimize the effects of the vividness of media content. As the Snickers example showed in the introduction, an online crisis can go viral within minutes and may have an effect on perceived credibility and the purchase of Snickers. Therefore, companies need to be aware of the fact that a crisis can spread quickly and anticipate this.

The recommendation to companies who are facing a crisis is to use the content which stimulates the senses the least. To be more precise, use a text instead of a video in order to mitigate the effect on perceived corporate credibility and purchase intention. When looking at financial outcomes it is advisable to prevent people from spreading highly vivid content online, because that will lower the credibility of the company and lead to decrease in purchasing. Although this study looked at a customer generated post and not at a company generated post concerning a crisis situation, both of these could be seen to contain negative information about an organization (on social media). Therefore, this is a valid recommendation.

Conclusion

This study is the first to combine the levels of content vividness within a crisis situation on credibility and purchase intention, and it is a valuable addition to a new field of regarding vividness and crises on social media. We found that vividness does not always influence purchase intention, which is in contrast with the MRT and other articles which looked at vividness. Within a crisis situation, videos have a negative effect on corporate credibility and therefore the impact it has on the purchase intention. To conclude, the degree of vividness of media content within a crisis situation may influence the final outcome for the company. To apply the results of this research to the Snicker example from the introduction, we can conclude that the presence of a crisis is mediated by the perceived corporate credibility and influences the intention to purchase. Because the consumer posts a video (high level of vividness) about a Snicker online, the negative effects and organizational treat would be higher than when a photo or a text about the crisis was posted.

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Appendix

Appendix I - Pretest

Consensus form/ introduction

Dear Participant,

Thank you for taking part in this survey and helping us with our master thesis! It will take you approximately 2 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 are only used for the purpose of this test.

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

Best,
Laura Brands
Jessica Knoller
Laura Redaelli

Pretest questions

Do you have a Facebook account?
O Yes
O No

How often do you use Facebook?
O Daily
O 3 to 5 times per week
O Less than 3 times per week
O Never

How many times a week do you eat chocolate?
O More than 5 times a week
O 3 to 5 times per week
O Less than 3 times
O Never
How many times a week do you eat bread (or something related) ?

O More than 5 times a week
O 3 to 5 times per week
O Less than 3 times
O Never

Perception of the crisis
How would you rate the situation for this organization?
No crisis O O O O O O O Crisis
How would you rate the impact of this situation?
No impact O O O O O O O A lot of impact

Brand involvement
Please rate the brand on the following traits:
Important O O O O O O O Unimportant
Trivial O O O O O O O Fundamental
Not needed O O O O O O O Needed
Useless O O O O O O O Useful

Perception of vividness
Please rate your perception of the Facebook post:
Abstract O O O O O O O Concrete
Boring O O O O O O O Vivid
Vague O O O O O O O Clear

The post is stimulating my senses:

Completely disagree O O O O O O O Completely agree

What is your gender?
o Male
o Female

What is your age? (Example: 25)
…

What is your nationality? (Example: Dutch)
…

What is your highest level of education? (Completed or still attending)
o Primary or basic education
o Lower vocational education (vmbo, mavo, LTS, LHNO)

o Secondary education (mulo, havo)

o Pre-university education (atheneum, gymnasium, HBS)

o Secondary vocational education (MBO)

o Higher professional education (HBO)

o University (WO)

Appendix II - Materials Pretest and main study

Company example of Breadelicious

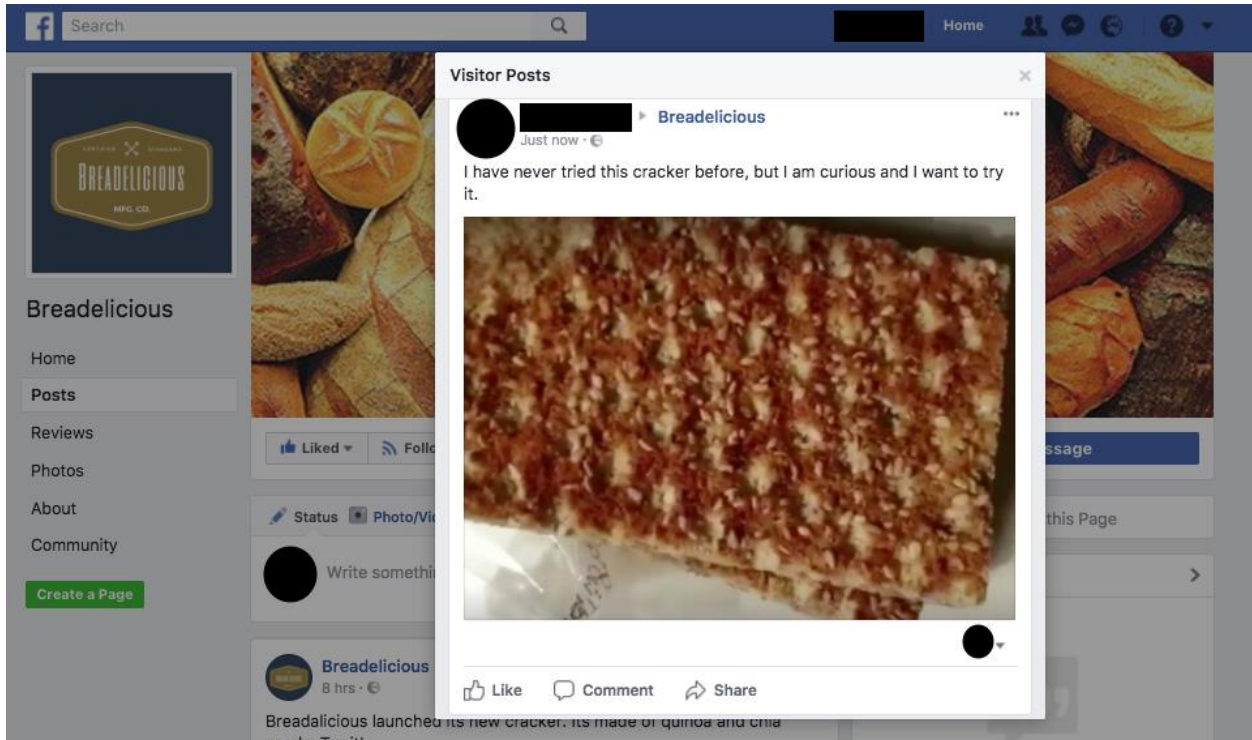*Figure A1: Low Vivid Social Media Content (Text), within a Normal Situation*

Figure A2: Medium Vivid Social Media Content (Photo), within a Normal Situation
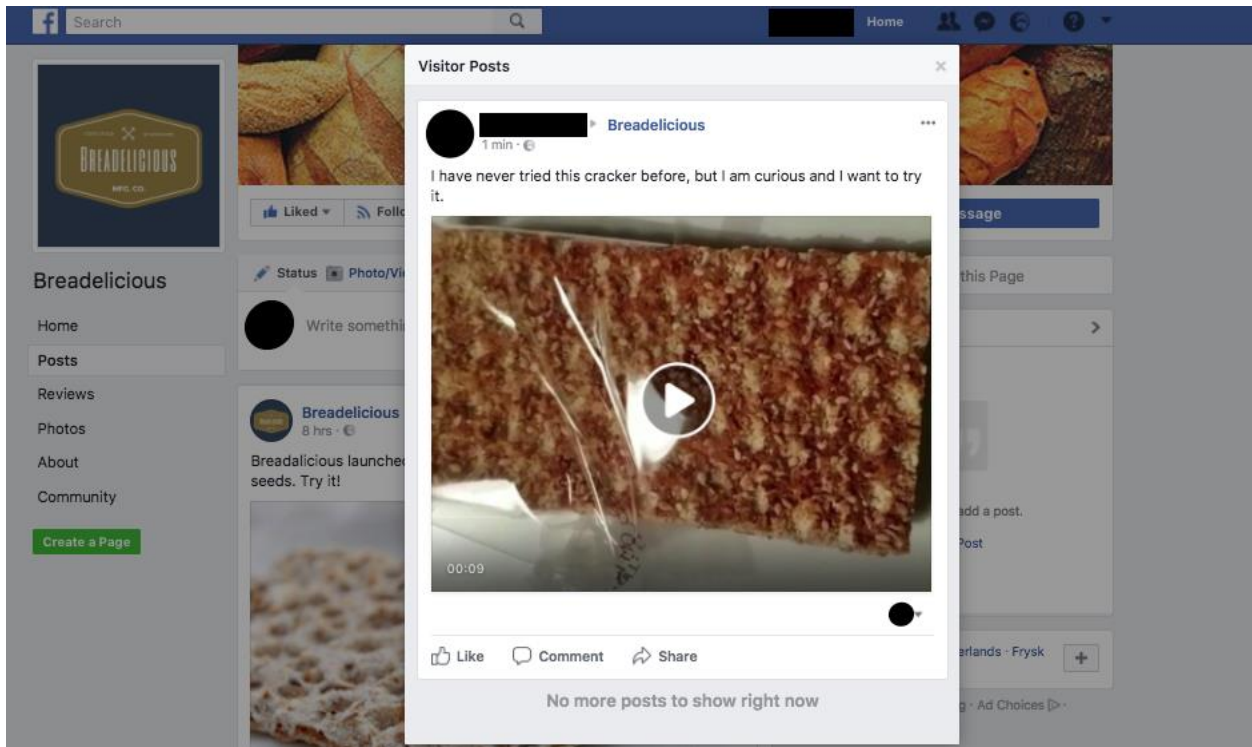

Figure A3: High Vivid Social Media Content (Video), within a Normal Situation

Figure A4: Low Vivid Social Media Content (Text), within a Crisis Situation

Figure A5: Medium Vivid Social Media Content (Photo), within a Crisis Situation

Figure A6: High Vivid Social Media Content (Video), within a Crisis Situation
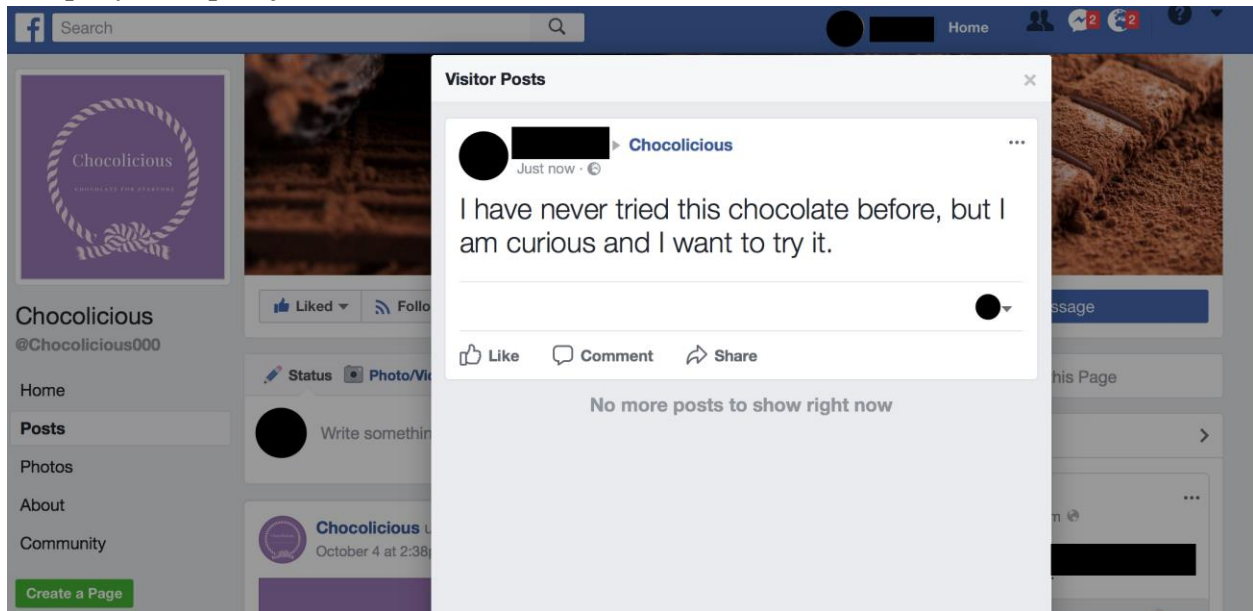
Company example of Chocolicious

Figure A1: Low Vivid Social Media Content (Text), within a Normal Situation
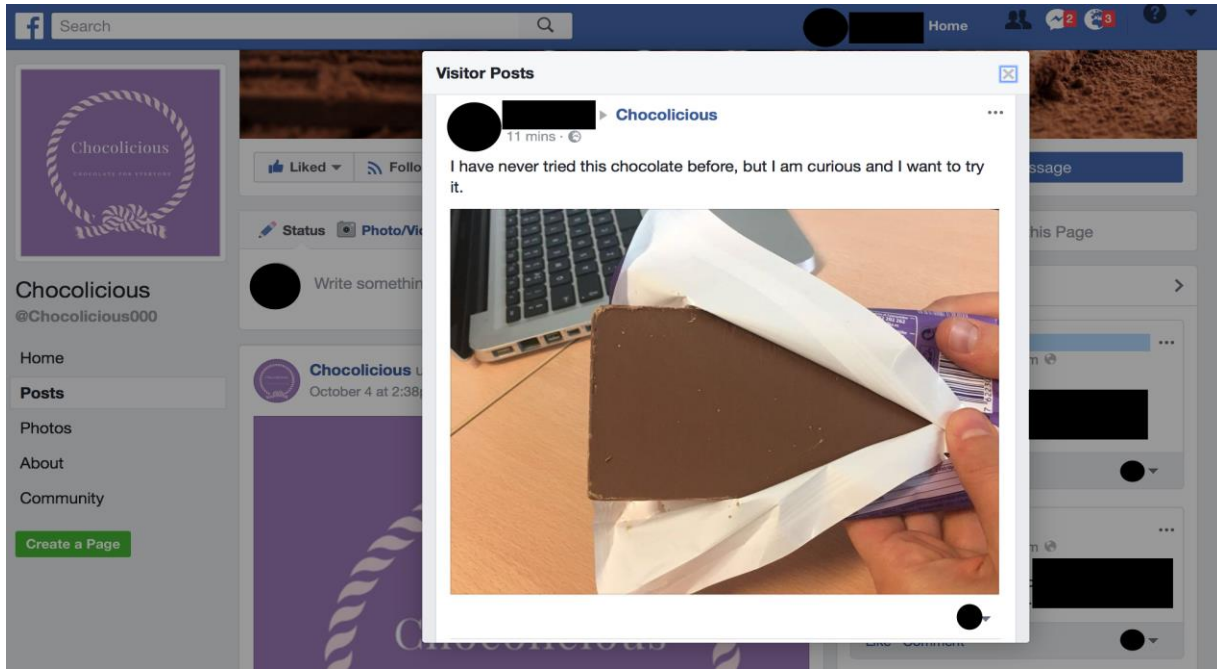
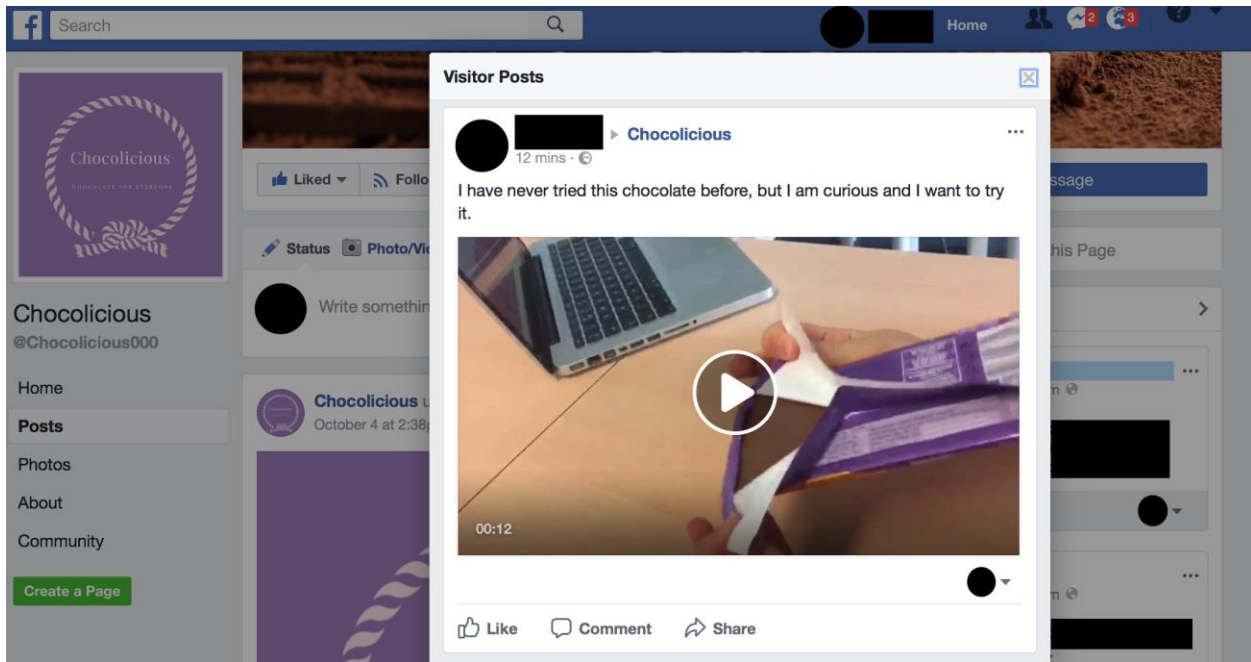*Figure A2: Medium Vivid Social Media Content (Photo), within a Normal Situation*

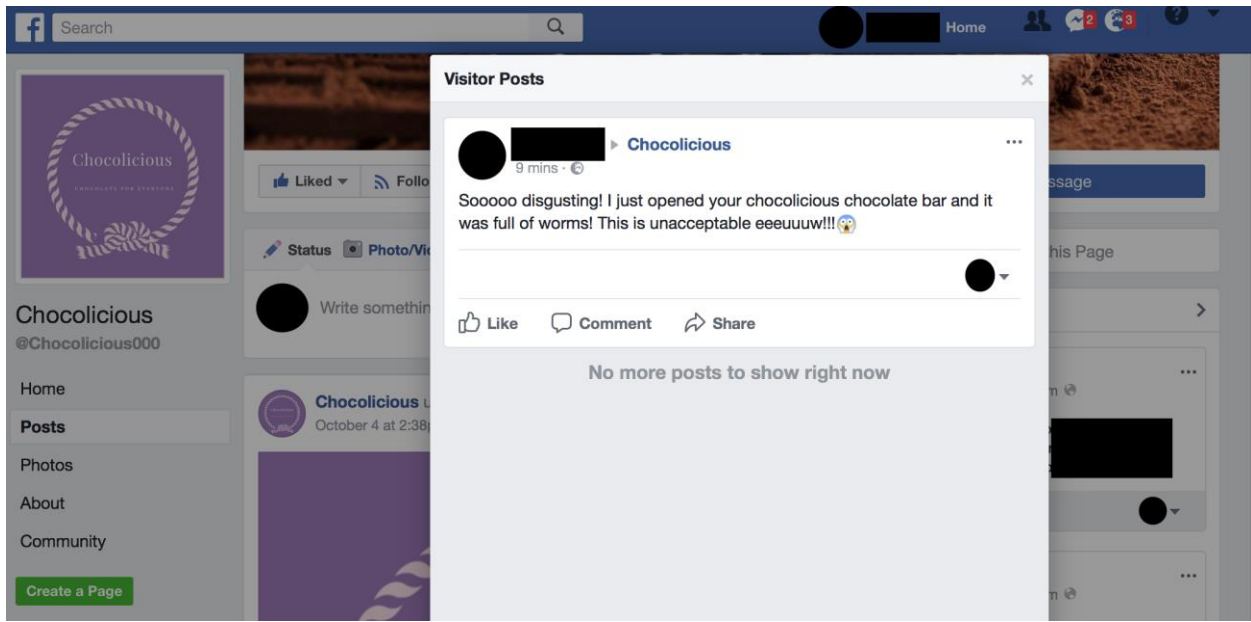*Figure A3: High Vivid Social Media Content (Video), within a Normal Situation*

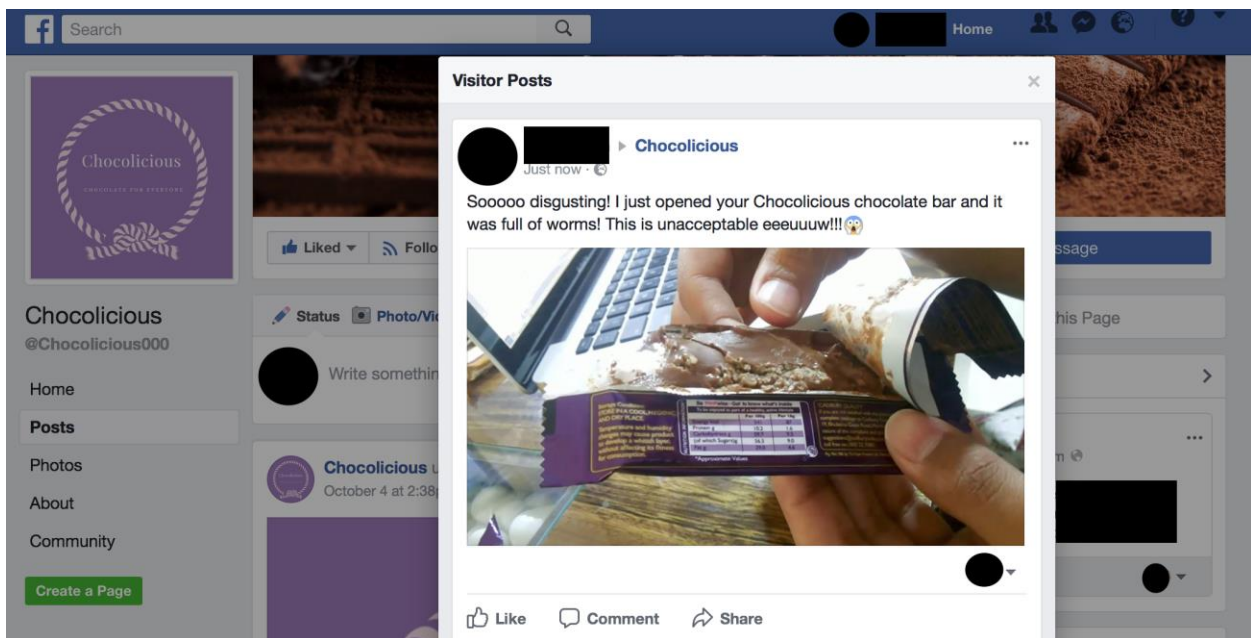*Figure A4: Low Vivid Social Media Content (Text), within a Crisis Situation*

Figure A5: Medium Vivid Social Media Content (Photo), within a Crisis Situation
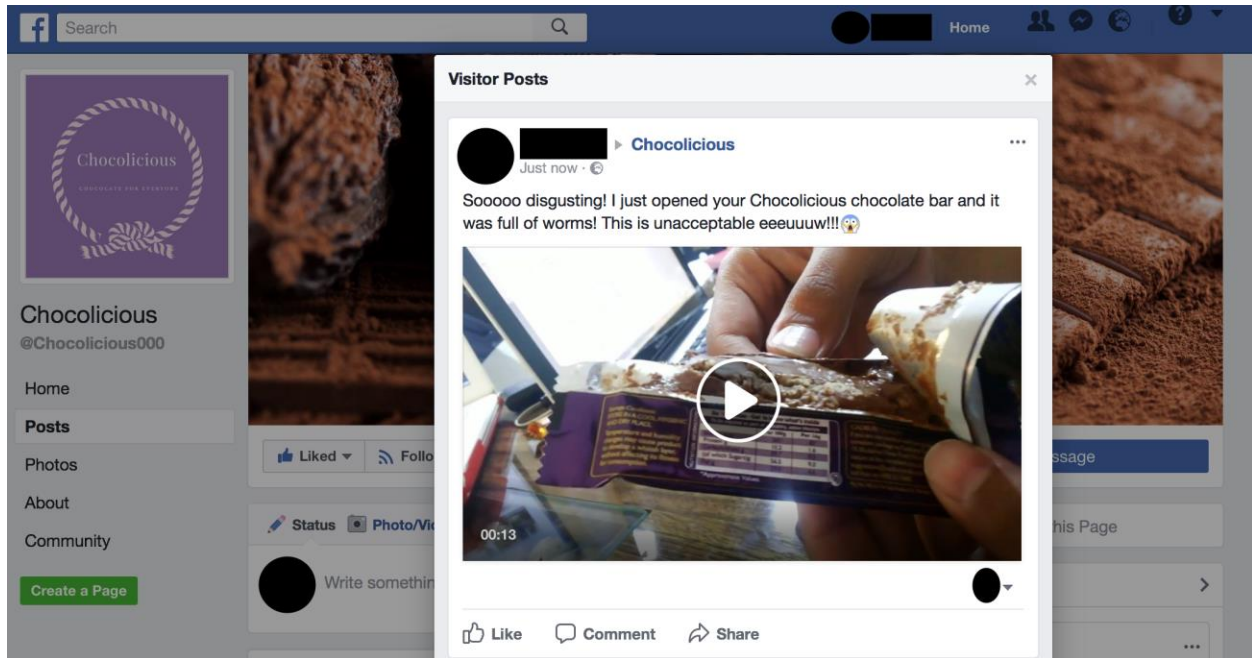
Figure A6: High Vivid Social Media Content (Video), within a Crisis Situation

Appendix III - Pretest results

Table A1

Reliability scores Brand Involvement.

	Crisis			No Crisis		
	Vividness level			Vividness level		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Breadelicious	α = .449	α = .488	α =.681	α = .890	α = .934	α = .796
Chocolicious	α = .834	α = .650	α = .934	α = .795	α = .513	α = .803

Table A2

Reliability scores Perception of Vividness.

	Crisis			No Crisis		
	Vividness level			Vividness level		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Breadelicious	$\alpha = .833$	$\alpha = .901$	$\alpha = .601$	$\alpha = .932$	$\alpha = .829$	$\alpha = .893$
Chocolicious	$\alpha = .368$	$\alpha = .347$	$\alpha = .735$	$\alpha = .607$	$\alpha = .646$	$\alpha = .684$

Table A3

Reliability scores Perception of Crisis.

	Crisis			No Crisis		
	Vividness level			Vividness level		
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High
Breadelicious	α = .77	α = .86	α = .04	α = -.44	α = .17	α = -1.42
Chocolicious	α = .89	α = .68	α = .96	α = .81	α = .71	α = .59

Appendix IV - Main study

1.Consensus form/ introduction

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

l..

Please click the arrow below to start the survey.

Thank you very much in advance for helping us,
Jessica Knöller
Laura Redaelli
Laura Brands

2. Questions Facebook account and use

Do you have a Facebook account?
O Yes
O No

How often do you use Facebook?
O More than 5 times a day
O 3 to 5 times a day
O Less than 3 times a day
O Never

3. 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.

4. Randomization of the conditions

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

Abstract content 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Concrete content

Lean content 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Rich content

Vague content 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 Clear content

Purchase intention (Moon, Chadee & Tikoo, 2008; Xia & Bechwati, 2008; Maxham, 2001)

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

1. Consider buying the product

Do not agree at all O O O O O O O Agree completely

2. Consider purchasing the product from this company

Do not agree at all O O O O O O O Agree completely

3. Consider making another purchase at the company

Do not agree at all O O O O O O O Agree completely

Corporate Credibility (Newell, 1993)

Please indicate how strongly you agree or disagree with following statements about the

company from the Facebook post above:

1. I believe this company is credible.

Strongly Disagree O O O O O O O Strongly Agree

2. I believe I can trust this company.

Strongly Disagree O O O O O O O Strongly Agree

3. I believe this company is honest.

Strongly Disagree O O O O O O O Strongly Agree

4. I believe this company has great expertise (in his product sector)

Strongly Disagree O O O O O O O Strongly Agree

Brand attitude

Please rate the **brand** on the following traits:

Bad O O O O O O O Good

Unappealing O O O O O O O Appealing

Unpleasant O O O O O O O Pleasant

Unattractive O O O O O O O Attractive

Boring O O O O O O O Interesting

Dislike O O O O O O O Like

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 O O O O O O O Agree completely

2. The company is well respected

Do not agree at all O O O O O O O Agree completely

3. The company is well thought of

Do not agree at all O O O O O O O Agree completely

4. The company has status

Do not agree at all O O O O O O O Agree completely

5. The company is reputable

Do not agree at all O O O O O O O Agree completely

Please rate the Facebook content you just saw according to the following traits:

Disgusting O O O O O O O Delightful

Please rate the credibility of the Facebook content you just saw according to the following traits:

Implausible O O O O O O O Plausible

5. Demographics

What is your gender?
o Male
o Female

What is your age? (Example: 25)

What is your nationality? (Example: Dutch)

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

O Primary or basic education

O High school diploma

O University of applied sciences/ Bachelor's degree

O Master's degree

O PhD

O Others

Appendix V - Main Study Results

A homogeneity check was tested with the Levene's test. The result of the Levene's test for purchase intention showed a significant result $F(5, 247) = 2.34$, $p < .042$ and the result of the Levene's test for corporate credibility was also significant $F(5, 247) = 3.75$, $p < .003$.Which means that the assumptions of homogeneity of variance were correct. A Chi-Square test was executed in order to see if participants actually understood what they saw within the condition. A significant difference was found for the six conditions that were set in the study, $X^2 (25) = 505.95$, $p < .001$. So the participants interpreted the version the way it was meant to be. Frequencies can be found in Table A4.

Table A4

Frequencies of Chi-Square Test.

| | Crisis | | | No crisis | | | |
| | Level of vividness | | | Level of vividness | | | |
	Low	Medium	High	Low	Medium	High	Total
Count	68	46	45	22	41	31	253
Expected count	68.0	46.0	45.0	22.0	41.0	31.0	253
% within condition type	26.9%	18.2%	17.8%	8.7%	16.2%	12.3%	100.0%
% perception condition type	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%
% of total	26.9%	18.2%	17.8%	8.7%	16.2%	12.3%	100%

Moderated mediation effect of low vs. high level of vividness

Model 8 was used to analyze the data (from dummy variable low vs. high level), with 5,000 bootstrapping samples and 95% bias-corrected and accelerated confidence intervals to evaluate

the indirect effects. The descriptive statistics of the intentions to display leadership behavior are shown in Table A5.

Table A5

The Means and Standard Deviations of Low and High levels of Vividness on Purchase Intention.

Crisis condition	Low $N = 76$		High $N = 85$	
	M	SD	M	SD
Crisis	2.94	1.30	2.45	1.26
No crisis	2.88	.97	3.48	1.56

The results of the analysis (dummy variable low vs. high level) showed that this model explained 39.3 percent of the variance, $F(3, 164) = 11.53$, $p < .001$ on corporate credibility. And the analysis showed that this model explained 62.7 percent of the variance, $F(4, 163) = 25.19$, $p < .001$ on purchase intention. There was no main effect of the low and high level of vividness ($b = .11$, $t(168) = .52$, $p = .607$), and there was no main effects for crisis ($b = -0.08$, $t(168) = -0.37$, $p = .715$) on purchase intention. Moreover, there were no main effects for low and high level of vividness ($b = .32$, $t(168) = 1.22$, $p = .223$), and crisis ($b = .19$, $t(168) = .79$, $p = .434$) on corporate credibility. Additionally, there was no interaction effect between vividness and the crisis conditions on purchase intention ($b = -0.16$, $t(168) = -0.47$, $p = .636$). The indirect and direct effects can be found in Table A6.

Table A6

The Direct and Indirect Effects of Vividness and Purchase Intention on Corporate Credibility.

| | | | 95% Bootstrapped Confidence Intervals | | | |
| | Estimated Mean Effect | | Lower Limit | | Upper Limit | |
Crisis condition	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect	Direct	Indirect
No Crisis	0.11	0.24	-0.31	-0.15	0.54	0.68
Crisis	-0.05	-0.69	-0.53	-0.98	0.44	-0.43

The results indicate that there was no indirect effect of low and high level of vividness on the 'normal' situation condition, BCa 95% CI [-0.14, 0.68] because the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals do cross zero. This indicates that within a 'normal' situation the intention to purchase did not differ between the low and the high level of vividness, because they did not differ in the corporate credibility. Furthermore, an indirect effect of low and high level of vividness in the crisis condition was found, BCa 95% CI [-0.98, -0.43] (the 95% bootstrapped confidence intervals does not cross zero). This indicates that within a crisis situation the intention to purchase did differed between the low level of vividness and the high level of vividness.