



Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

Master Thesis

Pia Kleyer

The effects of language choice and crisis response strategies in crisis messages on consumers' perceptions of organizational reputation, perceived crisis responsibility, emotionality, anger and attitudes towards crisis messages in Germany

Supervisor: Dr. Brigitte Planken

Assessor: Dr. Warda Nejjari

Date: July 22nd, 2021

Radboud University
Master International Business Communication



Abstract

The study aimed to examine effects of organizational crisis communication and language choice from a German context. Therefore, effects of crisis response strategies (diminish vs. rebuild) in crisis messages on German consumers' perceptions of organizational reputation, perceived crisis responsibility, emotionality, anger, and attitudes towards crisis messages in Germany were investigated. Additionally, the study incorporated language choice as a new factor into crisis communication research by testing potential effects of language choice (German as L1 vs. English as L2) on German consumers' perceptions of organizational reputation, perceived crisis responsibility, emotionality, anger, and attitudes towards crisis messages. In total, 115 German participants took part in the experiment for the present study (all German native speakers). The main results revealed that, overall, the combination of crisis response strategies and language choice of crisis messages rather than each of the two independent variables alone yielded nuanced effects on German consumers in terms of their evaluation of an organizational reputation, blame and crisis responsibility for the crisis event. Thus, consumers only perceived the reputation of the organization to be higher when the crisis messages were written in English and included a diminish crisis response strategy. Similarly, consumers attributed more organizational blame to the crisis event in case of English crisis messages that made use of a rebuild crisis response strategy. In contrast, consumers that were exposed to German crisis messages attributed more crisis responsibility to the organization in case of a diminish crisis response strategy. No effects of crisis response strategy and language choice could be detected for emotionality towards the crisis messages and anger. Only for attitudes towards crisis messages the crisis response strategy alone seemed to have an effect since consumers showed more positive attitudes towards a rebuild crisis response strategy, regardless of the language choice. The rather nuanced findings with regard to crisis response strategies and language choice of crisis messages highlight the importance of additional research that further investigates effects of diminish and rebuild crisis response strategies for an accidental crisis cluster on the above-mentioned variables and potential effects of language choice in crisis messages by e.g. comparing different language proficiency groups with each other.

Keywords: *Crisis communication, crisis response strategies, foreign language effect, consumer perceptions, Germany*



Introduction

Crises are described as “unpredictable events that can disrupt organizations, threaten to damage organizational reputations” (Coombs & Holladay, 1996, p. 166). Not only do crises damage organizational reputations, they can also affect relationships with existing and potential stakeholders. Stakeholders are defined as any group who can affect or is affected by the accomplishments of an organization’s objectives (Freeman, 1984). Consumers are among the most important stakeholder group for an organization as they are the primary generators of revenue for business (Walsh, Mitchell, Jackson & Beatty, 2009). By deciding to buy, or refusing to buy a particular product, or from particular stores or organizations, consumers are able to influence organizational business performances (Collins, Steg & Koning, 2007). Additionally, they can impact each other through word of mouth regarding the organization’s reputation (Walsh et al., 2009). To keep consumers well-informed and minimize negative outcomes, such as reputation damage, an effective crisis communication is therefore essential (Coombs, 2007).

Prior research suggested that an organization’s choice of crisis response strategy affects consumers’ perceptions of an organization’s post-crisis communication and their behavioural intentions regarding future interactions with the organization (Claeys, Cauberghe & Vyncke, 2010; Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2005). Initially, consumers will attribute responsibility for a crisis on the basis of its nature. However, the organization’s crisis response might also impact the extent to which consumers attribute organizational responsibility of a crisis event (Brown & White, 2011). Depending on the perceived crisis responsibility, an organization’s reputation will be affected as well, which in turn could indirectly guide consumers’ attitudes and behavioural intentions towards the organization (Coombs, 2007; Coombs & Holladay, 2005; McDonald, Sparks & Glendon, 2010; Park & Reber, 2011). Despite the increased expansion of organizations to multiple markets, there has been limited research to date investigating effects of different crisis communication strategies on consumers’ perceptions and behavioural intentions outside of an US context and with a European focus (Coombs & Laufer, 2018). While some studies focused on cross-cultural comparisons regarding possible crisis communication effects on consumers in different countries, no study has specifically examined effects of different crisis communication strategies in Germany (An, Park, Cho, & Berger, 2010, US South Korea comparison; Luoma-aho, Moreno, & Verhoeven, 2017, Finland Spain comparison).

With operating as German MNCs like Mercedes-Benz or Volkswagen who have expanded their business globally, comes the challenge to communicate effectively with



culturally diverse consumers, which often results in choosing the company's standardized lingua franca for communicative purposes (Ehrenreich, 2010). Next to standardization, organizations can adopt to their target groups in different ways to appeal to their cultural values by e.g. employing their language in the organization's communication and business practices (Louhiala-Salminen, Charles & Kankaanranta, 2005). The use of a lingua franca in an organizational communication may have effects on consumers' perceptions (e.g. their emotions), especially when the language employed is not their first language (L1). Findings of previous studies about the perceived emotionality of messages in first and second language revealed that a person's second language (L2) is generally perceived to be less emotional than their first language (L1) (Dewaele, 2004; Puntoni, De Langhe & Van Osselaer, 2008). The use of a second or foreign language (vs. first language) can affect decision making by reducing emotional bias, which is known as the Foreign Language Effect (FLE) (Circi, Gatti, Russo & Vecchi, 2021; Keysar, Hayakawa & An, 2012). Consequently, decision making based on information in the L2 is more rational compared to the L1. In the context of crisis communication, this could entail that consumer could perceive both an organization's crisis and its crisis response with more emotionality when it is presented in their L1 than when it is presented in an L2.

Considering that no studies on crisis communication have investigated effects of language choice in crisis responses in an international context, the present study aimed to investigate effects of crisis response strategy (diminish vs. rebuild) and language choice (German as L1 vs. English as L2) used in corporate crisis messages on consumers' perceived organizational reputation, perceived crisis responsibility, emotionality, anger and attitudes towards the crisis messages in Germany. Due to the lack of research into crisis communication strategy effects in Germany and the combination of diminish and rebuild crisis response strategies for an accidental crisis cluster, the present study contributes to filling a gap in the literature.

Theoretical framework

1. Research on crisis response strategies

Crisis communication can influence how consumers respond to and interpret the organization facing a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2008). An effective communication during a crisis is essential to ensure that consumers maintain a positive perception of the organization (Coombs, 2007; McDonald, Sparks & Glendon, 2010). Coombs (2007) developed the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SSCT), which offers a framework for understanding how consumers may react to different crisis response strategies used to manage a crisis. Factors such as the initial crisis responsibility, pre-crisis history and prior relational reputation with consumers might play a role in the effectiveness of the different crisis response strategies. Furthermore, the SCCT model proposes that the choice of crisis response strategies has a direct effect on the perceived organizational reputation and perceived crisis responsibility, which in turn indirectly influences behavioural intentions and emotions of consumers. Ideally, according to the model, an organization should choose a crisis response strategy that matches the crisis type. To do this, the crisis type has to be correctly identified first to be able to select an appropriate crisis response strategy (Coombs, 2007). Coombs (2007) defines three crisis clusters that group potential organizational crisis types: the victim cluster (e.g. natural disaster), the accidental cluster (e.g. technical product error) and the preventable cluster (e.g. human-error accident). Depending on the crisis type, the perceived crisis responsibility in the eyes of the consumers can range from low (e.g. victim cluster) to high (e.g. preventable cluster). According to the SCCT, there are three primary crisis response strategies: *deny*, *diminish* and *rebuild*. A deny strategy implies that the organization maintains that there is no crisis at all or tries to attack its accuser or shift blame for the crisis away from the organization itself and should be employed for rumour and challenge crises. In the diminish strategy, organizations attempt to minimize their responsibility for a crisis by claiming they had no control over it. Diminish crisis response strategies should be used for crises with minimal attributions of responsibility (victim crisis cluster) and crises with low attributions of crisis responsibility (accidental crisis cluster). However, if the perceived crisis responsibility is low, informing and adjusting information alone may be enough to prevent reputational damage. If the perceived crisis responsibility is high, the model recommends that organizations show accountability and accept crisis responsibility in their crisis response to prevent (further) reputational damage (Coombs & Holladay, 2005). Thus, organizations are advised to make use of a rebuild strategy by either



taking full responsibility for the crisis, apologizing, or offering compensation to the stakeholders involved. In general, rebuild crisis response strategies are not only recommended for preventable crisis types (high responsibility), but also for accidental crisis types (low responsibility) (Coombs, 2007). In theory, a congruent choice of crisis response strategy with crisis type (vs. an incongruent choice) is assumed to lead to a relatively positive effect on the organizational reputation.

Prior studies investigating a crisis-strategy congruence, that is, matching the crisis response strategy to the crisis type have yielded different findings with regard to more favourable post-crisis organizational outcomes (Claeys et al., 2010; Coombs et al., 1996; Grappi & Romani, 2015; Hegner, Beldad & Kraesgenberg, 2016). The current study focused on a comparison between the diminish and rebuild crisis response strategy pertaining to a crisis from the accidental crisis cluster, namely a product recall. A deny crisis response strategy has not been incorporated in the present study as it often tries to eliminate a connection between the organization and the crisis (Coombs, 2007). Given the context of the current study, this approach is rather unlikely to succeed in a crisis involving an organization's own products. Moreover, according to SCCT guidelines a product recall (accidental crisis cluster) warrants a diminish or a rebuild crisis response strategy instead of a deny crisis response strategy (Coombs, 2007).

The SCCT's match crisis-strategy recommendations were supported by the findings of Grappi & Romani (2015). In an experimental study Italian participants were exposed to different crisis communication strategies containing either a rebuild or diminish crisis response strategy in response to a real crisis event – the Costa Concordia shipwreck of the Italian coast (preventable crisis cluster). The main purpose of the experiment was to test the mechanisms that underlie the efficacy of matching the postcrisis communication strategies to the crisis type on key consumers' psychological and behavioural outcomes. Findings of the study provided evidence that matching the strategy of rebuild to a preventable crisis cluster has positive emotional implications in terms of reducing anger and increasing sympathy. Similar positive repercussions for a matching crisis response strategy were found in a scenario-based study by Hegner et al., 2016). In their study, Dutch participants were exposed to different scenarios containing a rebuild and diminish strategy in response to two crises from the preventable crisis cluster (product harm & moral harm) to test possible effects of a congruent (i.e. using a rebuilding strategy for a preventable crisis) versus an incongruent (i.e. using a diminish strategy for a preventable crisis) crisis communication strategy on consumers' trust towards the



organization and their purchase intentions. Main findings of the study revealed that the rebuilding strategy had more positive effects on consumer's trust towards the organization, compared to the diminish strategy for both crises from a preventable crisis cluster. Thus, the findings of these two studies confirm with SCCT's recommendations in terms of a crisis-strategy congruence for crises from the preventable crisis cluster (Coombs, 2007).

In contrast, other studies have shown that rebuild (vs. diminish) crisis response strategies generally lead to more positive consumer perceptions of the organization's reputation compared to diminish strategies, regardless of an (in)congruence with the crisis type, which contradicts Coombs' recommendation regarding crisis strategy-congruence. Claeys et al. (2010), for example, examined effects of crisis type (victim, accidental, preventable) and crisis response strategy (deny, diminish, rebuild) on consumers' perceived organizational reputation. Results of the study did not find support that matching crisis types and crisis response strategies lead to a more positive perception of organizations' reputation than mismatches. Instead, the study found a main effect of crisis response strategy on organizational reputation. The reputation of the organization was significantly more positive when a rebuilding crisis response strategy was used, regardless of the crisis type.

As mentioned earlier, the crisis type evokes perceptions about crisis responsibility. In a crisis situation, consumers search for causes of events and make attributions, especially when the events are negative and unexpected (Coombs, 2007). To identify the types of crisis clusters Coombs distinguishes between two causal dimensions people might use initially when they make attributions: *external control and personal control/ locus*. External control relates to whether the cause of an event is controllable by outside factors which are beyond a person's control, whereas personal control/ locus refers to whether the cause of an event is controllable by the person causing the event (Mc Auley, Duncan & Russel, 1992). The extent to which people make judgements about these dimensions influences their feelings and behaviours towards the actors involved in the event (Weiner, 1985). Coombs based his SCCT model on Weiner's Attribution Theory and proposed that in times of crisis an organizational crisis responsibility is perceived as strongest if the external control for the crisis is low and the personal control/ locus is high (preventable crisis cluster), which in the worst-case scenario could negatively affect consumers' attitudes and behavioural intentions towards an organization (Coombs et al., 1996).

However, the explanation an organization offers in response to a particular crisis can affect consumers' attributions about the event by shaping their perceptions of the organizational



crisis responsibility. Conversely, consumers can be affected by subsequent feelings that are created by their attributions (Coombs, 2007; Weiner, 1985). With respect to crisis communication this could imply that corporate crisis responses can influence consumer's attributions in the second instance, as well as the emotions that their attributions subsequently evoke (Coombs et al., 1996).

Previous studies have examined the effects of crisis response strategy on perceived organizational crisis responsibility (Dean, 2004; Lee, 2004; Ma & Zhan, 2016). Dean (2004) investigated effects of crisis response and responsibility for the crisis on consumers' regard for the organization. In an experimental study at a University in the U.S., students were exposed to a company's response to a product harm crisis that caused death and to governments determination of the company responsibility for the event. Findings of the study suggested that organizations responding to a crisis with fairness and compassion for those affected (i.e. in the form a rebuild crisis response strategy) were more highly regarded than organizations whose responses lacked those elements. Overall, the perceived responsibility for the crisis had the greatest impact on consumer's regard to the organization. Based on attribution theory (Weiner, 1985) Coombs suggested that organizations that are seen as responsible for an event are perceived as more negative unless they accept the blame for the crisis (Coombs et al. 1996), which is in line with findings of Dean's study.

The extent to which consumers attribute responsibility for a crisis event also generates emotions which further guide and shape attitudes towards the organization and organization-consumer relationships (McDonald et al., 2010). If consumers' attributions of organizational crisis responsibility are high, stronger feelings of anger can be elicited (Weiner, 1985), which can negatively impact the relationship between an organization and its consumers. Since strong negative emotions like anger are triggered in most crisis situations (Clementson & Xie, 2020) and anger has been determined as a substantial mediator between an organizational crisis response and consumers' perception of that response, the present study decided to incorporate anger as the only emotion relevant to a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). McDonald et al. (2010) researched the amount of anger, joy and sympathy of Australian participants that were generated by a variety of crisis response strategies and the perceived level of crisis responsibility. Results of the study revealed that crisis responsibility is positively related to anger and negatively related to sympathy suggesting that negative emotions can affect the relationship between organizations and consumers, which is line with findings of other studies (An et al., 2010; Coombs & Holladay, 2005).



Next to eliciting negative or positive emotions, the perceived crisis responsibility may also impact attitudes towards the organizational crisis response strategy. A high organizational responsibility can worsen future relationships between consumers and an organization which may negatively impact consumers' behavioural intentions (An et al., 2010, Park et al., 2011). In an experimental study that investigated Hong Kong consumers' evaluation process in an airline crisis, Lee (2005) found that an organization's denial crisis response strategy made consumers form more negative impressions, while a rebuild strategy led to more positive impressions towards the organization. Hence, consumers' evaluation and attitudes could vary depending on the crisis response strategy that is being used by organizations in times of crisis. Since no prior research specifically looked into the effects of crisis response strategies (diminish vs. rebuild) on consumers' attitudes towards the crisis message in the context of Germany, specifically, the present study will add a new variable to crisis communication research.

2. *Language Choice as a potential factor in Crisis Communication*

In a scenario where individuals are faced with problems that require making decisions, they make use of several heuristics that do not necessarily follow rational principles but help to reduce the cognitive load. In this way, intuitive decision processes are reinforced allowing individuals to make fast decisions without involving a more slowly and logical reasoning. Costa, Foucart, Arnon, Aparici and Apesteguia (2015) have noted that next to employing heuristics such as the cognitive fluency afforded by a specific problem or individuals' stress levels, emotional resonance plays a significant role in the context of decision making as it refers to the emotionality that is elicited by a given problem. For example, if a problem involves life and death decisions, the emotional reaction to the problem may vary depending on whether the individuals involved in the problem are known to the participant. Problems involving a high emotional connotation are likely to elicit stronger emotional reactions and are said to be sensitive to heuristic bias and therefore reduce a more logical reasoning. However, a decrease of emotionality elicited by a specific situation may lead to a reduction of intuitive biases and a more objective decision making (Costa et al., 2015).

A study by Keysar et al. (2012) followed this reasoning and explored whether the impact of intuitive biases on decision making is reduced if a problem is presented in an individual's foreign language (FL) as compared to their first language (L1). More specifically, the researchers wanted to investigate the extent to which a foreign language is perceived as less



emotional and language effects on individual's decision-making process. Thinking in a foreign language may further activate systematic reasoning processes whereby the L1 and the FL can differently affect decision making, a phenomenon which they referred to as the Foreign Language Effect. The Foreign Language effect was tested in one of Keysar et al.'s (2012) experiments about risk seeking and risk aversion in decision making. According to the researchers, people are likely to avoid risk and choose the safest option if the decision is framed as a gain (e.g. saving 200 out of 600 lives). Reversed, if the dilemma is framed as a loss (e.g. losing 400 out of 600 lives) they are more inclined to opt for the all-or-nothing risk. It was expected that the use of a L2 reduces the impact of framing on risk preferences. Findings of the study revealed that participants' risk preferences were not affected by the framing manipulation in the foreign language because the L2 decreased the risk posed by their choices as less rationality and emotionality evoked. Moreover, it was found that more emotions were elicited by the L1 than the L2 in decision making and risk assessment and by using a foreign language the emotional response decreased (Keysar et al., 2012). Similar conclusions were drawn based on meta-analysis conducted by Circi et al. (2021) who compared 38 studies investigating the FLE in moral-decision making and 9 experimental studies with regard to risk aversion. Their findings revealed that a L2 overall led to riskier behaviour in decision making and reduced participant's overall risk aversion compared to the L1. Based on these findings, it can be assumed that an individual's second or foreign language enables a more distant stance and a more rational approach compared to a more critical and emotional approach in an L1, which may evoke different attitudes and perceptions.

While the FLE has been investigated to some extent in relation to risk assessment and moral decision making, it has rarely been investigated in the context of corporate communications. This would be relevant, as the corporation's choice for a FL (vs. own L1) could be assumed to play a potential role in communicating with international target groups. As organisations are expanding globally, they may face challenges in communicating with international consumers with potentially different language backgrounds (Coombs et al., 2018). Thus, organisations are debating what overall language strategy to adopt (standardization vs. localisation debate) in their international communication and what the effects are of employing a localization (own language) vs. standardization (FL = English) communication strategy (Louhiala-Salminen et al., 2005). Only one study has looked into the FLE in the context of corporate communication, specifically advertising, by investigating bilinguals' responses to marketing communication in L1 vs. L2 (Puntoni et al., 2008). Findings of the study confirmed



with the FLE in that marketing slogans were perceived to be more emotional by bilinguals in their L1 (Dutch) than in their L2 (English). These findings regarding the perceived emotionality of L1 messages are in line with those of a study by Dewaele (2004), in which the perception of the emotional force of swearwords and taboo words among multilinguals was examined. Results indicated that the perceived emotional force of swearwords is highest in an L1 and gradually lower in L2, which was determined among other things by the environment in which the language has been acquired and how frequently it has been used. In the context of crisis communication research this could entail that crisis messages in an L2 (vs. L1) could be perceived with less emotionality by consumers which may lead to attributing relatively less organisational responsibility for the crisis event and to more positive attitudes towards the organisation.

No studies to date have examined the effects of language choice in crisis communication, where, and the potential FLE that might present itself. In that context, the present study aims to investigate the effects of language choice in crisis messages on German consumers' perceived organisational reputation, perceived crisis responsibility, emotionality, anger and attitudes towards the crisis messages.

3. The present study

Coomb's SCCT model (2007) suggests that a crisis-strategy congruence could positively affect the reputation of an organization. While some studies have found support for his recommendation (e.g. Grappi et al., 2015; Hegner et al., 2016), other studies have found that a congruence between the crisis type (in terms of clusters) and the crisis response strategy may not yield more favourable outcomes for an organization (Claeys et al., 2010). The rather nuanced findings call for further investigations. Since none of the discussed studies gave insights into possible effects of diminish and rebuild crisis response strategies in the context of an accidental cluster, the present study aims to extend existing research into crisis communication by investigating effects of these two crisis response strategies for an accidental crisis cluster on perceived organisational reputation, perceived crisis responsibility, emotionality towards the crisis message and anger of consumers. It further incorporates a new dependent variable - attitudes towards the crisis message. It should be noted that possible effects of a deny crisis response strategy were not investigated in this study due to the nature of the crisis (product recall) and SCCT recommendations to employ either a diminish or rebuild crisis



response strategy in case of an accidental crisis. Even though, some factors of the SCCT model have been tested by previous studies, other factors might play a role as well when examining the effects of crisis response strategies (e.g. prior organisational reputation or the language choice of those strategies). Despite the fact that previous studies looked at cross-cultural differences (individualistic vs. collectivist cultures) regarding the effects of crisis response strategies (An et al., 2010; Coombs et al., 2018), language choice could play a role in how consumers perceive the organisation as well. Since research into crisis communication has been very limited regarding language choice and a more European focus (Coombs et al., 2018), this study aims to expand existing research in this area by further examining potential effects of language choice and crisis response strategy in a German context. Furthermore, the potential FLE has been rarely researched in the context of corporate communications, and not at all in relation to crisis communication.

Thus, the two research questions for the present study read:

RQ1: To what extent does the crisis response strategy (diminish vs. rebuild) used in a crisis message for an accidental crisis cluster affect German consumers' perceived organizational reputation and responsibility for the crisis, emotionality and anger and attitudes towards the crisis message?

RQ2: To what extent does the language choice (L1 vs. L2) used in a crisis message for an accidental crisis cluster affect German consumers' perceived organizational reputation and responsibility for the crisis, emotionality and anger and attitudes towards the crisis message?

In addition to the research questions, a number of hypotheses were formulated. Based on Coomb's crisis-strategy congruence and findings of Grappi et al. (2015) and Hegener et al. (2016), which confirmed that matching the crisis response strategy to the crisis type can yield positive organizational outcomes, the following hypothesis has been formulated for a crisis from the accidental crisis cluster:

Hypothesis 1: A rebuild crisis response strategy leads to a higher perceived organizational reputation than a diminish crisis response strategy.



Based on Keysar et al.'s study (2012) and Circi et al.'s study (2021), who found that individuals will be more critical and emotional when making decisions based on information in their L1 compared to in their L2, which in turn may influence their overall attitudes and perceptions differently, the following hypothesis regarding language choice in crisis communication was formulated:

Hypothesis 2: The use of a L1 in crisis messages will lead to different outcomes in terms of perceived organizational reputation and responsibility, and attitudes towards the crisis message than the use of a L2.

Based on the FLE, which was investigated by Keysar et al. (2012) and additional findings of Dewaele's (2004) and Puntoni's study (2008) who found that messages in an L1 are perceived to be more emotional than messages in an L2, the following hypothesis regarding perceived emotionality of crisis messages can be formulated:

Hypothesis 3: Crisis messages in consumers' L1 will be perceived with more emotionality than in their L2

Since consumers' perceived organizational crisis responsibility may evoke different emotions as demonstrated by McDonald et al. (2010) and crisis response messages in an L1 are more likely to be perceived as more emotional than crisis response messages in a L2 (Circi et al., 2021; Dewaele, 2004; Keysar et al., 2012; Puntoni et al., 2008), the last hypothesis for the current study reads:

Hypothesis 4: Crisis messages in consumers' L1 will be perceived with more anger than crisis messages in their L2.

Method

4. Design

The experiment was a 2 (diminish, rebuild) x 2 (German, English) between subjects design. The study aimed to examine possible effects of crisis response strategy and language choice in crisis communication on German consumers with regard to the following dependent variables: perceived organizational reputation, perceived organizational responsibility, emotionality towards the crisis message and anger, and attitude towards the crisis message.

4.1 Materials

The two independent variables in this study were the crisis response strategy used within the crisis message (*diminish, rebuild*) and the language choice (*German vs. English*) of the crisis message.

All participants were exposed to the same crisis description, presented in a fictitious article in a national German newspaper. The article, in German, consisted of description of a coffee recall that took place at a fictitious international coffee chain called Club Coffee that operates in Germany and outlined the cause and outcome of the crisis. As the researcher aimed to feature a crisis from an accidental crisis cluster, a product recall was chosen for the experiment. Despite the fictitious nature of the newspaper article, the researcher utilized a real newspaper name to ensure authenticity.

Next, respondents were presented with the message Club Coffee supposedly communicated in response to the crisis. All crisis responses were presented on the company's fictitious Facebook page, consisting of a title (e.g. "Club Coffee's Caramel Ice Latte recall statement") and a signature from Club Coffee's CEO.

The manipulations of the crisis response strategies were based on Coombs' SCCT model (2007) and were incorporated in the organizational crisis messages on Facebook. Participants were exposed to a crisis message that employed either a diminish or a rebuild crisis response strategy. A *diminish* strategy attempts to decrease an organizational crisis responsibility by minimizing the impact of the crisis, denying its intent to harm others and stating an inability to control the events that lead to the crisis (e.g. "adverse health effects were minor and temporary"; see Appendix H). A *rebuild* strategy indicates that the organization takes



full responsibility for a crisis and asks for consumers understanding or forgiveness (e.g. “we offer our sincere apologies to our customers for any inconvenience caused”; see Appendix F).

Regarding the language of the crisis messages, participants in the L1 condition were asked to read a German text, while all participants in the L2 condition were asked to read the text in English.

Pre-test

Authenticity of the crisis response message

With the help of a manipulation check it was analysed whether participants perceived the two crisis responses (diminish vs. rebuild) as equally authentic. Two items were used to measure the authenticity of the crisis messages. One item asked participants about the likelihood of coming across the same crisis responses on social media. The other item measured the organizations' reaction to the crisis by asking participants e.g. whether the organizational crisis response was comprehensible, clear or authentic. Overall, 19 German participants took part in the pre-test ($n = 19$). An independent sample t-test showed that there were no significant differences between the two crisis response strategies with regard to their perceived authenticity ($t(18) < 1, p = .680$).

Perceived differences of the crisis response strategies

The manipulation of the crisis response strategies (diminish vs. rebuild) was to some extent successful. Participants who read the rebuilding Facebook messages were more likely to perceive that the organization apologized for the problem in its crisis response and to offer compensation to victims that have suffered from the crisis, compared to those that were exposed to a diminish crisis response ($t(18) = 1.23, p < .001$ ($M_{\text{rebuild}} = 4.05, M_{\text{diminish}} = 2.13$). However, participants who read the diminish Facebook messages were not more likely to perceive the organization minimizing the impact of the problem in its crisis response as well as denying its intention to do harm to its customers, than those who read the rebuild crisis response ($t(18) = 3.82, p = .006$ ($M_{\text{rebuild}} = 2.83, M_{\text{diminish}} = 3.59$). Thus, the diminish crisis response Facebook message was adapted accordingly for the final questionnaire in that the severity of the crisis and its outcomes were further downplayed in the crisis messages.



4.2 Subjects

In total, 115 participants took part in the experiment. The nationality of the participants as well as their first language (both German) were requirements for participating in the experiment. Thus, all participants had a German nationality ($n = 115$) and were native German speakers ($n = 115$). Most of the participants were female (75,7 %, $n = 87$) and their most frequent level of education was a bachelor's degree ($n = 52$). Their mean age was 25 years ($M = 25.11$, $SD = 4.87$; range = 18-62).

Gender ($\chi^2(6) = 8.34$, $p = .214$), age ($F(3, 114) = 2.42$, $p = .069$) and education level ($\chi^2(15) = 13.49$, $p = .564$)¹ were equally distributed across the four conditions.

Participants in the L2 condition were also asked to self-assess their proficiency in English on a seven-point scale from. Their average language proficiency for participants in the L2 diminish condition ($M = 5.76$, $SD = .97$.) as well as in the L2 rebuild condition was fairly high ($M = 5.90$, $SD = .75$.). There were no significant differences in the self-assessed proficiency in English between the two L2 conditions ($t(56) = 1.49$, $p = .549$).

4.3 Instruments

The five dependent variables, perceived organizational reputation, organisational responsibility for the crisis event, emotionality towards the crisis message, anger and attitudes towards the crisis message were measured in an online questionnaire. The online questionnaire was written in respondents' L1 (German). The full questionnaire is included in Appendix J.

Perceived organizational reputation was measured on a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 'strongly disagree – strongly agree' and the following five statements: "The organization is concerned with the well-being of its public", "The organization is basically dishonest", "I do not trust the organization to tell the truth about the incident", "Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the organization says", and, "The organization is not concerned with the well-being of its public" (adopted from Van der Meer et al., 2014). The reliability of perceived organizational reputation comprising of five items was questionable: $\alpha = .63$. Even though the alpha level for perceived organizational reputation was low, composite means based

¹ The expected cell counts of primary, secondary, vocational training and doctoral degree were smaller than 5. It was beyond the scope of this thesis to perform additional statistics.



on the five items were calculated as using individual items in separate analyses was beyond the scope of this thesis.

To measure the perceived organizational responsibility for the crisis event, participants had to respond to two statements on a 7-point Likert scale: “To what degree should the organization be blamed for the crisis” (*1 = not at all, 7 = absolutely blamed*) and “How much responsibility should the organization bear” (*1 = not at all responsible, 7 = totally responsible*) (adopted from Lee, 2004). The reliability of perceived organizational responsibility comprising two items was very low: $\alpha = .05$. Therefore, perceived organizational blame and perceived organizational responsibility were included in subsequent analyses as separate variables.

Perceived emotionality of the crisis message was measured by using the following three seven-point Likert scales (*1 = completely disagree, 7 = completely agree*): “*I think this crisis response makes me emotional*”, “*The crisis response makes me emotional*”, “*The crisis response touches me*” (developed by Puntoni et al. (2008) and adapted to this multi-item scale by Speulman, 2014). The reliability of perceived emotionality of the crisis message comprising three items was questionable ($\alpha = .64$) but bordered on adequate after deleting the third statement ($\alpha = .67$). Composite means were subsequently calculated on the basis of the two remaining items.

To measure perceived anger, participants were asked to respond to the following questions on a 7-point Likert scale: “The company crisis makes me”: irritated (*1 = not at all irritated, 7 = absolutely irritated*), angry (*1 = not at all angry, 7 = absolutely angry*), aggravated (*1 = not at all aggravated, 7 = absolutely aggravated*) (adopted from An et al, 2010). The reliability of anger comprising three items bordered on acceptable ($\alpha = .69$)

To measure consumers' attitude towards the crisis message, participants had to respond to the following statements: “I support what the organization says”. “I agree with what the organization says”, “I am favourable toward what the organization says” anchored by ‘*strongly disagree-strongly agree*’ (adopted from An et al., 2010). The reliability of attitude towards the crisis message comprising of three items was excellent: $\alpha = .92$.

At the end of the questionnaire participants were asked background information about their gender, age, education level, nationality, mother tongue and language proficiency in the L2 (English). As a control check, participants had to rate their English language proficiency on a 7-point Likert scale by *very poor – excellent* followed by the statement: “Please indicate how you would assess your English for the following skills”: “Speaking”, “Writing”, “Reading” and “Listening” (adopted from Krishna & Alluhwalia, 2008). For the subsequent analysis, the three



items that measured self-assessed language proficiency in English were calculated as one composite mean.

4.4 Procedure

The participants were recruited through an online questionnaire on the platform Qualtrics. The experiment was conducted individually and there were no financial reward or incentives given, instead, the participation was voluntarily and could have been withdrawn at any time. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions namely L1 message with diminish crisis response strategy, L1 message with rebuild crisis response strategy, L2 (English) message with diminish crisis response strategy or L2 (English) message with rebuilding crisis response strategy. After being assigned to a condition, participants had to read an introductory text about the experiment in their native language, including instructions and a guarantee that participation is voluntary, and data will be dealt with confidentially and will be anonymously reported.

4.5 Statistical Treatment

To answer the research question and test the hypotheses two-way ANOVAS were carried out to investigate the effects of crisis response strategies and language choice on perceived organizational reputation, perceived crisis responsibility (blame and responsibility separately), emotionality of the crisis message, anger, and attitude towards the crisis response.

Results

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the effects of crisis response strategy (diminish vs. rebuild) and language choice (L1 vs. L2) on perceived organizational reputation, perceived organizational responsibility/ blame, perceived emotionality of the crisis message, anger and attitude towards the crisis message of German consumers.

5. Perceived organizational reputation

A two-way ANOVA was carried out with as between subject factors language (German/ English) and crisis response strategy (diminish/ rebuild) and perceived organizational reputation as the dependent variable. There were no significant main effects of language choice ($F(1, 111) = 1.45$, $p = .231$, $\eta^2 = .01$) and crisis response strategy ($F(1, 111) < 1$, $p = .453$, $\eta^2 = .00$). However, the interaction effect between language choice and crisis response strategy was statistically significant ($F(1, 111) = 6.39$, $p = .013$, $\eta^2 = .05$). To disentangle the significant interaction separate ANOVAS were carried out for the German and English crisis messages. The one-way ANOVA for the German condition only with as between subject factor crisis response strategy (diminish/ rebuild) for perceived organizational reputation showed no significant main effect of crisis response strategy ($F(1, 55) = 1.12$, $p = .294$, $\eta^2 = .02$). However, the one-way ANOVA for the English condition only with as between subject factor crisis response strategy (diminish/ rebuild) for perceived organizational reputation showed a significant main effect of crisis response strategy ($F(1, 56) = 8.84$, $p = .004$, $\eta^2 = .13$). Consumers who were exposed to the diminish crisis response strategy in English ($M = 4.93$, $SD = .90$) attributed a higher reputation to the organization, than those who were exposed to the rebuild crisis response strategy ($M = 4.37$, $SD = .49$). All means and standard deviations for perceived organizational reputation are shown in table 1.

Table 1. Means and standard deviations for perceived organisational reputation, perceived organisational blame, perceived organisational responsibility, emotionality towards the crisis message, anger, and attitudes towards the crisis message (1 = negative/low, 7 = positive/high)

	German		English	
	<i>diminish</i>	<i>rebuild</i>	<i>diminish</i>	<i>rebuild</i>
	n = 30	n = 27	n = 26	n = 32
	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M(SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>	<i>M (SD)</i>
Perceived organizational reputation	4.70 (1.26)	5.00 (.79)	4.93 (.90)	4.37 (.49)
Perceived organizational blame	5.13 (1.16)	5.00 (1.03)	4.73 (1.34)	5.72 (.68)
Perceived organizational responsibility	5.93 (1.36)	5.85 (.90)	5.58 (1.10)	3.19 (1.57)
Emotionality towards the crisis message	2.75 (1.09)	3.20 (1.17)	2.84 (1.06)	2.48 (1.25)
Anger	3.02 (1.68)	2.66 (1.26)	2.91 (1.31)	3.06 (.62)
Attitudes towards the crisis message	4.12 (1.35)	4.69 (.86)	4.26 (1.04)	4.75 (1.00)

5.1 Perceived organizational blame and organizational crisis responsibility for the crisis event

A two-way ANOVA with the same factors and perceived organizational blame as dependent variable revealed no significant main effect of language choice ($F(1, 111) < 1, p = .431, \eta^2 = .00$), but a significant main effect of crisis response strategy ($F(1, 111) = 4.55, p = .035, \eta^2 = .03$). Consumers who read a rebuild crisis response strategy ($M = 5.39, SD = .92$) attributed more blame to the organization than consumers who read the diminish crisis response strategy ($M =$



4.95, $SD = 1.25$). The significant main affect was qualified by a significant interaction effect between language choice and crisis response strategy ($F(1, 111) = 7.84, p = .006, \eta^2 = .08$). To disentangle the significant interaction separate ANOVAS were carried out for the German and English crisis response messages. The one-way ANOVA for the German condition only with as between subject factor crisis response strategy (diminish/ rebuild) for perceived organizational blame showed no significant main effect of crisis response ($F(1, 55) < 1, p = .652, \eta^2 = .00$). The one-way ANOVA for the English condition only with as between subject factor crisis response strategy (diminish/ rebuild) for perceived organizational blame showed a significant effect of crisis response ($F(1, 56) = 13.16, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$). Consumers reading the English crisis response strategy attributed more blame to the organization crisis when presented with a rebuild crisis response strategy ($M = 5.72, SD = .68$) than with a diminish crisis response strategy ($M = 4.73, SD = 1.34$). Means and standard deviations for the perceived organizational blame for the crisis event are displayed in Table 1.

Another two-way ANOVA was carried out to test whether the between subject factors language choice (German/ English) and crisis response strategy (diminish/ rebuild) had an effect on consumers' perceived organizational responsibility for the crisis event. Both language choice ($F(1, 111) = 39.62, p < .001, \eta^2 = .26$) and crisis response strategy ($F(1, 111) = 26.50, p < .001, \eta^2 = .19$) had a significant main effect on consumers' attribution of organizational responsibility. Consumers who read the German crisis response message ($M = 5.89, SD = 1.16$) perceived the organization to have more responsibility for the crisis, than those who read the English messages ($M = 4.26, SD = 1.82$). Moreover, consumers who were exposed to the diminish crisis response strategy ($M = 5.77, SD = 1.25$) attributed a higher crisis responsibility to the organization compared to consumers in the rebuild crisis response condition ($M = 4.41, SD = 1.86$). There was also a significant interaction effect between language choice and crisis response strategy ($F(1, 111) = 23.12, p < .001, \eta^2 = .17$). To disentangle the interaction separate ANOVAS were carried out for the German and English language conditions. The one-way ANOVA for the German condition showed no significant effect of crisis response ($F(1, 55) < 1, p = .794, \eta^2 = .00$). The one-way ANOVA for the English condition only, however, did show a significant main effect of crisis response ($F(1, 56) = 42.77, p < .001, \eta^2 = .43$). Consumers who were exposed to the diminish crisis response strategy perceived the organization to be more responsible for the crisis ($M = 5.58, SD = 1.10$, than consumers who read a rebuild crisis response strategy ($M = 3.19, SD = 1.57$). All means and standard deviations for perceived organizational responsibility for the crisis event are illustrated in Table 1.



5.2 Emotionality towards the crisis message and anger

A two-way ANOVA with as between subject factors language (German/ English) and crisis response strategy (diminish/rebuild) was conducted to investigate whether these two had an effect on consumers' emotionality towards the crisis messages. Both language choice ($F(1, 111) = 2.07, p = .152, \eta^2 = .01$) and crisis response strategy ($F(1, 111) < 1, p = .832, \eta^2 = .00$) had no main effect on consumers' emotionality towards the crisis message. The interaction effect between language and crisis response strategy was also non-significant ($F(1, 111) = 3.55, p = .062, \eta^2 = .03$). All means and standard deviations for emotionality towards the crisis message are shown in Table 1.

Another two-way ANOVA was carried out to examine to what extent language (German/ English) and the crisis response strategy (diminish/ rebuild) had an effect on anger of consumers. Language of the crisis messages ($F(1, 111) < 1, p = .552, \eta^2 = .00$) as well as the crisis response strategy ($F(1, 111) < 1, p = .670, \eta^2 = .00$) had no significant main effect on the degree of anger consumers perceived. Furthermore, no significant interaction effect between language and crisis response strategy could be found ($F(1, 111) = 1.13, p = .288, \eta^2 = .01$). Means and standard deviations for anger are displayed in table 1.

5.3 Attitude towards the crisis response message

A final two-way ANOVA was conducted with as between-subject factors language (German/ English) and crisis response strategy (diminish/ rebuild) to analyse whether language of the crisis message and the crisis response had an effect on consumers' attitude towards the crisis message. There was no significant main effect of language choice on consumer's attitudes towards the crisis message ($F(1, 111) < 1, p = .615, \eta^2 = .02$). But the crisis response strategy did have a significant main effect on consumers' attitudes towards the crisis message ($F(1, 111) = 6.64, p = .011, \eta^2 = .05$). Consumers that were exposed to a rebuild crisis response strategy ($M = 4.72, SD = .93$) had a more positive attitude towards the crisis message compared to consumers who read the diminish crisis response strategy ($M = 4.19, SD = 1.21$). No interaction effect between language and crisis response strategy could be detected ($F(1, 111) < 1, p = .829, \eta^2 = .00$). All means and standard deviations for attitude towards the crisis message are summarized in table 1.

Conclusion and Discussion

The purpose of the present study was on the one hand to further shed light on the effects of crisis response strategies (diminish and rebuild), specifically in the context of a crisis from the accidental crisis cluster on German consumers' perceived organizational reputation and crisis responsibility, emotionality towards the crisis message, anger, and attitudes towards the crisis message (RQ1). On the other hand, this study incorporated a new factor into existing crisis communication research by investigating to what extent the language choice in crisis communication messages impacted German consumers' perceived organizational reputation and crisis responsibility, emotionality towards the crisis message, anger and attitudes towards the crisis message (RQ2). Overall, for both crisis response strategy and language choice in the crisis messages limited effects on the above listed dependent variables were detected. Despite the non-significant main effect of crisis response strategy on perceived organizational reputation, a significant cross-over interaction between language choice and crisis response strategy overruled the non-significant main effect of crisis response strategy in that for crisis messages in English (L2) a diminish crisis response strategy led a higher perceived organizational reputation than a rebuild crisis response strategy. Interestingly, the crisis response strategy as well as the language choice of crisis messages did not affect crisis messages that were written in German (L1).

Similarly, both independent variables seemed to influence consumers' attribution of blame and crisis responsibility as additional significant interaction effects for crisis response strategy and language choice of crisis messages pointed out. In fact, a rebuild crisis response strategy led to a higher attribution of blame in English crisis messages compared to a diminish crisis response strategy. This effect was not found for consumers reading the German crisis messages. Moreover, results of the effects on crisis response strategy and language choice on consumer's attribution of crisis responsibility revealed a second significant interaction effect in which the crisis response strategy in combination with the language choice of crisis messages had an opposite effect on consumers' attribution of crisis responsibility than on their attributions of blame for the crisis. Thus, a diminish crisis response strategy led to higher attributions of organizational crisis responsibility in German crisis messages than rebuild crisis response strategies. Reversed, this effect could not be discovered for consumers reading English crisis messages.



With regard to the other dependent variables emotionality towards the crisis message and anger no significant main effects were found for crisis response strategy and language choice of the crisis messages for a crisis from the accidental crisis cluster. In other words, diminish and rebuild crisis response strategies and the language chosen for crisis messages (German as L1 vs. English as L2) did not yield different effects on emotionality towards the crisis message and anger.

However, a significant main effect was detected for crisis response strategies on attitudes towards the crisis message. Hence, a rebuild crisis response strategy seemed to have more positive outcomes than a diminish crisis response strategy on consumers' attitudes towards the crisis message. The language of the crisis message did not reveal significant main effects on consumer's attitude towards the crisis message indicating that the type of language choice (German as L1 vs. English as L2) did not impact consumer's attitudes towards crisis messages.

Overall, it can be concluded that the effects of crisis response strategy and language choice were rather nuanced. Specifically, the combination of the two independent variables yielded different effects on perceived organizational reputation, blame and responsibility. Thus, crisis response strategies had an effect to some extent on organizational reputation, perceived organizational blame and organizational crisis responsibility, and attitudes, but not on emotionality towards the crisis message and anger. Additionally, the language choice of the crisis messages also revealed an effect to some extent, namely on reputation, perceived organizational blame and responsibility, but not on emotionality towards the crisis message, anger, and attitudes towards the crisis message.

6. The effect of crisis response strategies on perceived organizational reputation

Hypothesis 1 stated that for a crisis pertaining from an accidental crisis cluster a rebuild crisis response strategy would lead to a higher perceived organizational reputation than a diminish crisis response strategy. Hypothesis 1 was not supported as a diminish crisis response strategy led to a higher perceived organizational reputation than a rebuild crisis response strategy. This effect, however, was only visible for English crisis messages, not for German crisis messages. Thus, this finding in terms of the effects of crisis response strategies imply that a rebuild crisis response strategy does not necessarily lead to a more favourable organizational reputation than diminish crisis response strategies which contradicts with results of Claeys et al's study (2010).



In their study about the effects of crisis types and crisis response strategies on perceived organizational reputation, the researchers found that a rebuild crisis response had the most positive effect on participants' perceived organizational reputation. Taken into consideration that the present study followed Coombs' recommendations of employing crisis response strategies that match the crisis type (Coombs, 2007) and the fact that only one crisis response strategy yielded a higher perceived organizational reputation further offers an interesting finding. Thus, the present demonstrated that a match strategy congruence may not be a guarantee for more positive organizational outcomes in times of crisis which is not in line with conclusions from earlier studies (Grappi & Romani, 2015; Hegner et al., 2016).

Additionally, previous research has demonstrated that incorporating both compensations and apologies in a rebuild crisis response strategy as recommended by Coombs (2007) may not yield more favourable organizational evaluations since consumers are more likely to positively evaluate an organization that employs expressions of concerns in their crisis communication than offering compensations to the victims involved (Kiambi & Shafer, 2016). The fact that rebuild crisis response strategies in the present study displayed both a compensation and an apology might negatively affected consumers reputation ratings, which is why they may have attributed a higher organizational reputation in the case of a diminish crisis response strategy.

6.1 The effects of language choice on perceived organizational reputation and organizational responsibility, perceived organizational blame, and attitudes towards the crisis messages

It was predicted that crisis messages in consumers L1 (German) would lead to different outcomes in terms of organizational reputation, perceived crisis responsibility and blame as well as attitudes towards the crisis messages than in their L2 (English) (H2).

Despite the overall non-significant main effects for language choice (German vs. English) on perceived organizational reputation, an interaction effect was found between the language choice and crisis response strategies (as already discussed under section 6.1). Consumers who were exposed to an English crisis message perceived the organizational reputation as higher when a diminish crisis response strategy was used than when a rebuild crisis response strategy was utilized. This effect was not found for respondents who were presented with German crisis messages. While there were different outcomes with regard to crisis messages in L1 vs. L2 (H2 partially supported), the actual findings were rather



unexpected. Based on findings of studies by Circi et al. (2021) and Keysar et al. (2012) which pointed out that individuals are more critical in their L1 when making decisions than in their L2, it was assumed that in the context of crisis communication respondents would follow a more critical approach when evaluating an organizational crisis in their L1 than in their L2. However, findings of the present study suggested the opposite. Hence, it is possible that the combination of using a L2 in crisis messages and employing a diminish crisis response strategy for an accidental crisis cluster might favour an organizations' post-crisis reputation. Nevertheless, future research has to investigate why this is the case.

Similar unexpected findings were detected for perceived organizational blame as respondents in crisis messages in the L2 attributed more organizational blame when a rebuild crisis response strategy was utilized, while no effects could be determined for crisis messages in the L1. Recurrently, there were different outcomes between crisis messages in L1 compared to crisis messages in L2, but these outcomes did not confirm to conclusions drawn from previous research (Circi et al., 2021; Keysar et al., 2012). Contrary than assumed, respondents did not attribute more blame to crisis messages in their L1 indicating that a L1 may not enable a more critical stance in decision making than a L2. Future research is yet needed to determine why respondents may attribute more organizational blame to crisis messages written in their L2 compared to those in their L1. Interestingly, the findings of the present study with respect to perceived organizational crisis responsibility were in line with what has been suggested by earlier studies (Circi et al. (2021) and Keysar et al. (2012) (H2 supported). Thus, respondents attributed more organizational crisis responsibility to crisis messages that were written in their L1 and made use of diminish crisis response strategies than those written in the L2. The supposition that consumers will have a more critical and emotional approach in their decision-making process in an L1, which in turn may guide their perceptions and attitudes by e.g. attributing a higher organizational crisis responsibility is thereby supported (Circi et al., 2021; Keysar et al., 2012).

In consideration of the Foreign Language effect and potential differences between the effects of crisis messages in an L1 compared to crisis messages in L2 (Keysar et al., 2012), it was further hypothesized that consumers will have different attitudes towards the crisis messages when these are presented in their L1 (H2). Findings of the present study regarding the effects of language choice on attitudes towards the crisis message did not coincide with the hypothesis, because the language choice of the crisis messages proved to have no significant influence on consumers' attitudes towards the crisis message. The non-significant main effect



of language choice suggests that there is no perceived difference between an L1 vs. an L2 with respect to attitudes towards the crisis message. While this finding was rather unexpected it could be explained by the high self-assessed L2 language proficiency (English) indicating that the language of the crisis message alone does not impact attitudes towards crisis messages. The significant main effect of crisis response strategy on attitudes towards the crisis message may further support this assumption. Regardless of the language choice in the crisis messages, participants had more positive attitudes towards a rebuild crisis response which goes in line with findings of previous studies (Lee, 2005). In his study with Hong Kong consumers, Lee found that overall a rebuild crisis response strategy was perceived as the most positive crisis response strategy by consumers.

While the type of crisis response strategy might have affected consumers' attitudes towards the crisis message, the foreign language effect may have taken off in case of a higher proficiency in the L2 resulting in an equal perception of L1 and L2 crisis messages (Čavar & Tytus, 2018), which is further illustrated through the rather equal mean values for attitude towards the crisis message in both language conditions.

6.2 The effects of language choice on consumers' emotionality towards the crisis message and anger

Hypothesis 3 and 4 stated that consumers will perceive crisis messages in their L1 (German) with more emotionality and anger than crisis messages in their L2 (English). Both hypotheses were rejected as the language choice of the crisis messages had no effect on the perceived emotionality towards the crisis message and anger of consumers. These findings are not in line with those of previous studies about perceived emotionality of (crisis) messages which demonstrated that message in L1 evoke higher perceived emotionality than messages in an L2 (Dewaele, 2004; Puntoni et al., 2008). In his study about the perception of emotional force of swearwords and taboo words among multilinguals, Dewaele (2004) found that swearwords in participants L1 were perceived with a higher emotional force than those in their L2. Similar conclusions were drawn by Puntoni et al. (2008) who illustrated that marketing slogans in a L1 were perceived to be more emotional in respondents' first language than in their L2.

A possible factor that could explain the rather unexpected finding regarding language choice on emotionality towards the crisis messages is the rather high L2 proficiency of the participants which may have eliminated the FLE. Research has demonstrated that a FLE may



diminish in case of a high L2 proficiency, which in turn could lead to a decrease in the degree of emotionality towards the crisis messages (Čavar & Tytus, 2018; Degner, Doycheva, & Ventura, 2012). In their experiment with German and French bilinguals Degner et al. (2012) found that participants were able to capture emotional connotations in their L2 if their proficiency was equivalently high to their L1. Factors such as participants high level of immersion and frequent use of L2 played a role as well. Therefore, it is likely that a high immersion in an L2 impacts perceptions of that language and may become equivalent to the L1 with respect to emotional connotations. Similar results regarding a potential elimination of a FLE for a high L2 proficiency were illustrated in Čavar et al.'s (2018) study with German and Croatian bilinguals. Participants responded in the same way in both language conditions and evaluated the moral scenarios similarly in case of a high L2 language proficiency. Consequently, judging moral dilemmas (e.g. a crisis) and decision making in a foreign language do not induce utilitarian responses due to an emotional distance to that language, but rather omit the FLE and reduce an utilitarian approach in decision making processes in case of a higher L2 proficiency. Thus, in the context of the present study it is likely that the high proficiency in the L2 may have had the same effect and evoked similar reactions regarding emotionality towards the crisis messages as respondents' L1.

Additionally, the absence of the FLE occurrence and the non-significant effect of language choice on anger and emotionality towards the crisis message could also be explained by the non-severe nature of the crisis (accidental crisis cluster) rather than differences between perceived emotionality and anger towards L1 and L2 crisis messages.

6.3. Limitations

This study is subject to some limitations. Firstly, the reliability of the scales used for perceived organizational reputation, perceived organizational responsibility, measured by Cronbach's alpha, were questionable. Moreover, respondents seemed to regard responsibility and blame as two different concepts and not to be part of the same scale. Hence, findings regarding perceived organizational blame and perceived crisis responsibility need to be treated with caution. Additionally, the rather low Cronbach's alpha for the other dependent variables perceived reputation and emotionality towards the crisis messages could have possibly affected the accuracy of the results as well.



Secondly, another potential limitation concerned the measurement of organizational reputation in the present study. Organizational reputation was measured by asking respondents to evaluate the organizational crisis communication messages. However, it should be noted that reputation is a multidimensional construct that can be evaluated differently by different groups of stakeholders in times of crisis and is influenced by various organizational characteristics such as quality of products and services, open and transparent policies and contribution to people, the environment and society (Dowling, 2016). Therefore, the measurement of organizational reputation may not have been extensive enough not only with regard to different stakeholder groups, but also in terms of organizational characteristics.

Thirdly, both the employed organization and crisis of the present study were fictitious to ensure that respondents did not have any biased attitudes towards the organization beforehand, which is why prior reputation could not have been measured in the present study. Incorporating prior organizational reputation would have been a useful factor to include to test whether crisis response strategies could have influenced the organizational reputation after the crisis.

Finally, anger was the only emotion that was investigated in the present study in relation to consumers' perceptions of crisis response strategies. While anger is considered as one of the most experienced emotions during a crisis, crisis response strategies may not only trigger negative, but also positive emotions such as sympathy (Jin, 2014). Examining both positive and negative emotions that are provoked during a crisis and through specific crisis response strategies may provide more insights on how to communicate effectively with consumers in times of crisis.

6.4 Suggestions for further research

As the current study only employed a coffee recall as a crisis from the accidental crisis cluster, future studies investigating the effects of language choice in crisis messages may opt for varying degrees of crisis severity to examine if a FLE and anger are provoked through different crisis types. Most importantly, future research should opt for a comparison between two different consumer groups that are not equally proficient in English (L2) to determine potential effects and differences with regard to language choice in crisis messages. Hence, it is possible that the FLE may occur in case of a lower L2 proficiency, which consequently might affect attitudes and emotions towards crisis messages. Incorporating different L2 proficiency levels as a new factor into crisis communication research could not only expand existing research into



FLE, but also could greatly contribute to existing knowledge of international crisis communication research.

Since attitudes towards the crisis message was added as a new variable into crisis communication research more research with different crisis cluster and crisis response strategies is needed to examine consumer's attitudes towards crisis messages to a greater extent.

6.5 Practical Implications

This study has shown that a match-crisis strategy congruence does not necessarily yield more favourable organizational outcomes in times of crisis since other factors such as the language chosen for crisis messages also impacts the extent to which organizations are evaluated by its consumers. If organizations in Germany that operate internationally, are experiencing an accidental crisis in the form of a product recall, it is crucial to take into consideration that a combination of both the language chosen for crisis messages (L1 vs. L2 of consumers) as well as the employed crisis response strategy (diminish vs. rebuild) could affect how German consumers evaluate the reputation of an organization and its responsibility and blame for the crisis event. Furthermore, based on the results of this study German companies operating in multiple countries do not necessarily need to adapt their crisis communication to their target group by e.g. employing their local language for organizational purposes. However, the choice of language for communicative purposes may depend on consumers language proficiency in a L2 and therefore should be taken into consideration by organization in the process of implementing organizational crisis messages.



References

- An, S. K., Park, D.J., Cho, S., & Berger, B. (2010). A cross-cultural study of effective organizational crisis response strategy in the United States and South Korea. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 4(4), 225-243. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2010.515543>
- Brown, K.A., & White, C.L. (2011). Organization-public relationships and crisis response strategies: Impact on attribution of responsibility. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 23(1), 75-92. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2010.504792>
- Čavar, F., & Tytus, A. E. (2018). Moral judgement and foreign language effect: When the foreign language becomes the second language. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 39(1), 17-28. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434632.2017.1304397>
- Circi, R., Gatti, D., Russo, V., & Vecchi, T. (2021). The foreign language effect on decision-making: A meta-analysis. *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*. <https://doi.org/10.3758/s13423-020-01871-z>
- Claeys, A. S., Cauberghe, V., & Vyncke, P. (2010). Restoring reputations in times of crisis: An experimental study of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory and the moderating effects of locus of control. *Public Relations Review*, 36(3), 256-262. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.05.004>
- Clementson, D.E., & Tong Xie. (2020). Narrative storytelling and anger in crisis communication. *Communication Research Reports*, 37(4), 212-221. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08824096.2020.1811660>
- Collins, C.M., Steg, L., & Koning, M.A.S. (2007). Customers' values, beliefs on sustainable corporate performance, and buying behavior. *Psychology & Marketing*, 24(6), 555-577. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mar.20173>



- Coombs, W. T. (2007). Protecting organization reputations during a crisis: The development and application of situational crisis communication theory. *Corporate Reputation Review, 10*(3), 163-176. <https://doi.org/10.1057/palgrave.crr.1550049>
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (1996). Communication and attributions in a crisis: An experimental study in crisis communication. *Journal of Public Relations Research, 8*(4), 279-295. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr0804_04
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2005). An exploratory study of stakeholder emotions: Affect and crises. *Research on Emotion in Organizations, 1*(5), 263-280.
- Coombs, W.T., & Holladay, S.J. (2007). The negative communication dynamic: Exploring the impact of stakeholder affect on behavioral intentions. *Journal of Communication Management, 11*, 300-312. doi: 10.1108/13632540710843913
- Coombs, W. T., & Holladay, S. J. (2008). Comparing apology to equivalent crisis response strategies: Clarifying apology's role and value in crisis communication. *Public Relations Review, 34*(3), 252-257. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2008.04.001>
- Coombs, W. T., & Laufer, D. (2018). Global crisis management – Current research and future directions. *Journal of International Management, 24*(3), 199-203. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.intman.2017.12.003>
- Costa, A., Foucart, A., Aparici, M., Apesteguia, J. (2015). Piensa twice: On the foreign language effect in decision making. Corrigendum. *Cognition, 142*, 362-363. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.cognition.2015.05.013>
- Dean, D.H. (2004). Consumer reaction to negative publicity: Effects of corporate reputation, response, and responsibility for a crisis event. *Journal of Business Communication, 41*(2), 192-211. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0021943603261748>
- Degner, J., Doycheva, C., & Wentura, D. (2012). It matters how much you talk: On the automaticity of affective connotations of first and second language words. *Bilingualism: Language and Cognition, 15*(1), 181-189. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1366728911000095>



- Dewaele, J. (2004). The emotional force of swearwords and taboo words in the speech of multilinguals. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 25(2), 204-222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01434630408666529>
- Dowling, R.G. (2016). Defining and measuring corporate reputations. *European Management Review*, 13, 207-223. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12081>
- Ehrenreich, S. (2010). English as a business lingua franca in a German multinational corporation: Meeting the challenge. *Journal of Business Communication*, 47(4), 408-431. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0021943610377303>
- Freeman, R.E. (1984). *Strategic management: A stakeholder approach*. Pitman: Marshfield.
- Grappi, S., & Romani, S. (2015). Company post-crisis communication strategies and the psychological mechanism underlying consumer reactions. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 27(1), 22-45. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2014.924839>
- Hegner, S.M., Bellas, A.D., & Kraesgenberg, A.L. (2016). The impact of crisis response strategy, crisis type and corporate social responsibility on post-crisis communication trust and purchase intention. *Corporate Reputation Review*, 19, 357-370. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41299-016-0007-y>
- Jin, Y. (2014). Examining publics' crisis responses according to different shades of anger and sympathy. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 26(1), 79-101. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2013.848143>
- Keysar, B., Hayakawa, S.L., & An, S.G. (2012). The foreign-language effect: Thinking in a foreign tongue reduces decision biases. *Psychological Science*, 23(6), 661-668. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0956797611432178>
- Kiambi, D., & Shafer, A. (2015). Corporate crisis communication: Examining the interplay of reputation and crisis response strategies. *Mass Communication & Society*, 19(2), 1-22. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15205436.2015.1066013>
- Krishna, A., & Ahluwalia, R. (2008). Language choice in advertising to bilinguals:



Asymmetric effects for multinationals versus local firms. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35 (4), 692-705. doi: 10.1086/592130

Lee, B.K. (2004). Audience-oriented approach to crisis communication: A study of Hong Kong consumers' evaluation of an organizational crisis. *Communication Research*, 31(5), 600-618. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0093650204267936>

Lee, B.K. (2005). Hong Kong consumers' evaluation in an airline crash: A path model analysis. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 17(4), 363-391. https://doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr1704_3

Louhiala-Salminen, L., Charles, M., & Kankaanranta, A. (2005). English as a lingua franca in Nordic corporate mergers: Two case companies. *English for Specific Purposes*, 24(4), 401-421. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.esp.2005.02.003>

Luoma-aho, V., Moreno, A., & Verhoeven, P. (2017). Crisis response strategies in Finland and Spain. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management*, 25(4), 223–231. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-5973.12163>

Ma, L., & Zhan, M. (2016). Effects of attributed responsibility and response strategies on organizational reputation: A meta-analysis of situational crisis communication theory research. *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 28(2), 102-110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2016.1166367>

McAuley, E., Duncan, T.E., & Russel, D.W. (1992). Measuring causal attributions: The revised causal dimension scale (CDSII). *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 18, 566-573. <https://doi.org/10.1177%2F0146167292185006>

McDonald, L. M., Sparks, B., & Glendon, A. I. (2010). Stakeholder reactions to company crisis communication and causes. *Public Relations Review*, 36(3), 263–271. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016%2Fj.pubrev.2010.04.004>

Park, H., & Reber, B.H. (2011). The organization-public relationship and crisis communication: The effect of organization-public relationship on publics' perceptions



- of crisis and attitudes towards the organization. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 5, 240-260. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2011.596870>
- Puntoni, S., De Langhe, B., & Van Osselaer, S.M. (2008). Bilingualism and the emotional intensity of advertising language. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 35(6), 1012-1025. <https://doi.org/10.1086/595022>
- Speulman, S. (2014). "Nice Beat, but Those Dutch Vocals Are like a Red Shirt on Yellow Pants" - An Experimental Study on the Effectiveness of Dutch and English in Pop Music in the Netherlands (Master's thesis, Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen).
- Van der Meer, T. G. L. A., & Verhoeven, J. W. M. (2014). Emotional crisis communication. *Public Relations Review*, 40(3), 526–536. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2014.03.004>
- Walsh, G., V, W., Mitchell, Jackson, P.R., & Beatty, S. (2009). Examining the antecedents and consequences of corporate reputation: A customer perspective. *British Journal of Management*, 20(2), 187-203. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2007.00557.x>
- Weiner, B. (1985). An attributional theory of achievement motivation and emotion. *Psychological Review*, 92(4), 548. <https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1037/0033-295X.92.4.548>



Appendices

Appendix A. Pre-test crisis response rebuild (pre-tested only in German)



Club Coffee Deutschland

Stellungnahme zu den Rückrufaktionen von Club Coffee Deutschlands Karamell Ice Latte

Kürzlich wurden Fälle von Übelkeit und Magendarmbeschwerden auf Seiten unserer Kunden gemeldet, die unseren beliebten Karamell Ice Latte getrunken haben. Aus Vorsichtsmaßnahmen wird der Karamell Ice Latte unverzüglich aus dem Sortiment unserer Shops genommen.

Eine interne Ermittlung hat ergeben, dass das verwendete Karamell Sirup von einem Bakterium befallen war, welche die Übelkeit und Magendarmbeschwerden bei unseren Kunden verursachte. Dieses Problem betrifft den Karamell Ice Latte der bei uns in Deutschland verkauft wird.

Club Coffee legt höchsten Wert auf die Qualität unserer Produkte. Deswegen haben wir uns dazu entschieden den Verkauf des Karamell Ice Latte in unseren Shops vorerst zu stoppen. Kunden, welche von Übelkeit und Magendarmbeschwerden betroffen waren, bitten wir uns zu kontaktieren. Als Entschädigung erhalten sie einen 1-monatigen Getränk Gutschein für kostenlose Getränke ihrer Wahl.

Wir stehen im engen Kontakt mit unserem deutschen Sirup Lieferanden, um die Ursachen dieses Problems zu bestimmen. Club Coffee Deutschland hatte schon immer einen guten Ruf, weshalb es unser Bestreben ist dieses Ereignis schnell hinter uns zu lassen. Wir sind entschlossen, euch möglichst bald wieder euren beliebten Karamell Ice Latte anbieten zu können. Wir entschuldigen uns bei unseren Kunden für die entstanden Unannehmlichkeiten.

Thomas Jonson,
CEO Club Coffee Deutschland

Appendix B. Pre-test crisis response diminish (pre-tested only in German)



Club Coffee Deutschland

Stellungnahme zu den Rückrufaktionen von Club Coffee Deutschlands Karamell Ice Latte

Kürzlich wurden Fälle von Übelkeit und Magendarmbeschwerden auf Seiten mancher Kunden gemeldet, nachdem sie unseren beliebten Karamell Ice Latte getrunken haben. Obwohl nur sehr weniger unsere Kunden betroffen waren, werden wir aus Vorsichtsmaßnahmen den Karamell Ice Latte unverzüglich aus dem Sortiment unserer Shops nehmen.

Eine interne Ermittlung hat ergeben, dass das verwendete Karamell Sirup von einem Bakterium befallen war, welches möglicherweise die leichten Übelkeits- und Magendarmbeschwerden bei manch unserer Kunden verursachte. Dieses Problem betrifft den Karamell Ice Latte der bei uns in Deutschland verkauft wird.

Club Coffee legt höchsten Wert auf die Qualität unserer Produkte. Außerdem war unsere Firma zuvor noch nie in einem Fall involviert, welcher die Gesundheit unseren Kunden negativ beeinträchtigte. Deswegen haben wir uns dazu entschieden den Verkauf des Karamell Ice Lattes in unseren Shops vorerst zu stoppen.

Wir stehen im engen Kontakt mit unserem deutschen Sirup Lieferanden, um die Ursachen dieses Problems zu bestimmen. Club Coffee Deutschland hatte schon immer einen guten Ruf, weshalb es unser Bestreben ist dieses vorübergehend minderschwere Ereignis schnell hinter uns zu lassen. Wir sind entschlossen, euch möglichst bald wieder euren beliebten Karamell Ice Latte anbieten zu können.

Thomas Jonson,
CEO Club Coffee Deutschland



Appendix C. Pre-test questionnaire (English)

Introduction_ consent

Dear Participant,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study

In this research study I want to investigate consumers perceptions of crisis communication messages. The procedure of this research involves reading a statement by an organization and answering a number of questions.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. This means that you can withdraw your participation and consent at any time during the research, without giving a reason. Even up to two weeks after participating you can have your research data and personal data removed, by sending a request to the researcher, pia.kleyer@student.ru.nl. If you have questions about the research, you can contact the researcher too.

The research data we collect during this study will be used by scientists as part of data sets, articles and presentations. The anonymized research data is accessible to other scientists for a period of at least 10 years. Personal data collected remain confidential. When we share data with other researchers, these data cannot be traced back to you. All research and personal data are safely stored following the Radboud University guidelines.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the research study, please get in contact by using the contact information at the bottom of this letter.

If you want to participate in this research study, I ask you to sign the consent form. With this written consent, you declare that you have understood the information we have provided and consent to participate in this research study.

Kind regards,

Pia Kleyer

By clicking on the 'I Agree' button below you indicate that:

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in this study, please decline participation by leaving this page

X I agree

X I disagree

One version of materials was displayed to the participant: either a diminish crisis response strategy in L1 (German) or a rebuild crisis response strategy in L1 (German)

Q1_1 authenticity

How likely is it that you may come across this response on social media?

very unlikely O O O O O very likely



Q1_2 authenticity

I find Club Coffee's reaction to the crisis

clear

strongly disagree strongly agree

comprehensible

strongly disagree strongly agree

legible

strongly disagree strongly agree

realistic

strongly disagree strongly agree

authentic

strongly disagree strongly agree

Q2 Perceived differences of the crisis response strategies

Club Coffee apologizes for the problem in its crisis response

completely disagree completely agree

Club Coffee offers compensation to victims that have suffered from the crisis

completely disagree completely agree

Club Coffee minimizes the impact of the problem in its crisis response

completely disagree completely agree

Club Coffee denies its intention to do harm to its customers

completely disagree completely agree

Q3 Background Questions

1. Please indicate your mother tongue

German

Other

2. Please indicate your age _____

3. Please fill in the gender you associate yourself with

Male

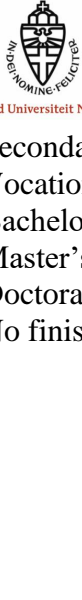
Female

Other

Don't want to say

4. What is the highest level of education you have completed or are currently attending?

Primary Education



Radboud Universiteit Nijmegen

- X Secondary Education
- X Vocational Training
- X Bachelor's Degree
- X Master's Degree
- X Doctoral Degree
- X No finished education

Pia Kleyer, Master's thesis 2021



Appendix D. Crisis description in German newspaper (only in German)

Frankfurter Allgemeine

Politik **Wirtschaft** Finanzen Feuilleton Karriere Sport Gesellschaft Stil Rhein-Main Technik Wissen Reise

Rückrufaktionen von Club Coffee's Caramel Ice Latte

Aktualisiert am 23.04.2021

Sirup im Kaffee verursacht Magendarmbeschwerden: Deswegen nimmt Club Coffee Deutschland das beliebte Getränk aus dem Sortiment

Die internationale KaffeeKette **Club Coffee** muss in Deutschland seinen beliebten Karamel Ice Latte aus dem Sortiment nehmen. Grund dafür ist eines im Karamel Sirup freigesetzte Bakterium welches Übelkeit und Magendarmbeschwerden bei Club Coffe's Kunden verursachte. Warum und wie das Bakterium in den Kaffeesirup gelangte ist noch unklar. Club Coffee kündigte an genaue Untersuchungen durchzuführen, um die Ursache zu bestimmen.

Weitere Themen

Solaranlagen für Hauseigentümer

Mann erfindet 50-Euro Solaranlage - wie ist das möglich?




Kein Taifun dieses Jahr

Dürre in Taiwan verschärft Chip-Krise





Appendix E. Crisis response rebuild (Final manipulation German version (L1))



Club Coffee Deutschland

Stellungnahme zu den Rückrufaktionen von Club Coffee's Karamell Ice Latte

Kürzlich wurden Fälle von Übelkeit und Magendarmbeschwerden auf Seiten unserer Kunden gemeldet, die unseren beliebten Karamell Ice Latte getrunken haben. Aus Vorsichtsmaßnahmen wird der Karamell Ice Latte unverzüglich aus dem Sortiment unserer Shops genommen.

Eine interne Ermittlung hat ergeben, dass das verwendete Karamell Sirup von einem Bakterium befallen war, welche die Übelkeit und Magendarmbeschwerden bei unseren Kunden verursachte. Dieses Problem betrifft den Karamell Ice Latte der bei uns in Deutschland verkauft wird.


Club Coffee legt höchsten Wert auf die Qualität unserer Produkte. Deswegen haben wir uns dazu entschieden den Verkauf des Karamell Ice Latte in unseren Shops vorerst zu stoppen. Kunden, welche von Übelkeit und Magendarmbeschwerden betroffen waren, bitten wir, uns zu kontaktieren. **Als Entschädigung erhalten sie einen 1-monatigen Getränk Gutschein für kostenlose Getränke ihrer Wahl.**

Wir stehen im engen Kontakt mit unserem deutschen Sirup Lieferanden, um die Ursachen dieses Problems zu bestimmen. Club Coffee Deutschland hatte schon immer einen guten Ruf, weshalb es unser Bestreben ist dieses Ereignis schnell hinter uns zu lassen. Wir sind entschlossen, euch möglichst bald wieder euren beliebten Karamell Ice Latte anbieten zu können. **Wir entschuldigen uns bei unseren Kunden für die entstanden Unannehmlichkeiten.**

Thomas Jonson,
CEO Club Coffee Deutschland



Appendix F. Crisis response rebuild (Final manipulation English version (L2))



Club Coffee Deutschland

Club Coffee's Caramel Ice Latte recall statement

Recently, cases of nausea and stomach problems have been reported amongst our customers after they drank our famous Caramel Ice Latte. As a precaution, Club Coffee Germany will remove the Caramel Ice latte from the coffee range in our shops immediately.

An internal investigation has revealed that the sirup that we have been using for the Caramel Ice Latte contained a bacterium which was responsible for causing nausea and stomach problems amongst our customers. The problem concerns Caramel Ice Lattes that were sold in Germany.

At Club Coffee we place great value on the quality of our products. Therefore, we have decided to stop selling the Caramel Ice Latte in our shops for the time being. Customers who have suffered from nausea and stomach problems after consuming the Latte are more than welcome to contact us to receive a free drink for one month voucher.

We are in close contact with our German sirup supplier to determine the cause of this problem. Club Coffee Germany has always had a great reputation which is why we aim to put this incident behind us as soon as possible. We are determined to provide you with your favorite Caramel Ice latte again in the near future. We offer our sincere apologies to our customers for any inconvenience caused.

Thomas Jonson,
CEO Club Coffee Germany

Übersetzung anzeigen



Appendix G. Crisis response diminish (Final manipulation German version (L1))



Club Coffee Deutschland

Stellungnahme zu den Rückrufaktionen von Club Coffee's Karamell Ice Latte

Kürzlich wurden Fälle von Übelkeit und Magendarmbeschwerden auf Seiten **mancher** Kunden gemeldet, nachdem sie unseren beliebten Karamell Ice Latte getrunken haben. Obwohl **nur sehr wenige** unserer Kunden von **den geringfügigen und temporären** Auswirkungen betroffen waren, werden wir aus Vorsichtsmaßnahmen den Karamell Ice Latte unverzüglich aus dem Sortiment unserer Shops nehmen.

Eine interne Ermittlung hat ergeben, dass das verwendete Karamell Sirup von einem Bakterium befallen war, welches **möglicherweise die leichten Übelkeits- und Magendarmbeschwerden bei manch** unserer Kunden verursachte. Dieses Problem betrifft den Karamell Ice Latte der bei uns in Deutschland verkauft wird.

Club Coffee legt höchsten Wert auf die Qualität unserer Produkte. Außerdem war unsere Firma zuvor noch nie in einem Fall involviert, welcher die Gesundheit unseren Kunden negativ beeinträchtigte. Deswegen haben wir uns dazu entschieden den Verkauf des Karamell Ice Lattes in unseren Shops vorerst zu stoppen.

Kleinere Zwischenfälle, wie dieser können in Betriebsabläufen von jedem Unternehmen vorkommen. Wir stehen im engen Kontakt mit unserem deutschen Sirup Lieferanten, um die Ursachen dieses Problems zu bestimmen. Club Coffee Deutschland hatte schon immer einen guten Ruf, weshalb es unser Bestreben ist dieses **temporäre Ereignis** schnell hinter uns zu lassen. Wir sind entschlossen, euch möglichst bald wieder euren beliebten Karamell Ice Latte anbieten zu können.

Thomas Jonson,

CEO Club Coffee Deutschland



Appendix H. Crisis response diminish (Final manipulation English version (L2))



Club Coffee Deutschland



Club Coffee's Caramel Ice Latte recall statement

Recently, cases of nausea and stomach problems have been reported amongst **some of our customers** after they drank our famous Caramel Ice Latte. **Although only very few of our customers have been affected and adverse health effects were minor and temporary,** as a precaution Club Coffee will remove the Caramel Ice Latte from the coffee range in our coffee shops immediately.

An internal investigation has revealed that the sirup that we have been using for the Caramel Ice Latte contained a bacterium which **may have been responsible for causing the minor nausea and stomach problems in some of our customers.** The problem concerns Caramel ice Lattes that were sold in Germany.

At Club Coffee we place great value on the quality of our products. **Moreover, no other incidents within our organization that negatively affected our customers health have occurred before.** Therefore, we have decided to stop selling the Caramel Ice Latte in our shops for the time being.

Minor incidents like this can happen as part of the operations of any organization. We are in close contact with our German sirup supplier to determine the cause of the problem. Club Coffee Germany has always had a great reputation which is why we aim to put this **temporary incident** behind us as soon as possible. We are determined to provide you with your favorite Caramel Ice latte again in the near future.

Thomas Jonson,
CEO Club Coffee Germany



Appendix I. Final Questionnaire in German (participants were only exposed to a German questionnaire)

Introduction_consent

Lieber Teilnehmer/Liebe Teilnehmerin,

Ich würde mich freuen, wenn Sie an meiner Umfrage zum Thema Krisenkommunikation teilnehmen würden. Die Bearbeitung des Online-Fragebogens dauert ca. 7 Minuten. Die Umfrage besteht aus zwei Teilen: Als Ersten werden Sie einen Zeitungsartikel, der eine Krise beschreibt und eine Krisenreaktion eines Unternehmens zu sehen bekommen, zu dem Sie dann Fragen beantworten werden. Am Ender der Umfrage werden Ihnen Fragen zu Ihrer Person gestellt.

Ihre Teilnahme an der Studie ist freiwillig und Sie können jederzeit die Teilnahme beenden, ohne einen Grund zu nennen. Auch zwei Wochen nach der Teilnahme können Sie ihre Forschungsdaten, sowie persönliche Daten gelöscht haben, indem Sie eine Anfrage an den Forscher schicken, pia.kleyer@gmail.com. Falls Sie Fragen zu dieser Studie haben oder weiterer Informationen wünschen, können Sie ebenfalls den Forscher kontaktieren.

Die Forschungsdaten, die mittels dieser Umfrage gesammelt werden, werden von Wissenschaftlern zum Teil für Datensätze, Artikel und Präsentationen genutzt. Die anonymisierten Forschungsdaten sind zugänglich zu anderen Wissenschaftlern über einen Zeitraum von mindestens 10 Jahren. Persönlich gesammelte Daten bleiben vertraulich. Falls wir Daten mit anderen Wissenschaftlern austauschen, können sie nicht auf Ihre Person zurückgeführt werden. Alle Forschungs- und persönlichen Daten sind sicher nach den Richtlinien der Radboud Universität gespeichert. Wenn Sie an dieser Studie teilnehmen möchten, bitte ich Sie die Einverständniserklärung zu unterzeichnen. Mit dieser Einverständniserklärung geben Sie an die genannten Informationen verstanden zu haben und an der Studie teilzunehmen.

Mit freundlichen Grüßen,

Pia Kleyer

Klicken Sie auf ‚Ich stimme zu‘, wenn Sie:

- die obigen Informationen gelesen und zur Kenntnis genommen haben
- sich dazu bereit erklären, freiwillig an der Umfrage teilzunehmen
- mindestens 18 Jahre alt sind.

Falls Sie nicht an der Umfrage teilnehmen möchten, verlassen Sie bitte diese Website.

Ich habe die obigen Informationen zur Kenntnis genommen und stimme den Bedingungen zu.

X Ich stimme zu

X Ich stimme nicht zu

Perceived organizational reputation

Basierend auf Club Coffee's Facebook-Post, bitte geben Sie ihre persönliche Meinung zu den folgenden Aussagen an:



Das Unternehmen sorgt sich um das Wohlergehen der Bevölkerung
stimme zu stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Das Unternehmen ist grundsätzlich unehrlich
stimme zu stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Ich vertraue nicht darauf, dass das Unternehmen wahrheitsgemäß über das Ereignis berichtet
stimme zu stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Grundsätzlich würde ich glauben, was das Unternehmen sagt
stimme zu stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Das Unternehmen sorgt sich nicht um das Wohlergehen der Bevölkerung
stimme zu stimme überhaupt nicht zu

Perceived crisis responsibility I

In welchem Maß sollte Club Coffee Deutschland beschuldigt werden?

überhaupt nicht beschuldigt völlig beschuldigt

Perceived crisis responsibility II

Wie viel Verantwortung sollte Club Coffee Deutschland tragen?

überhaupt nicht verantwortlich völlig verantwortlich

Emotionality towards the crisis message

Ich finde diese Krisenreaktion emotional
stimme überhaupt nicht zu Stimme völlig zu

Die Krisenreaktion macht mich emotional
stimme überhaupt nicht zu Stimme völlig zu

Die Krisenreaktion berührt mich
stimme überhaupt nicht zu Stimme völlig zu

Anger

Club Coffee Deutschland's Krisenreaktion macht mich

überhaupt nicht irritiert völlig irritiert

überhaupt nicht wütend völlig wütend

überhaupt nicht verärgert völlig verärgert +



Attitude towards the crisis message

Ich unterstütze was Club Coffee Deutschland sagt

Stimme überhaupt nicht zu Stimme völlig zu

Ist stimme überein mit dem was Club Coffee Deutschland sagt

Stimme überhaupt nicht zu Stimme völlig zu

Ich stehe dem was Club Coffee Deutschland sagt positiv gegenüber

Stimme überhaupt nicht zu Stimme völlig zu

Background information

Bitte geben Sie Ihre Nationalität an

Deutsch

Andere

Bitte geben Sie Ihre Muttersprache an

Deutsch

Andere

Bitte geben Sie Ihr Alter an _____

Bitte geben Sie das Geschlecht an, mit dem Sie sich am ehesten assoziieren

Mann

Frau

Andere

Das möchte ich nicht sagen

Was ist die höchste Ausbildungsstufe, die Sie abgeschlossen haben oder derzeit besuchen?

Grundschule

Sekundarschulausbildung (Hauptschule, Gesamtschule, Gymnasium)

Berufsausbildung

Bachelor Abschluss

Master Abschluss

Doktorgrad

Keine abgeschlossene Ausbildung

Bitte geben Sie an, wie Sie ihre Englischkenntnisse bewerten würden:

Sprechen

Schreiben

Lesen

Hörverstehen

all: sehr schlecht hervorragend



Appendix J. Questionnaire (English)

Introduction_consent

Dear Participant,

I would like to invite you to participate in a research study.

In this research study I want to investigate consumers' perceptions of crisis communication messages. The procedure of this research involves reading a newspaper article about a crisis, a crisis statement by an organization and answering a number of questions.

Your participation in this research is voluntary. This means that you can withdraw your participation and consent at any time during the research, without giving a reason. Even up to two weeks after participating you can have your research data and personal data removed, by sending a request to the researcher, pia.kleyer@student.ru.nl. If you have questions about the research, you can contact the researcher too.

The research data we collect during this study will be used by scientists as part of data sets, articles and presentations. The anonymized research data is accessible to other scientists for a period of at least 10 years. Personal data collected remain confidential. When we share data with other researchers, these data cannot be traced back to you. All research and personal data are safely stored following the Radboud University guidelines.

If you want to participate in this research study, I ask you to sign the consent form. With this written consent, you declare that you have understood the information we have provided and consent to participate in this research study.

Kind regards,

Pia Kleyer

By clicking on the 'I Agree' button below you indicate that:

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in this study, please decline participation by leaving this page.

X I agree

X I disagree

One version of materials was displayed to the participant: L1 crisis message with diminish crisis response strategy/ L1 crisis message with rebuild crisis response strategy/ L2 crisis message with diminish crisis response strategy/ L2 crisis message with rebuild crisis response strategy

Perceived organizational reputation

Based on the organization's statement on Facebook, please indicate your personal opinion about the following statements:



The organization is concerned with the well-being of its public
strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ strongly agree

I do not trust the organization to tell the truth about the incident
strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ strongly agree

Under most circumstances, I would be likely to believe what the organization says
strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ strongly agree

The organization is not concerned with the well-being of its public
strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ strongly agree

Perceived crisis responsibility I

To what degree should Club Coffee Germany be blamed for the crisis?
not at all blamed ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ absolutely blamed

Perceived crisis responsibility II

How much responsibility should Club Coffee Germany bear?
not at all responsible ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ totally responsible

Emotionality towards the crisis message

I think this crisis response is emotional
completely disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ completely agree

The crisis response makes me emotional
completely disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ completely agree

The crisis response touches me
completely disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ completely agree

Anger

The company crisis response makes me
not at all irritated ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ absolutely irritated

not at all angry ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ absolutely angry

not at all aggravated ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ absolutely aggravated

Attitude towards the crisis message

I support what Club Coffee Germany says
strongly disagree ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ strongly agree

I agree with what Club Coffee Germany says



strongly disagree O O O O O O O strongly agree

I am favourable toward what Club Coffee Germany says

strongly disagree O O O O O O O strongly agree

Background information

Please indicate your nationality

X German

X Other

Please indicate your mother tongue

X German

X Other

Please indicate your age _____

Please fill in the gender you associate yourself with

X Male

X Female

X Other

X Don't want to say

What is the highest level of education you have completed or are currently attending?

X Primary Education

X Secondary Education

X Vocational Training

X Bachelor's Degree

X Master's Degree

X Doctoral Degree

X No finished education

Please indicate how you would assess your English for the following skills:

Speaking

Writing

Reading

Listening

all: very poor O O O O O O O excellent



Appendix K. Declaration on plagiarism and fraud

The undersigned
[first name, surname and student number],

Pia Kleyer

Master's student at the Radboud University Faculty of Arts,

declares that the assessed thesis is entirely original and was written exclusively by himself/herself. The undersigned indicated explicitly and in detail where all the information and ideas derived from other sources can be found. The research data presented in this thesis was collected by the undersigned himself/herself using the methods described in this thesis.

Place and date:

Nijmegen, 22nd July 2021

Signature:

[Empty box for signature]