

RACISM IN ADVERTISING IN THE BEAUTY INDUSTRY
Emotional Responses in Social Media during Racism Related Crises

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>This study discusses social media’s impact on crisis communication by analyzing the online communication around two different social media crisis situations. These two situations, around the beauty and fashion brands H&M and Dove, both deal with racism related discourse caused by the brands own products or advertisements.</p> <p>This thesis takes a look into how these two organizations handled the sudden crisis situations and how people reacted to the public statements released by each company on Twitter and Facebook. The cases were analyzed with the help of previous crisis communication theories and models, such as SCCT, SMCC, ICM and the social media crisis communication matrix. The research was qualitative and utilized critical discourse analysis.</p> <p>The findings of this study showed that, as predicted by the earlier theories, people expressed different emotions based on the crisis response strategies used by the organization, the origin of the crisis, and the level of responsibility attributed to the organization by the stakeholders.</p> <p>However, there were also vast differences in the emotional reactions between audience members, depending on how they interpreted the crisis. Unlike other crisis situations, such as faulty products, in racism-related crises the responsibility for the crisis is determined by whether the stakeholder believes racism was present or not. This caused some of the audience members to express anger and disappointment, while others expressed sympathy.</p>	
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Aika – Month and year Joulukuu 2019	Sivumäärä – Number of pages 99
<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Tämän tutkielman tarkoituksena on analysoida kuinka sosiaalinen media vaikuttaa yritysten kriisiviestintään. Tutkimuksen kohteena on kaksi eri organisaatiota, jotka ovat joutuneet käymään läpi rasismiin liittyvän kriisin sosiaalisessa mediassa viimeisen kahden vuoden aikana.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen kohteina ovat H&M ja Dove, joiden molempien tapauksissa kriisi johtui yritysten omasta mainoksesta tai tuotteesta, jonka osa heidän asiakkaistaan totesi rasistisiksi.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tavoitteena oli selvittää, kuinka nämä organisaatiot vastasivat syytöksiin Twitterissä ja Facebookissa, sekä minkälaisia tunteita tapaukset ja organisaation viestintäkeinot herättivät yleisön jättämissä kommentoissa. Molempia tapauksia tarkasteltiin aiempien kriisiviestinnän teorioiden avulla. Käytettyihin teorioihin kuuluivat SCCT, SMCC ja ICM, sekä näistä kehitetty taulukko nimeltä Social Media Crisis Communication Matrix. Tutkimus oli laadullinen ja hyödynsi kriittisen diskurssianalyysin (CDA) keinoja.</p> <p>Tutkimuksen tulokset osoittivat, että yleisön jäsenet ilmaisivat erilaisia tunteita riippuen siitä, kuinka he ymmärsivät kriisin alkaneen ja kuinka suuri vastuu organisaatiolla oli heidän mielestään kriisin syntymisessä. Nämä tulokset vastasivat aikaisempien tutkimusten tuloksia, mutta myös osoittivat, että rasismiin liittyvissä tapauksissa yleisö voi olla hyvinkin jakautunut, sillä ihmisillä on eri mielikuvia siitä mikä on rasistista ja mikä ei. Tästä syystä rasismiin liittyvissä tapauksissa oikeanlaisen vastauksen muodostaminen voi olla hankalaa organisaatioiden näkökulmasta.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Racist views and ideas are not often outright expressed in advertisements anymore, but they are hidden in implied meanings that people pick up on while viewing them. Van Dijk (2000) defines racism as a “social system of inequality” (p. 212) which consists of “two main subsystems, namely a social system of discriminatory actions at the micro level and group dominance at the macro level, and a cognitive system of racist ideologies controlling specific ethnic or racial attitudes”. (p. 212) This definition shows why racism can be very hurtful, since it is based on the idea that one race is better than the others, and people are defined and judged just based on the color of their skin. In recent years, multiple companies have been accused of having racist ads. In fact, according to an article by Cherry Wilson (2018), Advertising Standards Authority (ASA) in the UK received almost 2,400 racism complaints between 2013 and 2018 concerning 956 different ads. This shows that these situations happen quite frequently and that these incidents could easily create an organizational crisis.

Research on traditional crisis communication has a long history, but crisis communication in social media is still quite a new area. There seems to still be very little research on racism related crisis communication on social media, especially from the perspective of emotions, which is why this thesis will address that gap. Therefore, this thesis will contribute to that need and take a look at two social media crisis situations and see whether the emotional responses of the stakeholders reflect the models suggested by previous research. Additionally, the aspect of racism will bring a relevant aspect to this research, since it is a topic that has been discussed in media in recent times, for example in the context of things like the refugee crisis in Europe, when people have reacted very negatively to the idea of helping refugees from other countries because of racist mindsets. (McKenna, 2018).

While planning for crisis communication strategies, organizations have to consider many things, and they can try to do research to prepare for situations in advance. However, since people think and react differently, stakeholders may also react in many different ways to the statements the companies release during a crisis. For example, some people may threaten to never buy that company's products ever again, while others might say that an apology was not even necessary. This would also show that people's reactions are affected by their emotions, which is an aspect that this thesis will investigate.

Bazarova, Choi, Sosik, Cosley & Whitlock (2015) say that "although an emotional experience begins as an internal private process, it often leads to the social sharing of emotions with others" (p. 154). I agree with this and when it comes to an organizational setting, stakeholders are able to use social media to easily share these emotions with other stakeholders and the organization. Therefore, these are the emotional responses that this thesis will be looking at in the social media comments posted by stakeholders.

The cases analyzed in this thesis are from the beauty and fashion industry. The brands involved, Dove and H&M are both European companies, but their products are advertised worldwide. These brands are well-known and have large customer bases. I decided to focus on these specific companies, because they have had two of the biggest social media crises related to racism against black people in the last two years, and both brands issued an apology (or multiple apologies) on social networking sites such as Twitter and Facebook.

The analysis done in this thesis is based on a combination of crisis communication theories and crisis response models. By using the situational crisis communication theory developed by Timothy Coombs (2007), the integrated crisis mapping model by Jin, Pang and Cameron (2007), the social-mediated crisis communication model by Liu, Austin and Jin (2011), and the social media crisis communication matrix developed by Vignal Lambert and Barki (2017), this thesis

will examine the two cases and figure out how stakeholders responded to the crisis communication methods used by each brand during the crises.

I chose this topic because there have been many racism-related social media crises in the recent years, and I am interested in how these situations evolve, how people react to them and how they are handled by the organizations. I think it is important to see how these crisis situations happen, and to understand what led to these crisis situations, so that we might be able to avoid them or respond to them in the best possible manner in the future. Additionally, this research could also provide a look into what type of emotional responses companies may expect in racism related crises.

The findings of this research will provide information on how these situations started and how people reacted to different crisis communication methods on social media following the racism related crises. Therefore, this study could add to that area of research and help organizations, public relations professionals, as well as other individuals who work with social media to understand how people might react to these crisis situations, and what kind of emotional responses they should expect and take into account while preparing for a crisis or publishing a statement.

Before the analysis, the next chapter will introduce the theoretical framework of this thesis, which will help with the analysis done in chapter 4. The research aim and questions are presented in chapter 2.5 and chapter 3 will go through the methods and data used in this thesis in more detail. Lastly, after the analysis, chapter 5 will discuss the findings and chapter 6 will provide a conclusion and go through the implications and limitations of this thesis.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Before going into the analysis, this chapter will present the theoretical framework of this thesis. The first section introduces and defines the concepts around crisis communication and shows how it works in social media. Additionally, this chapter will explain the situational crisis communication theory and the other relevant crisis communication models that are later used in the analysis in chapter 4. The second section of this chapter focuses more on the type of emotional responses those strategies may elicit and the theories and models that have been developed to study these emotions. The third section of this chapter introduces the topic of racism against black people in advertising, its long history and how these issues are still visible in media today, which will be important background information for the analysis. Finally, section 2.5 will present the research aim and questions.

2.1 Crisis Communication and Social Media

In this thesis, the mentions of a “crisis” refer to an organizational crisis happening in social media. Timothy Coombs (2007) defines an organizational crisis as “a sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization’s operations and poses both a financial and a reputational threat. (...) Crises threaten to damage reputations because a crisis gives people reasons to think badly of the organization.” (p. 164) As Coombs (2007) points out in this definition, crises can have big effect on organizations and therefore the people responsible for managing the crisis need to be prepared for all kinds of situations.

Coombs (2014) has also mentioned that “if stakeholders believe an organization is in crisis, a crisis does exist, and stakeholders will react to the organization as if it is in crisis.” (p. 3) I agree that the crisis begins from stakeholders reacting negatively or concluding that something is

wrong. This would then lead to the organization having to put out a crisis communication statement, however, the crisis does not end there since organizations need to also pay attention to how the stakeholders react to the crisis management strategies that they have chosen to use.

Crisis communication is defined by Coombs (2010) as “the collection and processing of information for crisis team decision making along with the creation and dissemination of crisis messages to people outside of the team” (p. 20) Additionally, he believes that organizations need to also work on crisis communication before and after the crisis, which I agree is important since the better you are prepared, the easier it will be to deal with the challenges of the crisis appropriately and effectively. Coombs (2010) says that before the crisis, organizations need to collect information and define the possible risks, as well as prepare a plan and train crisis management employees. After the crisis, organizations need to determine how well their crisis communication worked and provide possible follow-up information. (Coombs, 2010, p. 20) In this day and age, technological advancements have brought many new tools and platforms for communication and many crises seem to emerge and spread in social media. Additionally, since social media is also used for crisis communication, it brings a new area into consideration for crisis managers.

Ellison and Boyd (2013) have worked on a definition for social media or more specifically social networking sites and have come up with the following description:

A social network site is a *networked communication platform* in which participants 1) have *uniquely identifiable profiles* that consist of user-supplied content, content provided by other users, and/or system-level data; 2) can *publicly articulate connections* that can be viewed and traversed by others; and 3) can consume, produce, and/or interact with *streams of user-generated content* provided by their connections on the site. (p. 158)

This shows well how platforms, such as Twitter and Facebook, work and what researchers need to keep in mind while studying communication in social media. Everything that is posted

online has the possibility to be seen by a very large audience. For example, one customer leaving an angry comment, or a negative review could go viral and create problems for the organization. Therefore, stakeholders' opinions about organizations are important and organizations need to pay attention to what is said about them online. These aspects also bring up the differences from how other forms of communication through media work.

Jones (2017), for example, explains the ways in which traditional media and social media differ by stating that:

Where traditional media is typically a one-way format curated by professionals and carefully reviewed by editors, social media is a 'wild west'. Everyone and anyone can get their voice heard and spread "news" – no matter how accurate, truthful, or inflammatory. It is instant, and there are no editors and no source checks. Furthermore, it's entirely two-way, and audiences can actively contribute to the spread of a message by liking and sharing. (p. 2)

This accurately describes how social media works and how it can contribute to a crisis. Since "anyone and everyone" can publish almost anything, it can be difficult to know which of the messages are true and which are false, so the possibility for crises is there, especially if people start believing false information. This explanation by Jones (2017) also explains the changes in how people communicate about news or crises, in a more two-way fashion than traditionally, and therefore it is easy to see the need for new strategies on how to deal with managing a crisis.

When it comes to recent research of crisis communication in social media Roshan Warren and Carr (2016) found that "many organisations did not respond to stakeholder crisis messages during crises, thus not benefitting from the full potential value of social media for supporting organizational crisis communication." (p. 359) Therefore, this will also be a focus in this thesis, since the aim is to see how Dove and H&M handled their crisis situations on social media. Roshan et al. (2016) add that many organizations rely too heavily on the accommodative

ways of responding in a crisis, such as apologizing. They also found that organizations sometimes do not take advantage of or behave differently to what crisis communication theories and models would suggest. (p. 359) This is very interesting, since it might mean that organizations have either found different strategies to deal with crises, and the current theories do not reflect all the options, or that organizations are not good at utilizing the suggestions that previous research models and theories have provided. Therefore, this thesis will also look at how Dove and H&M behaved compared to the theories.

In the area of racism-related crisis communication, Novak and Richmond (2019) studied a case where Starbucks made a Twitter campaign called #RaceTogether. According to the authors, the idea was to “encourage patrons to openly discuss and debate the contemporary treatment and place of race and ethnicity in global culture” (p. 1). However, the stakeholders’ reaction to the campaign was largely critical and many people started posting racist things in the hashtag. Novak and Richmond say Starbucks had to eventually stop the campaign (p. 1). This shows that racism-related topics can turn into a crisis very easily, and even when the organization means well, they might make mistakes that prove troublesome.

In addition, Yang Cheng (2016) has pointed out that traditional crisis communication theories alone do not consider all the aspects that social media brings into a crisis (p. 67), which is why this thesis will also look at other theories. However, despite the differences, traditional crisis communication theories and strategies are the base of the newer social-media focused crisis theories, so the next part of this chapter will introduce the more traditional theories before moving on to the social media focused theories and models.

2.1.1 Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT)

The situational crisis communication theory (SSCT), was developed by Timothy Coombs in 1995. He explains that, SCCT can be used to evaluate the best strategies for protecting the organization's image in different kinds of crises (Coombs, 2007, p. 163). The idea was refined in the early 2000's by Coombs and Holladay (2002), but the basic idea behind the theory is that organizations' level of responsibility in the crisis will affect stakeholder's reactions (Coombs & Holladay, 2002, p. 166).

Coombs and Holladay (2002) separated the possible crises levels into three clusters: The Victim cluster, Accidental cluster and Preventable cluster (p. 179). Figure 1 (see below) shows the definitions for these clusters based on Coombs' (2007) categorizations.

Victim cluster: The organization is also a victim of the crisis.

(Weak attributions of crisis responsibility = Mild reputational threat)

- Natural disaster: Acts of nature damage an organization such as an earthquake.
- Rumor: False and damaging information about an organization is being circulated.
- Workplace violence: Current or former employee attacks current employees onsite.
- Product tampering/Malevolence: External agent causes damage to an organization.

Accidental cluster: The organizational actions leading to the crisis were unintentional.

(Minimal attributions of crisis responsibility = Moderate reputational threat)

- Challenges: Stakeholders claim an organization is operating in an inappropriate manner.
- Technical-error accidents: A technology or equipment failure causes an industrial accident.
- Technical-error product harm: A technology or equipment failure causes a product to be recalled.

Preventable cluster: The organization knowingly placed people at risk, took inappropriate actions or violated a law/regulation.

(Strong attributions of crisis responsibility = Severe reputational threat)

- Human-error accidents: Human error causes an industrial accident.
- Human-error product harm: Human error causes a product to be recalled.
- Organizational misdeed with no injuries: Stakeholders are deceived without injury.
- Organizational misdeed management misconduct: Laws or regulations are violated by management.
- Organizational misdeed with injuries: Stakeholders are placed at risk by management and injuries occur.

Figure 1. SCCT crisis clusters by Timothy Coombs (2007, p. 168)

Coombs and Holladay (2002) as well as Coombs (2007) explain that if the organization is seen as a victim of the crisis, stakeholders will likely see the organization's crisis responsibility level as "weak", and therefore the crisis is considered a mild reputational threat. Similarly, if the stakeholders see that the situation that led to the crisis were not intentionally caused by the organization, the level is "minimal", which means that the crisis is a moderate reputational threat. Lastly, if people believe that the organization knowingly acted inappropriately, the level of crisis responsibility is considered "strong", and the crisis is a severe threat to the organization's reputation. (Coombs & Holladay, 2002, p. 197; Coombs, 2007, p. 168) Since this thesis is focused on racism as the cause of the crisis, I believe SCCT would be a great way to assess how stakeholders' opinions affect the reputational threat in a racism-related crisis. However, since racism is a sensitive topic and has the ability to hurt many people, I believe even accidental and unintentional racism could lead into a severe reputational damages for a company, so while these theories are useful, I believe there may be situations that are not so straight-forward, which is why this thesis will also look at these aspects.

Coombs (2006, 2007) has also argued that anyone dealing with a crisis can use different sets of approaches to deal with the situation according to the above-mentioned crisis types (see figure 2 below). The three primary response styles are categorized as deny, diminish, and rebuild strategies (Coombs, 2007, p. 170-171). There's also an additional category, "bolstering", that Coombs says can be used with any of the three main strategies (p. 172). The strategies based on these response types help the organization explain their point of view of what has happened. (p. 171)

Coombs (2007) explains that the "deny strategies" help an organization make a separation between itself and the crisis. (p. 171) For example, Coombs says that if the crisis is caused by a

rumor, which the organization can dismiss with an explanation (assuming that the stakeholders accept said explanation), the organizations reputation will not be harmed. (p. 171)

<u>Denial</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attack the accuser: confront those saying negative things about the organization • Denial: deny any responsibility for the crisis • Scapegoating: blame some other party for the crisis
<u>Diminish</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Excuse: minimize organizational responsibility by denying the intention to do harm or denying the ability to control the situation • Justification: attempt to minimize the perception of the damage inflicted by the crisis
<u>Rebuild</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Compensation: give victims aid, material goods, or money • Apology: publicly take responsibility for the crisis and ask for forgiveness
<u>Bolstering</u>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reminding: remind stakeholders of past organizational good works • Ingratiating: praise stakeholders for helping during the crisis • Victimage: indicate the organization is also a victim in the crisis

Figure 2. Coombs' crisis communication strategies. (Coombs, 2018, p. 24)

The “diminish strategies”, on the other hand, seek to assure the audience that the crisis situation is not as bad as it might seem. (Coombs, 2007, p. 171) According to Coombs, similar to the deny option, these strategies will also help the organization separate itself from the crisis by making it seem less negative. However, he reminds that to be successful, these strategies need credible evidence to back up the claims. If contradictory information is shared in the media, the stakeholders will follow the source they deem to be most credible, which may lead to reputational damage. (p. 171-172)

Finally, Coombs explains that the “rebuild strategies” focus on showing the organization’s willingness to change by offering help to the affected parties and apologizing for what has

happened. Therefore, these strategies try to steer the audiences focus away from the crisis with positive and remorseful behavior. Overall, the main idea is to give the stakeholders more positive information and perform “positive reputational actions” such as offering compensation. (Coombs, 2007, p. 172)

As mentioned earlier, “bolstering” is an additional strategy that can be used in accordance with the others. Based on Coombs’ (2018) explanations, bolstering means that the organization tries to “flatter those who have helped with the crisis” or to “remind stakeholders of past good works by the organization”. (Coombs, 2018, p. 25) Similar to the “rebuild” strategies, bolstering is a way for the organization to try and create a positive perception of itself in its stakeholders’ eyes. All these strategies can also be used in crisis communication on social media, but researchers have noticed that even SCCT needs revising to fit all the needs of the social media context, and to be more useful in current day situations. (Coombs, 2018)

2.1.2 Crisis communication models for social media

To fix the research gap in crisis communication on social media, Jin and Liu (2010) first worked on a blog-mediated crisis communication (BMCC) model to illustrate how “influential blogs” can directly affect their followers opinions. The idea of the model was also to help crisis managers respond to negative blog posts during a crisis. Later, around 2011, the model was renamed and formed into the social-mediated crisis communication (SMCC) model to better fit the different platforms used for communication by stakeholders. (Jin, Liu & Austin, 2011, p. 77)

According to Austin and Jin (2016), the SMCC model was “developed to provide evidence-based guidelines to help crisis communicators decide if, when, and how to respond to influential social media, while also acknowledging the influence of traditional media and offline word-of-

mouth communication.” (p. 169) Therefore, SMCC tries to apply the information learned from traditional crisis communication studies and develop a system that works better in the social media context.

The authors also mention that the SMCC model indicates that the source and form of information will influence the possible crisis responses, and then suggests fitting crisis response strategies. (Austin & Jin, 2016, p. 174) Based on the model, there are five specific factors that have an impact on organizations’ communication during a crisis: the origin, type, organizational infrastructure of the crisis, as well as the message strategy and form. (Austin & Jin, 2016, p. 172) The crisis response strategies suggested by the SMCC model are similar to the strategies of the SCCT model and are on a scale from defensive to accommodative approaches.

When testing these theories, Jin et al. (2011) found that “publics seem to be more likely to accept the organization’s accommodative responses” if they see the crisis origin as internal, and if they saw it as external, they accepted more “evasive” strategies. (Jin et al., 2011, p. 88-89) It will be interesting to see if these factors are also visible in the cases studied in this thesis and to learn more about this, chapter 2.2.2 will go into more detail and focus on the emotional responses of the stakeholders.

Additionally, Vignal Lambert and Barki (2017) found out in 2017 that the social networking sites Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube alone had approximately 3.48 billion users (Vignal Lambert & Barki, 2017, p. 297), so it is easy to see how big of a part social media has in communication in today’s world and how important for organizations it is to take into account stakeholders’ emotional responses when planning their crisis communication and management.

2.2 Emotional Responses in Crisis Communication

According to Thomas Dixon (2012) the word “emotion” has been in use since the 17th century, but there is still no agreement on a specific definition for the word. There are many theories, and different areas of study focus on different definitions. Myers (2010) defines emotion as “a response of the whole organism, involving (1) physiological arousal, (2) expressive behaviors, and (3) conscious experience.” (p. 499) For the purposes of this study, this definition mentioned by Myers will be used in connection with the following definition by Smith and Lazarus (1990), who define emotion as “a complex psychobiological reaction that fuses intelligence with motivational patterns, action impulses, and physiological changes that signify to both the actor and observer that something of significance for wellbeing is at stake in the encounter with the environment.” (p. 615). These definitions show that in the context of this thesis, the way stakeholders respond to crisis communication is likely to be strongly affected by their emotions, which on their part will be affected by how the stakeholders relate to the crisis situation.

Overall, when it comes to emotions, Ekman (1992) for example proposed that there are at least six primary emotions: fear, surprise, sadness, enjoyment, anger, and disgust (p. 170). Therefore, he also believes that all other emotions are just specific mixes or variants of these primary emotions. (p. 172-173) In my opinion these primary emotions could also be easily visible in crisis situations. For example, many of the above-mentioned emotions could easily be something you might expect in a racism-related incident, since racism is all about hate, power and discrimination. To address how emotions affect crisis communication, Jin, Pang and Cameron (2007) came up with the integrated crisis mapping model (ICM).

2.2.1 Integrated crisis mapping model (ICM)

The integrated crisis mapping model (ICM) by Jin, Pang and Cameron (2007) has originated from a “public-based and emotion-driven perspective of crisis communication” (p. 81), which means that they wanted to study crisis communication from the perspective of the public and to better understand the public’s emotional responses in crisis situations.

According to the authors, the model (see figure 3 below) also aims to establish a base for how the public’s emotions vary depending on how responsible the organization is for the crisis in the eyes of the stakeholders. Overall, ICM classifies four primary negative emotions that the public can express in crises: anger, sadness, fright, and anxiety. (Jin, Pang & Cameron, 2007, p. 227)

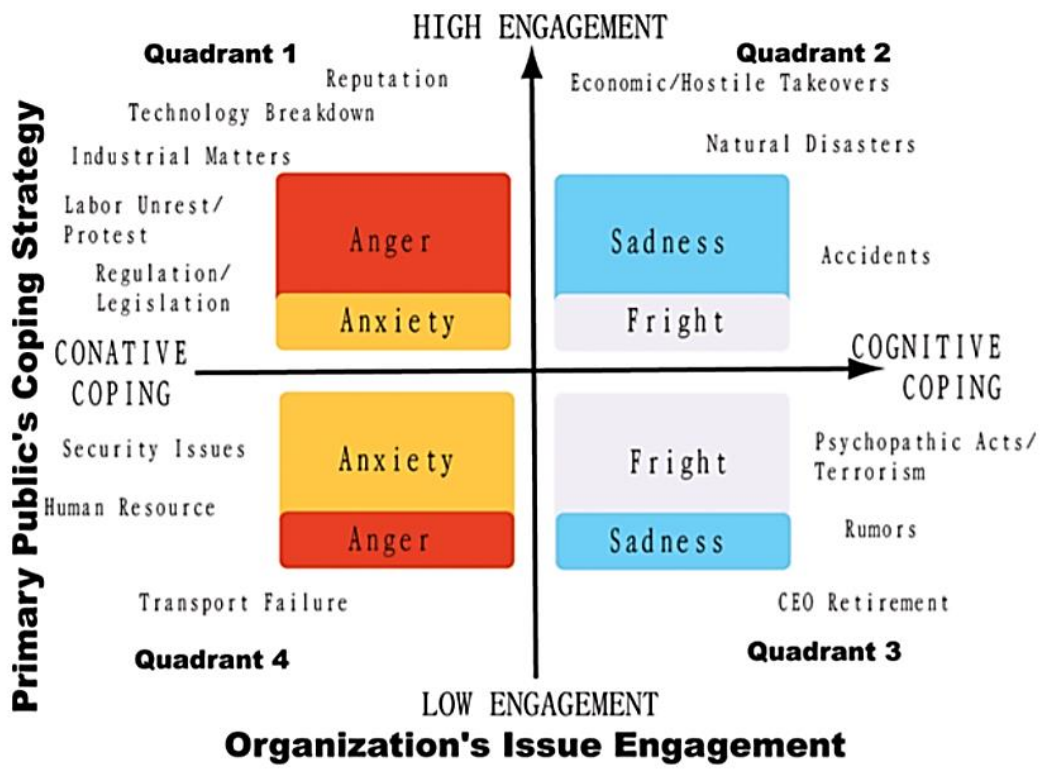


Figure 3. ICM -model by Jin, Pang and Cameron (2007)

The X-axis of the ICM model (see figure 3) contains public's possible coping strategies. The strategies go from conative coping to cognitive coping. According to Jin et al. (2007) conative coping means that the public's relationship with the organization changes and they react by taking more concrete actions. Cognitive coping on the other hand means that the public's view of the organization changes based on how they feel about the situation. (Jin et al., 2007, p. 90-91) However, Jin et al. (2012) remind that "during the coping process, the publics can alter or revise their interpretations based on the exigencies of the situation" (p. 272). This means that stakeholders' reactions and emotional responses can also change over time which is interesting and important to keep in mind.

For the second part of the model, the Y-axis contains the organizational involvement, going from low levels of engagement to high levels of engagement (Jin et al., 2007, p. 91). According to Jin et al. (2012) organizational engagement encompasses aspects such as what was involved in the crisis, what the organization's goals were, as well as the organization's level of responsibility in the crisis (p. 272). The authors explain that high level of organizational engagement means that the organization is putting a lot of effort into dealing with the crisis and is seen more intensely responsible for the crisis. In the same way, low level of organizational engagement means that the organization is not seen as responsible for the crisis and is not doing much to deal with the crisis. (p. 272)

Overall, the model shows that if the organizational engagement level was high, the primary emotion was anger or sadness based on whether the public's coping strategy was conative or cognitive. Similarly, if the organizational engagement level was low, the primary emotion was fright or anxiety. However, the authors remind that the model still needs work and more research, and the results are just a starting point, but they do give some idea on how these factors affect the public's responses to crises (Jin et al., 2012, p. 286-291). Based on all of this information, this

model will help analyze how the stakeholders see the organizations' level of responsibility in each of the cases studied in this thesis, as well as see the types of cognitive and conative coping visible in their emotional responses to the crisis communication done by the organizations.

2.2.2 SMCC and emotional responses in a crisis

Different from the previously mentioned ICM, the SMCC model is based on Bernard Weiner's (1986) attribution theory. Weiner's (1986) attribution theory talks about "outcome dependent-attribution independent" emotion and "outcome-independent-attribution dependent" emotion (Weiner, 1986, p. 125). Based on Weiner's (1986) definitions, outcome independent emotions happen in the beginning stages of a crisis, and the organizations level of responsibility does not affect these emotions. Outcome dependent emotions, on the other hand, come up in reaction to people's understanding of the crisis outcome and who they think is responsible for the crisis. However, Weiner (1986) argued that the two types of emotions mentioned can exist simultaneously.

Based on this and with the help of the SMCC model, Jin, Liu and Austin (2011) examined the role of social media in crisis communication, and how stakeholders consume crisis information. They divide the emotional responses into attribution-independent emotions such as fear and apprehension, and attribution-dependent emotions, such as anger and disgust. (p. 87) Based on what Jin et al. (2011) found out, when the stakeholders believed that the crisis origin was internal, they expressed much stronger emotions and a mix of attribution-dependent and -independent emotions. However, when the origin was seen as external, attribution-independent emotions were more likely. (p. 87-88) Similarly, if the audience believes the crisis origin to have been external, it is more probable that audiences accept accommodative rather than defensive

response strategies. (p. 88-89) The authors also add that there seems to be a connection between how the crisis information is shared with the public and how stakeholders react to it. The authors found that if the crisis information and responses were shared by the organization directly and not through other means, stakeholders reacted less negatively. (p. 88-89)

It should also be mentioned that instead of just negative emotions, positive emotions such as sympathy (Coombs & Holladay, 2005) can also be found in the audience's emotional responses. Overall, these findings give more evidence that the dominant emotional responses expressed by stakeholders can differ based on the crisis cluster the situation belongs in. Therefore, stakeholders' emotional responses could influence their acceptance of the crisis response strategies, which is why understanding how people perceive crises and how they react to them, and the organizations' responses, is important when an organization is looking for a way to handle a crisis.

2.3 Connecting the theories

To put all these models and theories together (see figure 4), Vignal Lambert and Barki (2017) have come up with a conclusion that “the definition and choice of the best response strategy are based on the connection between the origin of the crisis, the degree of attribution of responsibility for the crisis, and the stakeholders’ emotions in reaction to the crisis”. (p. 298) Based on this, their theory is trying to unite all the aspects of the previous crisis communication research and make it into a more applicable model.

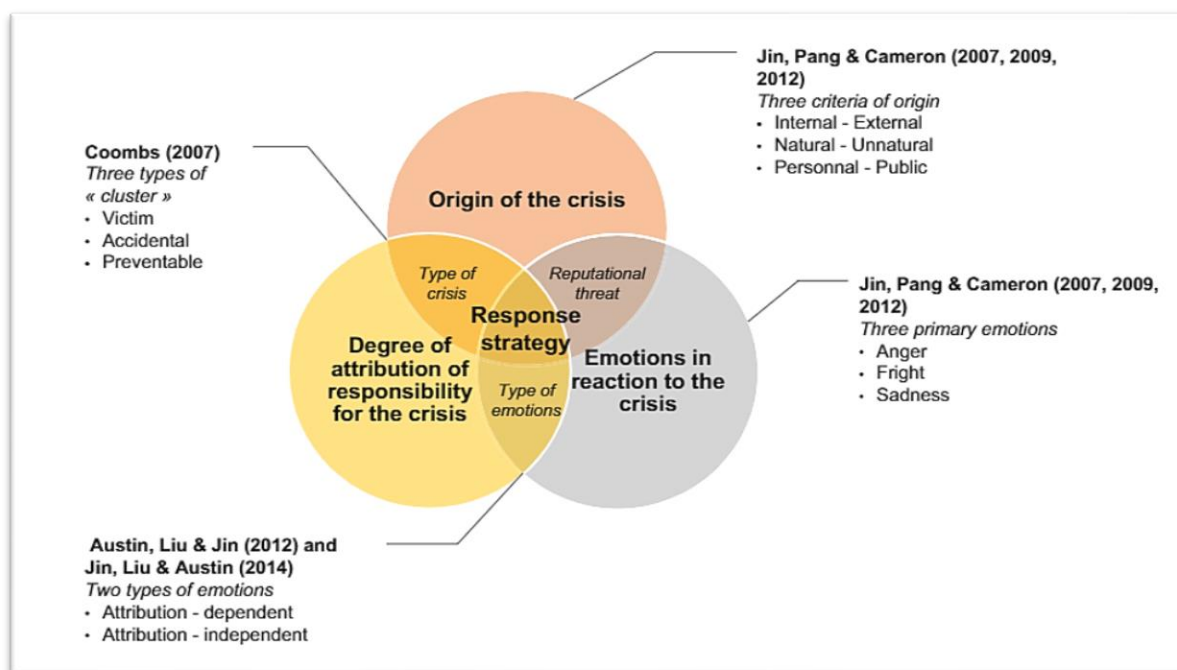


Figure 4. Constitution of a response strategy by Vignal Lambert and Barki (2017, p. 298)

Therefore, the matrix (see Figure 5 below) that they built should be more suitable for use in the context of social media. As seen in the image, the x-axis of the matrix measures the “degree of attribution of responsibility for the crisis” by stakeholders, from weak to strong. The y-axis considers the “origin of the crisis” on a scale from internal origin to external origin. (Vignal Lambert & Barki, 2017, p. 298).

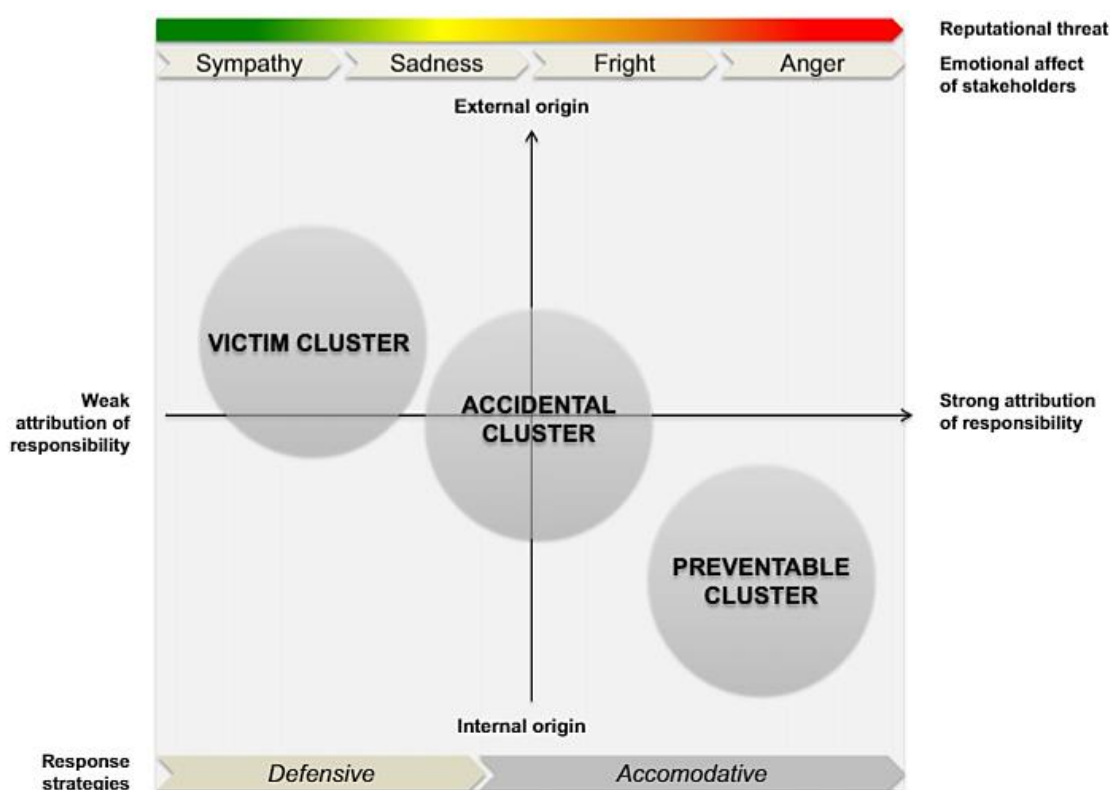


Figure 5. The social media crisis management matrix. (Vignal Lambert & Barki, 2017, p. 298)

The previous crisis communication theories and models are therefore used in the matrix as follows: Based on the SCCT by Coombs (2007), Vignal Lambert and Barki (2017) indicate that organizations can use either accommodative or defensive response strategies when communicating with their stakeholders. Jin, Pang and Cameron's (2007) ICM -model is included in shape of the level of responsibility stakeholders would assign to the organization in a crisis situation, and finally Jin, Liu and Austin's (2011) SMCC model brings into the matrix the emotional responses of the stakeholders, which are listed from attribution-independent to attribution-dependent emotions, meaning that they go from positive to negative. This also affects the reputational threat.

Overall, the matrix shows that the decision of what strategy would be the best option depends on the factor behind the crisis. For example, if the crisis is internal in origin, and the

organization's responsibility is seen as strong, the situation would belong in the preventable cluster, the reputational threat would be high, stakeholders would likely respond with anger and the best response strategy would be accommodative.

The analysis done on this thesis will be based on the theories discussed in this chapter, the main reference being the above-mentioned matrix created by Vignal Lambert and Barki (2017). Taking all of this into consideration, and inserting it into the context of social media, the audiences can be very widely spread and people from all kinds of beliefs and backgrounds have the opportunity to express their opinions on the situations, which therefore will most likely have a big impact on the variety of emotional responses seen in the comments. Therefore, this thesis will address this aspect of the topic. All of this information should help me analyze which type of strategy was used by the organizations in each of their statements, how the stakeholders reacted in comparison to what the matrix predicts, and how each of the aspects may have affected stakeholders' emotional responses to each of the statements made by the two organizations.

It should also be mentioned that topics involving racism may elicit very different emotional responses from different people based on the situational characteristics, and the significance and meaning of race to each person. (Jones, Lee, Caskett & Neblett, 2014, p. 355) Furthermore, since racism is a broad topic, the next chapter will take a look at the problems in the context of media and advertising.

2.4 Racism against Black People in Media and Advertising

In recent times, racism related issues in advertising have caused quite a few crisis situations. Some examples the last year alone being by companies such as Dior, Burger King and Dolce & Gabbana (Griffith, 2019; Bramwell & Kerry, 2019; Haas, 2018) If brands want to make

sure they do not offend anyone, they have to be very careful with what they say, since people have become more and more sensitive and aware of racism. This can also mean that one might even get in trouble without meaning any harm. Additionally, some people have even begun to wonder whether organizations have started to deliberately make racist ads to gain publicity, even if it is the “bad” kind of attention (Wilson, 2018).

To understand the reasons why people might find certain things offensive, we need to take a look at the history of racism in media. By doing this, it will be easier to understand why racism should be avoided. Since both of the cases analyzed in this thesis include racism against black people, this chapter will focus on this particular aspect. Similarly, the focus will be mostly on Western media, since the organizations are from Western countries.

As stated by McDonough and Egolf (2003), most of the early images of African-Americans used in advertising were based on European product packaging. They also mention that chocolate advertisements, for example, usually had visuals of black servants who served the chocolate to Europeans. (para. 1) These types of ideas, as well as the idea that darker skin is somehow dirty, have seemingly come up a lot in the history of advertising. Therefore, since White people have been often shown as “better”, I think these discriminatory and racist views have been very hurtful for minorities.

According to McDonough and Egolf (2003) soap ads that involved a black person becoming white, used to be very common. They also point out that the ads often suggested that a black person was ready to try all possible options, so that they could change their skin color, and that white children would not play with black children until they were washed (para. 2). One well-known example that the authors also bring up is an ad for Pears’ soap from 1884 (figure 6), that depicts a Black child getting a bath. After the child has used the Pears’ soap, he suddenly has white, “clean” skin. Of course, nowadays skin colour is not approached from the perspective of

White being the ‘norm’ anymore, but these kinds of harmful ideas and connotations do still come up sometimes, and racist people may use them to spread their hate, so it is important to be aware of the history of these attributions.



Figure 6. Pears' soap ad from 1884. (Conor, 2017)

The authors also mention that in the United States, the first appearance of Black people in ads happened during the 1870s, when printed trade cards were first made by using color lithography (McDonough & Egolf, 2003, para. 3). McDonough and Egolf (2003) also mention that two of the most popular subjects were sports figures and ethnic humor, which was often very racist. This also seems to show that White people were accepting Black people only if they provided some form of entertainment, while still making fun of them or on their expense.

McDonough and Egolf (2003) say that “from the beginning of the 20th century to the mid-1960s, advertising using stereotypical images of African-Americans was pervasive throughout the U.S.” (para. 4). The authors explain that images of Black people were used a lot in advertising for bottles, trade cards and ad stamps and some of the images are still well-known in

America as well as internationally (e.g. Aunt Jemima and Uncle Ben's). Since these brands are so well-known, they will most likely not be changing their logos or marketing any time soon.

Similarly, most people may not think about how harmful these portrayals of Black people as "aunts" and "uncles" are since they are connected with the idea of Black people being icons of domestic work.

McDonough and Egolf (2003) further explain that the Civil Rights movement finally brought more Black people into the advertising industry in a more respectful way. For example, they mention that "in 1963, a groundbreaking advertisement for New York Telephone Co. featured a professionally dressed, distinguished-looking black man shown anxiously entering a telephone booth. It was the first time such an ad ran in general-circulation publications" (para. 13). That was 56 years ago, which is not that long ago all things considered, so it shows how recent these issues have been.

In the context of this thesis, it is also important to mention that according to Luther, Lepre and Clark (2012) "advertisements featuring women of color have been found to maintain and create stereotypes." (p. 59) They explain that advertisements often imply that White women are beautiful, whereas Black women are still portrayed as overly sexual. In my opinion, this seems to suggest that Black women are only used in advertising as something "sexy" and no "ordinary" Black women are present, which would also be a form of racism. Regarding this, Cynthia Frisby (2004), who has studied the topic, says that when Black women see Black models in advertising, they end up feeling even less satisfied their own body-image. (p. 341) Luther et al. (2012) point out that when this kind of social comparison happens, consumers compare themselves to an "idealized" version, which the advertisers have created. (p. 76) Of course, this is not only a problem with Black woman, but all women suffer from the gender stereotypes and the idealized

versions of what women should be or look like. However, I believe that racism brings another level into this, and makes it even harder for Black women.

Therefore, racism in advertising is still a relevant issue, however as seen in the cases studied in this thesis, people are more than ready to point out such instances and use social media to critique or even shame the organization for their behavior. It should also be noted that both the brands included in this thesis have already been accused of racism before these specific cases as well.

Dove, for example, has been accused of racism in advertising at least twice. One of those incidents was because of an ad where a Black woman was placed next to a photo of dry skin and the word “before” and a White woman was next to a photo of smooth, moisturized skin and the word “after”. (Knafo, 2011) The second time happened due to Dove using the description “for normal to dark skin” in their products, which made it seem like dark skin was not normal. (Young, 2015) Similarly, H&M was accused of racism in 2015, when a customer from South Africa tweeted that she noticed how there were no black models in posters in a South African store, and H&M’s failed response about how they wanted to market a positive image backfired and implied that black models were not fitting for this image. (Maune, 2015)

Other recent cases not analyzed in this thesis include companies such as Nivea, who released an ad with the tag line “white is purity” in April 2017 (Amatulli, 2017), and Heineken, who released an ad for beer in March 2018, with the tag line “lighter is better” (Snider, 2018). These cases were not chosen for analysis, because Nivea and Heineken did not release any statements in social media and apologized through other means.

2.5 Research Aim and Questions

With the help of the theoretical knowledge gathered from the previous research shown in this chapter, this thesis will study two different cases, and aims to find out what the communication on social media was like between the organizations and their audiences after each of the two brands were accused of racism in their adverts. By focusing on Dove and H&M's Facebook and Twitter statements, it was possible to limit the scope of this thesis and focus on more specific questions. Therefore, the overall aim of this thesis is to answer the question:

How did the stakeholders respond to the organizations' crisis communication methods on Twitter and Facebook during a racism related crisis?

In addition to the overall aim, the thesis will also focus on the communication from the audience's perspective by answering these three questions:

RQ1. What were the main arguments that came up in the comments left on the apologetic posts made by the organizations?

RQ2. What type of emotions were expressed in the comments and do they fit in the categories suggested by earlier theories?

RQ3. Were there differences in the dominating emotions expressed between Twitter and Facebook responses?

Although this thesis will only look at two cases, by answering these questions this thesis will provide a look into how stakeholders react to crisis communication used in racism related

crises. Before going into the analysis however, the next chapter will go through the methods used in the analysis and present the data and cases that were analyzed in chapter 4.

3 METHODS AND DATA

This chapter will go over the research methods used in the analysis, as well as give an overview of the two cases, in order to allow for an understanding of the incidents before moving on to the analysis in chapter 4. The first part will explain the concepts of critical discourse analysis, case study and qualitative research, and talk about how these were used in this thesis. The second part will introduce the data and tell more about the data collection and process of analysis.

3.1 Research Methods

Overall, the analysis done in this thesis is qualitative, which means that the focus is more on interpreting the findings than trying to present numerical data and statistics. As a reminder, the main aim of this thesis is to study how H&M and Dove's stakeholders responded to the organizations' crisis communication methods on Twitter and Facebook during a racism related crisis. Due to the form of the research questions, I found that qualitative analysis would be the best way to find suitable answers. Furthermore, this thesis uses case study as a way to focus on a smaller amount of data and keep the research questions more specific. The cases chosen were "key" cases, which means that they were chosen because they were some of the more viral social media crisis situations around the time of the writing of this thesis. Critical discourse analysis methods were then used to analyse the social media statements and responses in more detail.

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) was developed by researchers such as Norman Fairclough, Ruth Wodak and Teun A. van Dijk around the 1980's. According to van Dijk (2001), CDA is "a type of discourse analytical research that primarily studies the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text and talk in the social and political context." (p. 352) Since this thesis deals with the topic of racism in advertisements and

the ways racism is brought up and discussed in social media, and since racism greatly relates to power inequalities and the dominance of one race over another, critical discourse analysis will help me study these aspects in the analysis. Additionally, Norman Fairclough (2013) explains that CDA helps us study three aspects of discourse; the text, discourse practises and social practises:

I see discourse as a complex of three elements: social practice, discursual practice (text production, distribution and consumption), and text, and the analysis of a specific discourse calls for analysis in each of these three dimensions and their interrelations. The hypothesis is that significant connections exist between features of texts, ways in which texts are put together and interpreted, and the nature of the social practice. (Fairclough, 2013, p. 59)

To study these aspects in this thesis, I first did research on the texts, photos and video material that were shared about the crisis situations online instead of just looking up the posts made by the organizations after the crisis began so that I could get an overall view of the situation. Next, I considered how the statements were written and how they may be received. I also reflected on how the platform may have affected the statements. Lastly, the third part of the analysis included the critical analysis of the posts and comments while keeping in mind the history of racism and the larger cultural context of the situations.

By looking at people's comments and tweets in response to the statements, CDA allowed me to get a view of the public's opinions and what kind of things people focused on. Additionally, by looking at the word choices and how the stakeholders expressed their thoughts in written form, I was able to get an idea of the emotions expressed in the comments. However, since the analysis is qualitative, this thesis does not focus on numerical data or try to generalize the findings, but to see how stakeholders responded to the communication by the organizations and see what kinds of emotional responses they expressed surrounding the topics on the organizations' Twitter and Facebook posts.

3.2 Data

The timeline of these crises begins from stakeholders noticing or coming to the conclusion that something is wrong with the advertising, which then starts a chain of reactions that leads to the organization having to put out a crisis communication statement, and ends with the stakeholders reacting to said “damage control”. Therefore, the primary data used in this thesis consists of the viral Twitter and Facebook posts that started the crisis, the statements published by the organizations, and the comments left by the audience on those posts. I also focused on the statements the organizations posted on their main accounts, since they are in English, although the country specific accounts often did not even have any mentions of the crisis in the first place.

Dove posted two responses on Twitter and two on Facebook on their @DoveUS account, which seems to also be their main account. Secondary data included in the Dove case includes a post made by a make-up artist, who ended up making the images go viral, and could be seen as the reason the crisis got so big, so fast. H&M made three posts on Twitter, and two posts on Facebook (on the US site). Secondary data on the H&M case included tweets by a couple of more well-known users, whose tweets about the situation went viral and thus also gave a beginning for the crisis.

The data was gathered by searching for the statements made by the brands on Twitter and Facebook. These statements were first analyzed on their own, and then the comments and replies to the posts mentioned were analyzed to see what type of emotions stakeholders expressed in reaction to the statements. I looked at the comments both with a signed-in twitter account and without one, but the comments were in the same order, so having an account does not seem to affect the order in which the comments are shown. This means there was no personalized or customized content provided for me that might make the results different.

I also made a note of which comments people agreed with the most (based on the number of likes, for example) to see the overall mood and emotions expressed in the comment section. Since many of the statements had thousands of comments, I had to restrict the sample of comments I read through to approximately a hundred comments per statement. This still gave a good idea of the variety of emotional responses the stakeholders expressed. Additionally, the stakeholders' identities are not revealed to keep the study ethical and to protect their identity, although all of the information used is publicly available.

Before the actual analysis, the next part of this chapter will give a brief overview of the cases. This will help show the overall situations and the context around the cases before the analysis goes deeper into the data and gives more details.

3.2.1 Case 1: Dove

On October 4th, 2017, Dove released an ad on Facebook for one of their shower products. In the ad, there are three women who wear shirts that are similar to the colors of their skin tones. First, a Black woman takes off her shirt and the video is edited in a way that from underneath the shirt is revealed a White woman, and then the White woman takes off her shirt and reveals a Latina woman. The ad was a very short GIF, which means the little video loops to the start and keeps going on its own. Therefore, the purpose was likely to be a creative way of showing how they are inclusive and use women of different colors in their advertising. However, the fact that the image changed from a Black woman to a White woman reminded people of the racist images used in old soap advertising, which implied that black skin is “dirty” and will turn white when cleaned. The situation was made worse by the fact that the video was not shared as it is, but as still images, which only showed the Black woman and the White woman (see figure 7).

Dove apologized for the situation on both Twitter and Facebook and made a total of four posts. The first posts were made on 7th of October and the last posts were posted on 9th of October on both platforms. Like mentioned earlier, the viral post that went around during the crisis

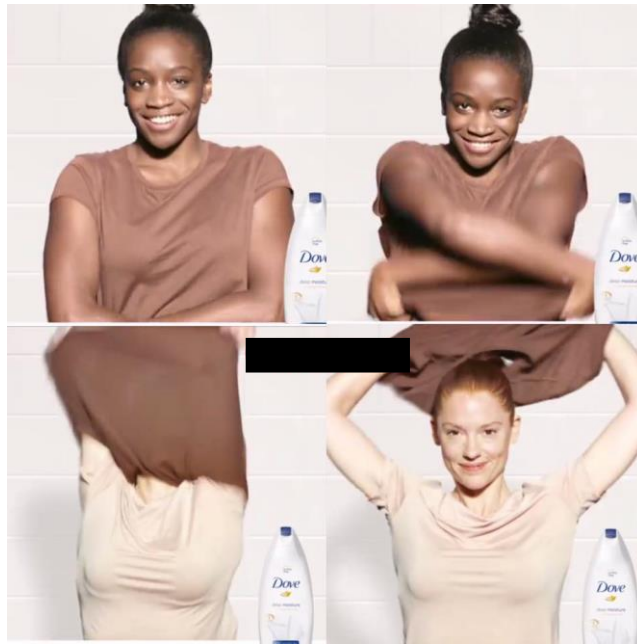


Figure 7. Screenshot compilation post by Facebook user that went viral

included four screenshots, with just the Black woman and the White woman. The screenshot compilation (see figure 7 above) was originally posted by a beauty blogger and make-up artist on Facebook.

3.2.2 Case 2: H&M

In January 2018, the clothing retail brand H&M had to apologize for an image that they had up in their online store. The image (see figure 8) showed a Black child modeling a hoodie that had the text “coolest monkey in the jungle” written on it. The image was criticized on social media for the implied reference that the Black child would be a monkey, which is an idea that has

long featured in racist discourse. Some of the anger was also caused by the fact that H&M had a White child modeling a similar hoodie, but that one said “official survival expert” instead, so some people thought it was done on purpose.

The earliest found Twitter post that talked about the situation and then went viral was posted on 7th of January 2018. According to a New York Times article by Liam Stack (2018) H&M removed the image on January 8th, 2018, and announced that they would also remove the shirt from sale. Stack (2018) also says that the mother of the child model also told him that she herself did not think the ad was racist, which is something that some of the stakeholders ended up using as a way to back their arguments.



Figure 8. Images that started the H&M crisis. (Sewing, 2018)

Aside from social media, H&M ended up also having multiple incidents in its South African stores, since people were so angry about the situation. Therefore, the organization had to also

respond to this incident, and stakeholders expressed their reactions again on social media.

Overall, H&M posted a combined amount of five statements on Facebook and Twitter. The first ones were posted on the 9th of January and the last ones on the 16th of January.

4 ANALYSIS

This chapter will first analyze the two cases mentioned in the previous chapter. Both cases will first be analyzed separately and then discussed as a whole at the end. The theories brought up in chapter 2, will be used as the base for this analysis. Mainly, the focus is on the aspects mentioned in Vignal Lambert and Barki's (2017) model (see figure 5 on page 24); crisis origin, the public's emotional responses, attribution of responsibility and the organizations' response strategy. These aspects will be studied in each case, and in each statement released by the organizations, and the results will be reflected on based on the overall information gathered in chapter 2.

4.1 Dove

As mentioned before, the Dove crisis began from an ad the company published on Facebook on the 4th of October 2017. In the ad, three women take off their t-shirt one at a time and the editing makes it look like another woman is revealed from underneath. The post said: "Ready for a Dove shower? Sulfate Free with 100% gentle cleansers, our body wash gets top marks from dermatologists." Unsurprisingly, this original post is not available anymore, so we cannot observe the responses people left on that post, but for the purposes of this study, the most important responses are the ones left on the posts where the organization apologized for the situation. Although the idea of the ad was to be inclusive and show women with different skin tones using the body wash, in the eyes of the public, the ad failed and too closely resembled other blatantly racist ads. As discussed earlier, the idea of Black skin being "dirty" and White skin being "clean" has been used many times in soap ads.

The crisis was ultimately started and gained more publicity when a make-up artist made a post about the advertisement on Facebook on October 6th, 2017 (see figure 9). She had taken

screenshots of the part where the Black woman “changes” into a White woman and posted them with the text: “So I’m scrolling through Facebook and this is the #dove ad that comes up.... Ok so what am I looking at....” Although she does not mention racism in the text, the meaning of her reaction is portrayed through the image she included, which means she let her audience come up with their own conclusion, while also hinting that there is something problematic about a Black woman turning into a White woman.

Since she has a large number of followers on the website – currently about 240,000 people follow her on Facebook – the post was able to quickly reach a very large audience. This also means that the crisis had a chance to get bigger outside of the ad itself, which most likely means that the organization was not immediately aware of it. It should also be mentioned that since the make-up artist included the compilation of screenshots of the ad in her post (see figure 9 above), that was also the picture that people started spreading around, and it eventually went viral.



Figure 9. Screenshot of the Facebook post that went viral

This means that most people might have only seen this screenshot compilation image and not the actual ad, which could make them believe the situation was much worse or different from what actually happened.

Since Facebook allows users to “react” to posts using emoticons, it is easy to see a limited representation of the overall feelings people wanted to express after seeing the images. The reactions that people can choose from consist of “Like”, “Love”, “Haha”, “Wow”, “Sad” and “Angry”. As of February 5th, 2019, a total of about 4,100 people have reacted to the post. About 2,100 of those reactions have been “angry”, visualized by the angry emoji. The rest of the reactions consist of about 880 “likes”, 580 “shocked” reactions, 360 laughing reactions, 150 sad emojis and 40 heart emojis (see figure 10 below).

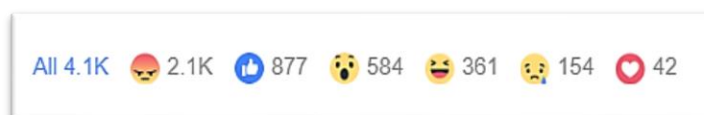


Figure 10. Facebook users reactions to the post by the make-up artist

This shows that most people reacted negatively, but it is important to keep in mind that we do not know whether people chose the “angry emoji” reaction because they were angry with Dove, or if they were angry with the make-up artist for accusing/implying that Dove’s ad was racist, or for some other reason. Based on the comments, people had very mixed reactions and opinions. Some were agreeing with her, and thought the ad was definitely racist, whereas others were angry at her for making such a big deal out of something that was not meant to be racist, in their opinion.

Examples of comments agreeing that the ad was racist included messages such as “No matter how it was intended...it conveys the WRONG message.” and “The message conveyed to

me was that the Black Woman is dirty and once you use Dove soap, you'll be clean and White. Passive Aggressive racism at its best", whereas comments disagreeing mentioned things such as "Yall are turning this into something it isn't" and "Black ppl be ready to find something to be mad about....there was nothing wrong with the commercial." This clearly shows that the audience's reactions were divided from the beginning.

One of the comments that gathered the most reactions also mentions that the make-up artist is turning the situation into something it is not, by not including the third, Latina woman of the ad in the screenshots. The make-up artist did eventually post a picture of the third woman as a reply to her original post, but most people would probably have only seen the image she included in the original post. Therefore, people might have thought the ad only showed the Black woman turning into a White woman and were not aware that the White woman also turned into a Latina woman afterwards.

4.1.1 Facebook statements and reactions

Dove reacted to the negative feedback by apologizing both on Facebook and on Twitter. The first statement they made on Facebook was posted on the 7th of October, 2017 (see figure 11). The post said:

Dove is committed to representing the beauty of diversity. In an image we posted this week, we missed the mark in thoughtfully representing women of color and we deeply regret the offense that it has caused. The feedback that has been shared is important to us and we'll use it to guide us in the future. (Dove, 2017a)

Based on Coombs' (2007) categorizations of crisis communication strategies, this response fits the definitions of both "diminish" and "rebuild" and based on Liu et al's (2011) SMCC model, the response belongs mainly in the accommodative crisis response strategy category. Since Dove mentions that they "missed the mark" while trying to include diversity in the ad, this could be seen as a way to diminish the severity of the situation. Using the expression "missing the mark", seems to imply that they were trying to go for something else, but somewhat failed, which is why people got offended. However, since they also mention that they "deeply regret the offense that it has caused" and that they will use the feedback as a "guide" so that they can do better in the future, their response clearly exhibits aspects of the so-called rebuild strategy (see Coombs, 2007).

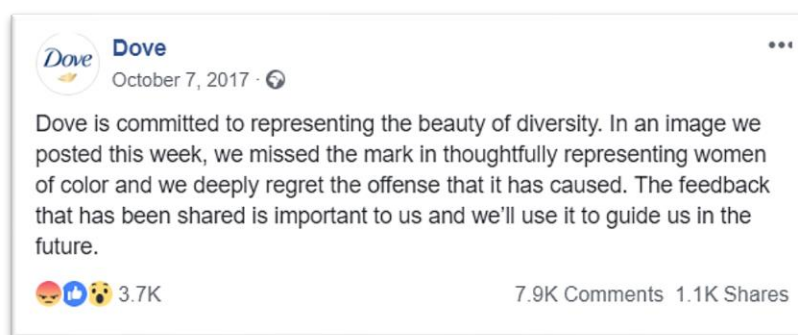


Figure 11. Dove's first Facebook statement. (Dove, 2017a)

It is also noticeable that instead of saying that they regret making the ad, they regret the fact that people got offended. There is only a subtle difference between saying "I am sorry I offended you" and "I am sorry you got offended", but it does somewhat shift the blame towards the people that got offended. The people in the comments also noticed this and pointed it out: "You regret the offense it has caused, but don't regret making the ad, uploading it, and posting it? Do you not regret being offensive?" and "So, not only do you have no one on staff who can

recognize a blatantly racist ad, but you also do not have a copy editor [...] who knows that being sorry that someone is offended is different from being sorry for having given offense.”

However, by using the word “we”, Dove does take responsibility in their actions. There is a slight difference between saying “in an image we posted” instead of for example using a phrase such as: “an ad that was posted” and shows that Dove is willing to admit that they are responsible. However, some aspects of Coombs’ (2007) “bolstering” can also be seen as Dove thanks its audience for the feedback and mentions that they are “committed” to representing diversity. This reminds Dove’s audience that they are trying to do good.

The above-mentioned apology post gathered approximately 3.700 reactions (see figure 12 below). Those reactions were distributed as 2.500 angry emojis, 755 likes, 196 shocked emojis, 109 sad emojis, 88 laughing emojis and 68 heart emojis. This shows that the reactions to the first post were overwhelmingly negative, and most people expressed anger. The fact that “like” is only the second most used reaction says a lot, since “liking” a post is the default option, and you have to separately choose the other reactions. This means that 2.500 people were willing to put effort into choosing the angry emoji, so that they could express their feelings about the post. This already gives us some idea of the audiences overall emotional response to the post.

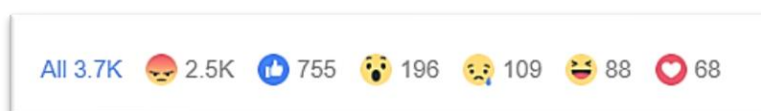


Figure 12. Facebook reactions to Dove’s first apology

The apology post has also gathered almost 8,000 comments, and unsurprisingly the emotions shown most frequently in the comments are anger, frustration and disbelief. Many of the comments point out the wording “missed the mark”, and overall people seem very unhappy

with the apology: “Try that apology again, Dove”, “What exactly were yall going for? What was the mark...”, “You didn’t miss the mark you did exactly what u set out to do which is to try and capitalize on the race war that’s going on.”, “You all didn't "miss the mark." You were "spot on" in continuing the deployment of a long racist trope.”

This shows that Dove failed with the wording of their apology. They had the right idea of going for the rebuild strategy, since as Jin et al. (2011) pointed out, stakeholders are more likely to accept accommodative crisis response strategies, such as corrective actions, when the crisis is perceived to have an internal origin. However, since they included the sentence about “missing the mark”, they failed to keep the focus on rebuilding and people latched on to that part instead and expressed their unhappiness with the apology. Therefore, if Dove had not included the “missed the mark” part, people might have had a better response to their apology.

Aside from people responding to the things Dove said in their apology, some commenters showed their anger by mentioning how they are never going to use Dove products again (see figure 13). These kinds of comments were made a lot, ranging from people saying they will throw away all their Dove products or never buy them again, to people urging others to stop supporting Dove. Some examples of this include comments such as “I'm sick that your product is in my home. Never again.”, “I threw all my dove away and bought #Nivea”, “Stop using their products. Don't be angry with them for showing us who they are. Just simply shut them down.” and “Ditch the dove”. This type of behavior seems to show that angry reactions make people take harsh actions and they want to show this to the organizations.

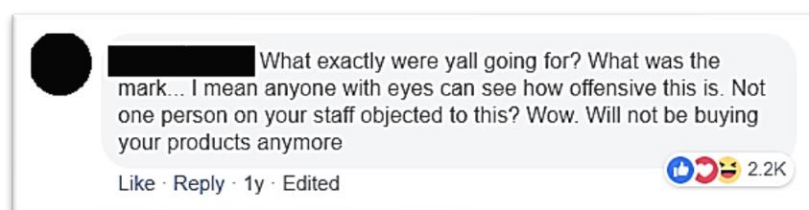


Figure 13. Example of a negative comment to Dove’s first apology.

Another noticeable theme in the comments is people telling Dove they need to hire more Black people into positions of power, or that the people responsible for this ad should be fired. As Jin et al. (2011) point out, when people are angry or frustrated and they see the crisis origin as internal, they want to see corrective actions taken by the organization. Comments such as “You desperately need to hire more people of color in more positions of authority.” and “This means you clearly lack diversity and inclusion in your marketing team” are a good example of this idea.

Some people (see figure 14 below) also pointed out the long history of racism against Black people in advertising. As explained in chapter 2.4, racism has a long history in advertising, and some people are very aware of this, which is why their emotional responses to new cases may be stronger.

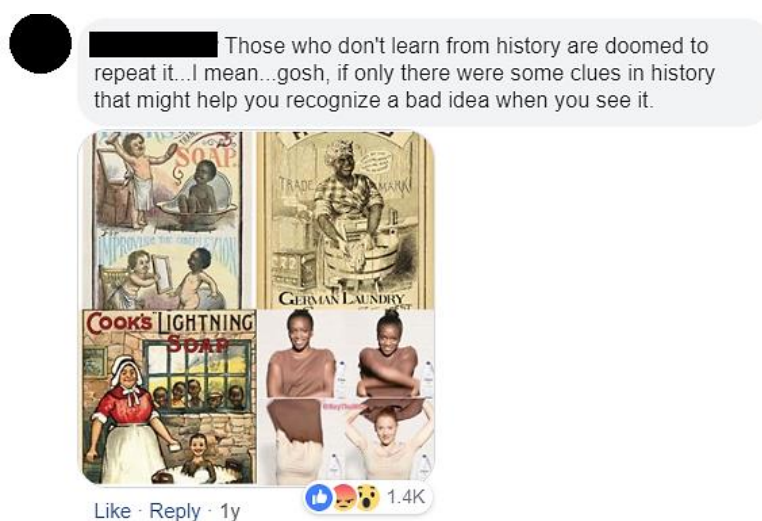


Figure 14. A comment pointing out the history of racism in soap advertising

In conclusion, when it comes to the first apology, based on the Coombs’ (2007) SCCT categories, Dove’s crisis response strategy was a mix of diminishing and rebuilding, with some bolstering added into the mix. Similarly, since the audience seemed to believe that the origin of the crisis was internal, the situation belonged in the SCCT’s preventable cluster. Therefore, in

accordance with Jin et al's (2007) ICM model and Liu et al's (2011) SMCC model, crisis responsibility was seen as high, and the main emotional response shown was anger. Other emotions shown were frustration, disbelief and cynicism. As seen by Vignal Lambert and Barki's (2017) matrix, the best crisis response strategy should have been accommodative, and Dove seemed to know this and tried to utilize it but made some mistakes in the eyes of some of the stakeholders which lead to those people expressing their unhappiness with the apology.

Two days after the first apology, on October 9th, 2017, Dove made another Facebook post (see figure 15), possibly with the idea of trying to form a better apology. This second apology was much longer and tried to explain what they were trying to do with the ad, and then focused heavily on the "rebuild" aspect of crisis communication. The post said:

As a part of a campaign for Dove body wash, a 3-second video clip was posted to the US Facebook page which featured three women of different ethnicities, each removing a t-shirt to reveal the next woman. The short video was intended to convey that Dove body wash is for every woman and be a celebration of diversity, but we got it wrong. It did not represent the diversity of real beauty which is something Dove is passionate about and is core to our beliefs, and it should not have happened. We have removed the post and have not published any other related content. This should not have happened and we are re-evaluating our internal processes for creating and approving content to prevent us making this type of mistake in the future. We apologize deeply and sincerely for the offense that it has caused and do not condone any activity or imagery that insults any audience. (Dove, 2017b)

They start the post by explaining the situation and making sure to point out that there were three women in the original ad instead of just the Black woman and White woman. Then, they explain their idea and what they were trying to convey, admit that they got it wrong and say they have removed the ad. The end of the post is once again focused on how they will take actions to prevent things like this from happening in the future, expressing that they are deeply sorry for the offense that the ad caused and that they do not condone anything that could cause offense to any group of people.

For this second post, Dove’s strategy is also in the rebuild category and they are trying even harder to show that they are accommodative by taking action by mentioning that they have deleted the ad and saying that they are re-evaluating their internal processes. It is also worth pointing out that they did not include the words “missed the mark” in this second post, and instead said that they “got it wrong”, which could mean that they realized it did not sound good.



Figure 15. Dove’s second statement on Facebook. (Dove, 2017b)

They also use some “bolstering” strategies by mentioning that Dove is passionate about the “diversity of real beauty”, which once again tries to remind the audience that they are trying to be a brand known for good representation.

This second apology post has gathered about 2,000 reactions, 1,800 comments, and about 500 people have shared the post. The reactions to the post were distributed into about 1,300 likes, 279 heart emojis, 268 angry emojis, 43 laughing emojis, 37 shocked emojis, and 28 sad emojis (see figure 16). This shows that people reacted to this apology much differently, and much more positively. However, there is also much less reactions compared to the first post, so it is possible less people saw this second apology.

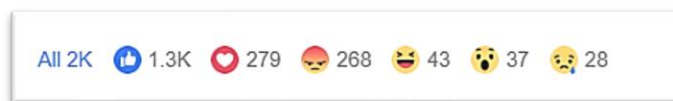


Figure 16. Facebook reactions to Dove's second statement.

Looking at the comments, the audience's reactions to this second post seem to be much more understanding, although there are still also some angry responses as well. Many of the commenters talk about how they realized after seeing the entire 3 second video that the situation was different than what the viral screenshot implied: "finally saw the actual video and not just the screenshots of the video. (...) You have nothing to apologize for.", "I loved the ad, unlike some people I saw the whole thing not just screenshots", "After watching the ad in its entirety...I am extremely bothered that it was displayed as a racist ad in the first place." Therefore, it can be assumed that since it had been two days, people had more time to find information about the situation, which made them change their opinions and their emotional responses were much more positive. This also shows the impact influencers' such as this specific make-up artist can have, since her post shaped many stakeholders' ideas of the situation.

However, there were still some angry comments as well. People pointed out that Dove should be putting more effort into showing that they support diversity instead of just saying it by leaving comments such as "It appears that Dove is purposely adding minorities in their ads as an effort to show they are "diverse".", "Perhaps your company should practice the diversity and inclusiveness you try so hard to portray." and "I am voting with my wallet, and not buying any of your products for the foreseeable future. It takes more than just words of apology to fix this."

Overall the emotions expressed are a mix of anger, frustration and sympathy. This is also reflected in the fact that the time of this second apology, the audience seemingly became more divided and the origin of the crisis was seen in two ways. Some people believed that the situation

was caused by internal factors, as in, the organization made the ad in a way that resembles racist imagery. Other people, however, seem to believe that the crisis was caused by external factors, as in, the ad was not racist and the people who are calling the ad racist are the ones who caused the crisis situation. Therefore, this explains why the emotional responses also differ between audience members.

In conclusion, the second apology post was likely received much better, because of the fact that based on Jin et al's (2007) ICM model, some of the audience members now came to the understanding that the origin of the crisis was external. Thus, as stated by the SCCT theory, those stakeholders most likely believed that Dove was actually more so a victim of the crisis and that their level of responsibility was low. This is where Jin et al's (2011) and Austin et al's (2012) theories about outcome and attribution dependent emotions are useful. Since the stakeholders' views on the crisis origin and responsibility changed over time, the emotional responses were split between anger and sympathy. These differences in reactions can be explained by the fact that people attributed different levels of responsibility on the organization for the crisis, and their emotional responses depended on said level. It should also be noted that Dove still went with a rebuilding strategy in the second post, possibly because they believed that responding accordingly to the stakeholders who still saw the crisis origin as internal, was more valuable in repairing their image. They also used bolstering again to try and remind the audience of their values and good work in the area of representing diverse beauty.

4.1.2 Twitter statements and reactions

Aside from Facebook, Dove also published two statements on Twitter. The first statement, published on 7th of October, 2017, is very short but mentions some of the same things as the first

post on Facebook. The post said: “An image we recently posted on Facebook missed the mark in representing women of color thoughtfully. We deeply regret the offense it caused.” (Dove, 2017c) The statement (see figure 17 below) gathered about 9,000 comments, 3500 retweets and 4,800 likes.

It is also worth noting that this tweet was posted at 9:27pm and the apology on Facebook was posted at 9:47pm, which means that they posted this short response first. This could also explain why it is much shorter, if they wanted to get a statement out quickly, although Twitter does also limit tweets to a certain amount of characters per tweet. At the time of this post, it would have been 140 characters, so Dove used all the space it had available in one tweet. However, as seen in the upcoming statements, if Dove wanted to release a longer statement, they could have used an image with the text written on it to get around the word limit.



Figure 17. Dove's first statement on Twitter. (Dove, 2017c)

The emotional responses expressed in the replies to this tweet seem to be less angry than the once on Facebook, and more evenly divided between disappointed, annoyed and frustrated. The response that got the most “support” from other users, in the form of likes and retweets (see figure 18 below) said: “Lol did this even look right to y’all? I mean your whole team sat down

and cleared this bullshit right here? How?” and included the image taken from the make-up artists’ Facebook post. This shows that the compilation of screenshots posted on Facebook, had already spread to Twitter as well and people were using it as a part of their own posts, when talking about the situation.

The reply gathered 10,000 retweets and 15,000 likes, which is more than Dove’s post itself. If we assume that the people who liked and retweeted the reply agree with the comment, it could mean that many people shared this frustration. However, that comment also received many

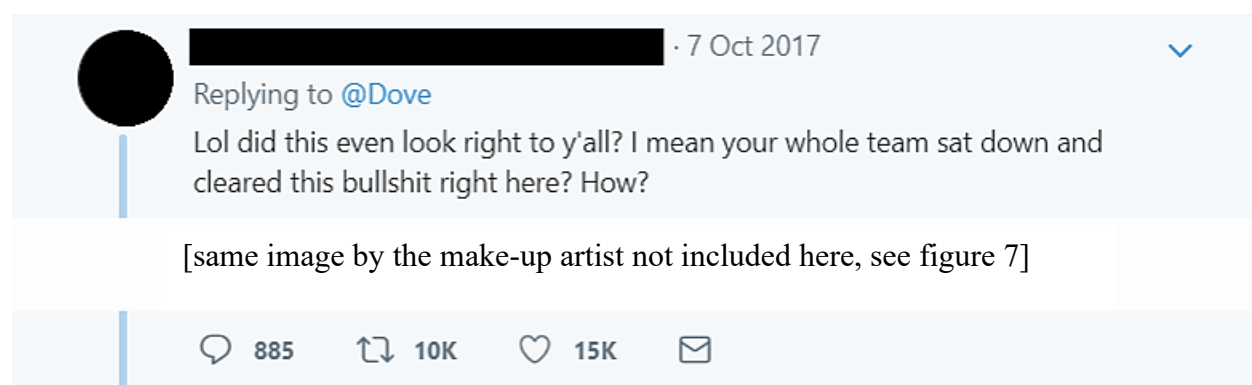


Figure 18. Example of people using the viral screenshot in their replies on Twitter.

angry replies from other users who disagreed and claimed that the ad was not racist and argued that the ad was purposefully misinterpreted. This shows that people on Twitter also had very differing opinions about the situation.

Similar to Facebook, many users on Twitter also focused on the wording used in the tweet, especially the expressions “missed the mark” and the “regret the offense it caused”. People expressed that “missing the mark” was nowhere near enough and that they were only diminishing the actual harm done (see figure 19). Overall, stakeholders were not very happy with the short apology; some expressed this by leaving comments such as “What a pathetic apology...!!!” and “That’s it????”.

This shows that if organization have had previous cases where they have been accused of racism, there is a possibility that stakeholders will remember and bring it up again.

Outside of anger, stakeholders also expressed disbelief and sadness in their comments. For example, many found it incredulous that an ad like that would get made; “You actually PAID an advertising firm to create this image/video?” and some decided to express their disbelief and sadness by saying things such as “I wish I was surprised” and “Very sad and disappointed about the new ad.”

Beside these more negative comments, there were also some comments that showed more positive emotions, such as empathy: “There was absolutely nothing wrong with your Commercial. Sorry you went through that.” Although, it should be noted, that many of the replies that showed empathy towards Dove were actually posted a couple of days later, so those people may have seen the apology at a later point or came back to the apology post to express their opinion after learning more about the situation.

In conclusion, in this first Twitter statement, based on the Coombs’ (2007) SCCT categories, Dove’s crisis response strategy was mostly to diminish the situation by saying the “missed the mark”. This would mean that they effectively put themselves into the accidental cluster. However, since the audience seemed to believe that the origin of the crisis was internal, from the stakeholders’ perspective the situation belonged in the SCCT’s preventable cluster. Therefore, like pointed out by Jin et al’s (2007) ICM model and Liu et al’s (2011) SMCC model, stakeholders saw the crisis responsibility as high, and the main emotional response shown was anger. Other emotions shown were frustration, sadness and disappointment. As seen by Vignal Lambert and Barki’s (2017) matrix, the best crisis response strategy should have been accommodative from the beginning, so based on the theories mentioned, Dove made a mistake by

choosing an approach that did not meet the expectations of a number of people, which led to many of the stakeholders expressing their unhappiness with the apology.

In addition to the first twitter post, Dove also posted the second, longer message they published on Facebook on Twitter on October 9th, 2017 (see figure 21). Since the text is the exact same as the one posted on Facebook, it will not be analyzed in detail again here. Overall, the second tweet gathered about 900 comments, 700 retweets and 1500 likes, which is a lot less than the original, shorter tweet. It also received the least amount of comments out of all the posts Dove made. This could mean that most people already accepted the apologies, had already seen the message on Facebook, or otherwise did not feel the need to engage with this tweet. It could also be that not as many people saw this tweet, since it was not shared by as many people.



Figure 21. Dove's second Twitter statement. (Dove, 2017d)

The replies to this tweet were mostly positive in the sense that in the sample of approximately one hundred comments, there were a lot more comments saying Dove did nothing wrong, and it was harder to find angry reactions, although some still existed. Many stakeholders tried to offer advice to Dove by leaving comments such as “Instead of purchasing diversity outside of your product, try including diversity within your company.” Others put the blame on those people who got offended and offered their sympathy to Dove; examples of these include comments such as “Dove did nothing wrong. Everyone just want to be angry” and “I love Dove and will still love Dove. Some people are too sensitive.”

Similar to the Facebook post, most people in the comments just voiced their opinions on whether the ad was racist or not. However, some people also expressed their unhappiness with the apology by saying things such as “It took you 2 full days to write this after your meaningless, emotionless standard copy-past apology tweet?” and “Do you hire people of colour in your company? Did they approve of this ad?”. Once again stakeholders are bringing up the idea that Dove must not have enough diversity within their employees. Additionally, some commenters even referred to the long history of racism in advertising: “A black woman turning into a white will forever be a problem whether y'all who 'see no problem with the ad agree or not" Some posted pictures of them throwing away their Dove products.

In conclusion, although this second tweet by Dove included the same text, and therefore the same strategies, as the post they made on Facebook, the emotions expressed in the replies that were analyzed appeared slightly more varied than on Facebook. In accordance with Jin et al’s (2007) ICM model and Liu et al’s (2011) SMCC model, those who saw the crisis responsibility as high expressed anger and those who saw it as low expressed sympathy. However, many also expressed other emotions such as sadness and disappointment. Based on the comments, it also seemed that stakeholders on Twitter were more evenly mixed between seeing the crisis origin as

internal or external, which is why their responses were more evenly split between expressing negative or positive emotions.

4.1.3 Findings

In the beginning, Dove's strategy was a mixture of the diminish and rebuild strategies, based on the work by Coombs (2007). However, stakeholders' first reactions were very negative, and many left angry comments and replies. People were especially not happy with Dove using the wording "missed the mark" when referring to the crisis, since they seem to believe that that was not enough to describe the seriousness of the situation.

When it comes to the second set of statements, posted three days later, stakeholders' reactions had changed. It is possible that after people had more information about the situation over time, some changed their reactions, which is why the second set of statements gathered a mixture of angry and sympathetic reactions. This would mean that based on Jin et al's (2007) ICM model, as time went on and the audience had time to learn more about the situation, some of the stakeholders came to the understanding that the origin of the crisis was external. Thus, as stated by the SCCT theory, those stakeholders believed that Dove was more so a victim of the crisis and their level of responsibility was low.

Therefore, Weiner's (1986) and Jin et al's (2011) research on outcome and attribution dependent/independent emotions was also helpful in pointing out how the stakeholders' emotional responses changed over time. Outcome independent - Attribution dependent emotions (such as anger and frustration, in this case) were more visible in the comments analyzed from the first post, whereas Outcome dependent – Attribution independent emotions (such as sympathy) started showing up in the analyzed comments of the second post. Since the stakeholders' views on the crisis origin and responsibility changed over time, the emotional responses were also split

between anger and sympathy. Since Dove continued with the rebuilding strategy, they managed to respond to the people who were angry and helped the situation to calm down. Additionally, Dove also used the bolstering strategies mentioned by Coombs (2007) in both of the stages of the crisis, to remind it's audience that it has been doing good work in representing diversity and will continue to do so in future as well.

Overall, the main emotions that came up in the responses to this case seem to be anger, disbelief, frustration, sadness, and sympathy. According to Vignal Lambert and Barki's (2017) matrix, accommodative strategies would have been the best choice, and Dove seemed to also acknowledge this, although judging by the audience's reactions they did not fully succeed in the beginning. Since the second Facebook post and the second tweet were the same, it was also noticeable that on Facebook people seemed to see the crisis origin as internal, whereas on Twitter people seemingly saw the crisis origin as external.

As seen in the comments, many people also accused Dove of not having enough diversity internally within their employees, which they seem to think is the problem why this situation was able to happen. Interestingly, Dove does not address this in their social media posts, and only talks about re-evaluating their "internal processes".

4.2 H&M

The H&M crisis started when a picture of a Black child wearing a hoodie with the text "coolest monkey in the jungle" went viral online in January 2018. The image was from H&M's online store, and people got upset because they had chosen a Black child to wear the coolest monkey hoodie, while a White child next to him was wearing a hoodie with the texts: "Mangrove Jungle", "official survival expert" and "junior tour guide". In their posts, people expressed their

uncomfortable feelings that this was too close to the derogative way White people used to portray Black people as similar to monkeys or “savages” in the past.

One of the first posts that started going viral was made by a style blogger on the 7th of January. She tweeted: "Whose idea was it @hm to have this little sweet black boy wear a jumper that says 'coolest monkey in the jungle'?" The post was retweeted nearly 20,000 times. In addition, on the 8th of January, 2018, a well-known artist called posted about the situation on Twitter to his approximately ten million followers and said: “woke up this morning shocked and embarrassed by this photo. i’m deeply offended and will not be working with @hm anymore...” His post was retweeted almost 120,000 times. This brought a lot of attention to the picture and added to the developing crisis, and the situation escalated even further.

H&M eventually responded to the criticism by posting an apology on both Twitter and Facebook on the 9th of January 2018. Additionally, they made a second post on Facebook on the 16th of January as well as two more post on Twitter on the 13th and 16th of January 2018. One of the twitter posts was made specifically because the hoodie crisis ended up causing riots in South African stores, so H&M had to address this serious development separately.

4.2.1 Facebook statements and reactions

H&M posted their first statement on Facebook on the 9th of January 2018 (see figure 22). The post said:

We would like to put on record our position in relation to the controversial image of our hoodie. Our position is simple– we have got this wrong and we are deeply sorry.

We have a responsibility to be aware of and attuned to all racial and cultural sensitivities – and we have not lived up to this responsibility at this time. This incident is accidental in nature, but this doesn’t mean we don’t take it extremely seriously or understand the upset and discomfort it has caused. We have taken down the image and we have removed the

garment. We will now be doing everything we possibly can to prevent this from happening again in future. <http://hm.info/1ahfv> (H&M, 2018a)

They start the post by addressing the fact that the image of their product has gone viral by saying they are aware of the “controversial image”. Next, they apologize and talk about how they have a responsibility to not be racially insensitive and admit that they have not “lived up to” that responsibility. This shows that they are willing to admit they are guilty of being insensitive. It also shows that H&M wants to be seen and known as an inclusive brand, which could be seen as H&M using Coombs’ (2007) idea of bolstering to remind their audience of its positive goals and values.

H&M also points out that “this incident is accidental in nature”, putting themselves into the accident cluster, possibly aiming to shift the audiences view of the situation as well. As seen by Vignal Lambert and Barki’s (2017) matrix, if the audience believes that the situation was accidental, the responses are more likely to be less angry and more positive, which would benefit the organization.

At the end, H&M apologizes again and mentions that they have removed the product from sale and are now focused on making sure this does not happen again. This shows that H&M is willing to admit that the origin was internal, and not the fault of the people who accused them. They are also already taking action by removing the image and removing the product from sale, which is an accommodative action, as stated by Jin et al. (2011).



Figure 22. H&M's first Facebook statement. (H&M, 2018a)

The apology post has gathered about 27,000 reactions. Those reactions are distributed into about 20,000 likes, 3,900 laughing emojis, 1,800 heart emojis, 894 angry emojis, 372 shocked emojis, and 166 sad emojis (see figure 23 below). This shows that most people seemed to react positively, or just did not feel like choosing any other reaction aside from “like” after seeing the post. The fact that the “laughing emoji” reaction is the second highest option, however, is very interesting. This might mean that people are either making fun of the situation and “laughing” at it as if they think it is not that seriously, or that they found the apology “insufficient” and are laughing at how bad it is, in their opinion. This is also somewhat visible in the comments, which are discussed further below. Of course, there could also be other reasons for people picking the specific emoji, but it is definitely interesting that so many of them chose it.

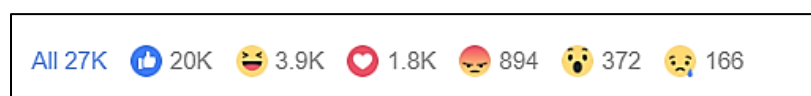


Figure 23. Facebook reactions to H&M's first apology post.

When looking at the comments, it is easy to see that the responses are mainly split into two main categories: (1) H&M did nothing wrong and they should not have to apologize, and (2) The apology is not good enough, and there is no way the situation was an “accident”. This shows that people seem to attribute different levels of crisis responsibility, and therefore see the crisis as belonging to different crisis clusters.

The comments that belong in category 1, seem to come from a standpoint where the user believes the organization is a victim of the crisis. However, in category 2, people seem to believe the crisis is more so in the preventable cluster. This means that the stakeholders’ perceptions of the levels of crisis responsibility the organization has in the situation vary drastically. Therefore, this shows that crisis situations are not always straight-forward, and since the reactions are so divided, it can be difficult for organizations to choose the best response strategy.

Examples of category 1 include comments such as “No reason to apologize. There was nothing wrong with the hoodie or the ad.” and “I think the people who made a big deal out of this are the ones in the wrong”. On the other hand, examples of category 2 include comments such as “How is it an accident? Someone thought it up and didn’t see a problem, someone approved it and didn’t see the problem” and “I’m concerned that you don’t have a single Black person in your organization that saw this and said, maybe don’t put the monkey shirt on a black child”.

However, there is also a smaller, third category of comments visible, where people make fun of the situation and say things such as “Look baby Im not mad at Ya , Are y’all hiring ? I’ll be the coolest monkey working there”, or ask for gift cards and discounts: “Y’all can apologize by giving EACH CUSTOMER A \$1000 gift card. 😏😏 Your words cant be trusted.” Some even say they now wish to buy the hoodie: “Hey H&M I actually like the hoodie, do you have them in adult sizes as well?” This makes it seem like some audience members are using sarcastic humor

when reacting to the situation. This could mean that they are hiding their anger behind humoristic comments, or that they think the whole situation is ridiculous and are making fun of it.

In conclusion, based on Coombs' (2007) SCCT categories, the crisis response strategy used in this first Facebook statement by H&M was a mix of diminishing and rebuilding, with some bolstering. Similarly, since some of the audience seemed to believe that the origin of the crisis was internal, whereas some of them saw it as external, the situation belonged in both the preventable and the victim cluster of the SCCT. As seen by Vignal Lambert and Barki's (2017) matrix, for those stakeholders who saw the crisis responsibility as high, the best crisis response strategy should have been accommodative, whereas for those who saw the crisis responsibility as low, the best response strategy would have been defensive. It is possible that H&M knew this, and therefore tried to mix both of their strategies in their statement. Similarly, in accordance with Jin et al's (2007) ICM model and Liu et al's (2011) SMCC model, the crisis origin and level of crisis responsibility were the main aspects affecting the emotional responses shown, which is why stakeholders expressed a mix of anger and sympathy. Other emotions shown were amusement and cynicism.

Later on, on the 16th of January 2018, H&M released a second statement on Facebook (see figure 24). The statement included text and an additional image that has the text "WE ARE LISTENING" on it. The actual text on the post said:

The recent incident was entirely unintentional, but it demonstrates so clearly how big our responsibility is as a global brand. We have reached out, around the world, inside and outside H&M to get feedback. Our commitment to addressing diversity and inclusiveness is genuine, therefore we have appointed a global leader, in this area, to drive our work forward. There will be more from us soon. (H&M, 2018b)

H&M begins the post by claiming that the incident was "entirely unintentional", which shows that they are putting themselves into the accidental cluster based on Coombs' (2007)

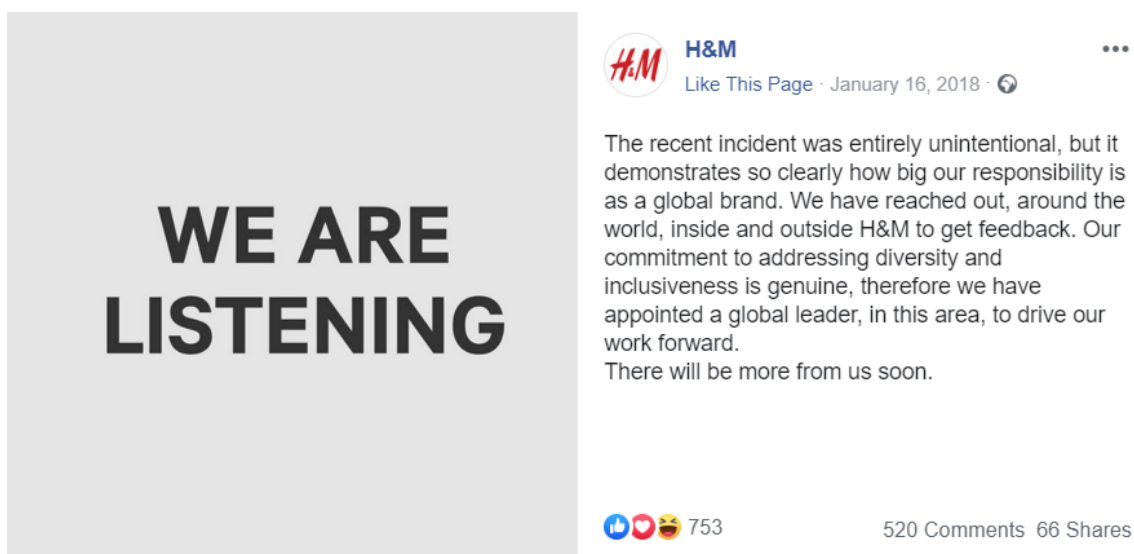


Figure 24. H&M's second statement on Facebook. (H&M, 2018b)

SCCT. Next, they try to be accommodative by saying they have reached out for feedback. They also mention that their “commitment to addressing diversity and inclusiveness is genuine”, which seems very defensive. It is easy for an organization to say these things, but since there is no evidence, the audience does not know whether that is true or not. Therefore, this could also be seen as the bolstering strategy that Coombs (2007) mentions. At the end, H&M even say that have employed someone in a role of a “global leader”, but there is no information whether or not it is a person of color or someone who is White, which seems to be something the stakeholders are interested in.

They end the post by saying “there will be more from us soon”, which leaves the message very open ended, and shares no actual information. It should also be pointed out that H&M does not actually apologize at all in this post but focuses on trying to show that they will try to be better in the future, which fits the “rebuilding” strategy mentioned by Coombs (2007). They also seemed to use the photo with the big “WE ARE LISTENING” text on it as a way to get people’s attention, and really push the “rebuilding” message.

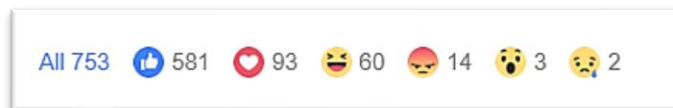


Figure 25. Facebook reactions to the second post by H&M.

The post gathered about 750 emoji reactions (see figure 25 above). The reactions were divided into 581 likes, 93 hearts, 60 laughing emojis, 14 angry emojis, 3 shocked emojis, and 2 sad emojis. This shows that people were reacting quite positively. This could mean that most people interacting with the post were either okay with the “like” option or did not feel the need to choose a different reaction. Overall, the amount of reactions is much lower than in the first post.



Figure 26. Mixed emotional responses to H&M's second Facebook statement.

In addition to the emoji reactions, the post gathered 531 comments. Unlike the emoji reactions, the comments left on the post are quite evenly mixed between stakeholders expressing negative and positive emotions (see figure 26 above). This could mean that those who were okay with the apology just left a “like” on the post, or felt less motivated to comment, and those who

were angry decided to leave comments. Many of the stakeholders express their anger and annoyance with the fact that there was no real information about this “global leader”. For example, one commenter expressed their frustration by saying: “Hell with all the apologies, what nationality is your global director you just hired. You need to diversify. You just don't get it, do you.”

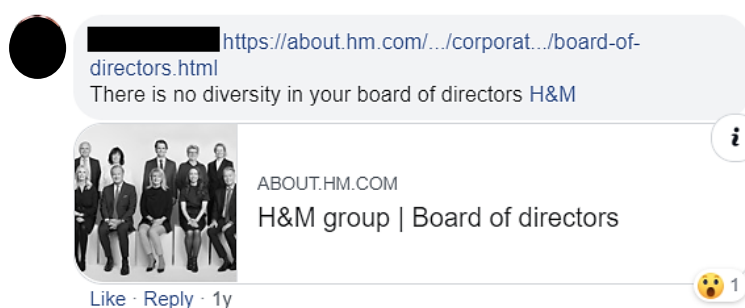


Figure 27. Comment mentioning H&M's nondiverse board of directors.

Another commenter posted a link to H&M's own page which has a photo of their board of directors and pointed out that all the people were White (see figure 27 above). This once again shows that stakeholders are demanding for more diversity from these big brands, and they seem to believe that if they had more POC employees, these racist “accidents” would not happen so easily.

In conclusion, when it comes to the second Facebook statement by H&M, based on Coombs' (2007) SCCT categories, their crisis response strategy heavily leaned on the rebuilding aspect, with some bolstering as well. The reason why this second statement was received in a similar way to the first Facebook statement was likely because of the fact that, based on Jin et al's (2007) ICM model, stakeholders were still divided on whether the crisis origin was internal or external. This is where Jin et al's (2011) and Austin et al's (2012) theories about outcome and attribution dependent emotions are useful. Since the stakeholders' views on the crisis origin and

responsibility did not seem to change much over time, the emotional responses were still split between anger and sympathy. However, the fact that H&M mentioned hiring a “global leader” but did not give any more information, made some commenters express additional anger and frustration towards the statement.

It should also be noted that although the situation had changed, H&M still went with a rebuilding strategy, possibly because they believed that responding accordingly to the stakeholders who still saw the crisis origin as internal, was more valuable in repairing their image. Similar to this, it should be noted that H&M did not mention the attacks to their stores in South Africa in any of their statements on Facebook, which could also be a way to not bring more attention to the crisis.

4.2.2 Twitter statements and reactions

As mentioned earlier, H&M also posted three statements on Twitter. The first one, posted on 9th of January (see figure 28) said:

We understand that many people are upset about the image of the children’s hoodie. We, who work at H&M, can only agree. We’re deeply sorry that the picture was taken, and we also regret the actual print. Therefore, we’ve not only removed the image from our channels, but also the garment from our product offering. It’s obvious that our routines haven’t been followed properly. This is without any doubt. We’ll thoroughly investigate why this happened to prevent this type of mistake from happening again. (H&M, 2018c)

Since H&M start this statement by saying they understand the situation and claiming that they are “deeply sorry that the picture was taken”. This makes it seem like they had no control over it and were not part of that situation, which fits the diminish aspect of Coombs’ (2007) SCCT. Some parts of the message are also worded strangely, since they quickly add that they “also regret the actual print” right after. It almost seems like someone wrote the statement very quickly and did

not structure the sentences very well. Next, H&M mentions that they removed the image and the product from sale, which shows that they are taking action. They also claim that they have routines to prevent this, but they were not followed properly, which slightly turns the blame on someone inside the organization who worked on the photos. It is also interesting that the statement on Twitter is very different from the statement on Facebook although they were posted on the same day.

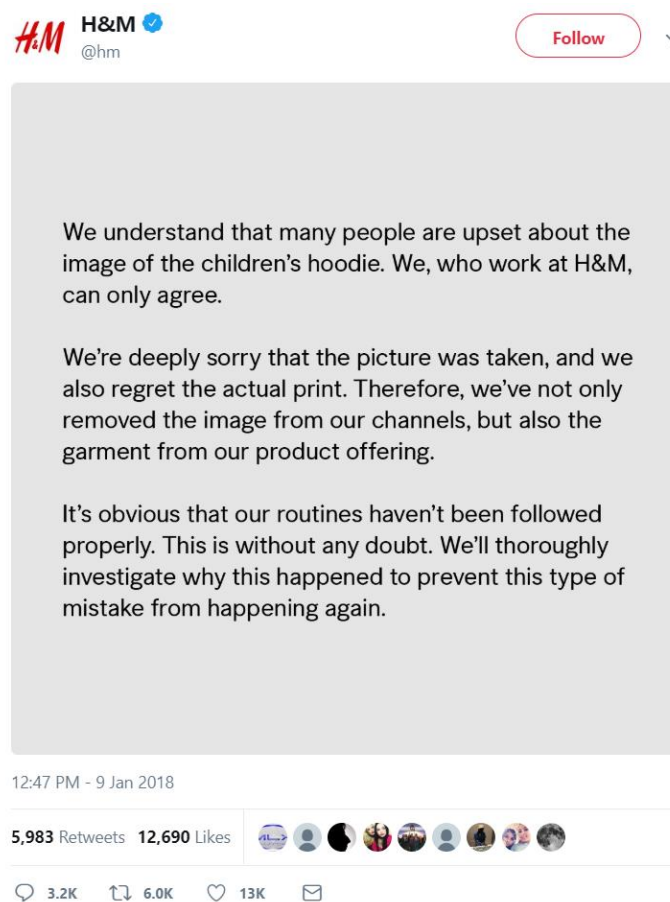


Figure 28. H&M's first Twitter statement. (H&M, 2018c)

Overall, the message seems like a strange mix of H&M trying to take responsibility, but also claiming that some other entity who worked on this case committed this offence. Based on SCCT, this statement is using a mixture of the diminishing and rebuilding strategies. They were

perhaps trying to be accommodative, but the execution is poor and the attempt to distance the organization as a whole from the situation and turning the blame to some smaller section of the marketing team is very clear.

The statement has gathered 3,200 replies, 6,000 retweets and 13,000 likes. This is much less than what the first Facebook post gathered. When it comes to the replies, many stakeholders express sympathy in the sense that they did not believe the ad was racist. The reply that gathered the most support (see figure 29) expressed this by saying: “I don't get it. Yes the hoodie says coolest monkey in the jungle. I don't associate him with a monkey just because his skin is dark. The fact everyone feels the need to freak out about this is the only thing being racist here.” Others, however, were not happy with the apology and reacted negatively to H&M calling the situation a mistake; good examples of this are replies such as “Was that supposed to be an apology? Y'all knew what you were doing...”, “Mistake? No, this wasn't a mistake at all.” and “H & M knew exactly what they were doing, they wanted to cause a public stir, but things got out of hand.” These comments seem to position H&M as a liar that tries to cover up something they did on purpose. Due to the vast differences in opinions, many commenters also ended up arguing amongst themselves about whether the image was racist or not.



Figure 29. Example of a comment under H&M's first Twitter statement.

In conclusion, when it comes to this first Twitter apology, based on the, H&M's crisis response strategy was a mix of Coombs' (2007) diminishing and rebuilding strategies. Similarly,

since the audience seemed to be split between many believing that the origin of the crisis was external and other believing it was internal, the situation belonged both in the victim and preventable cluster. Therefore, in accordance with Jin et al's (2007) ICM model and Liu et al's (2011) SMCC model, crisis responsibility was seen as by some as high and some as low, and therefore the main emotional responses were split between sympathy and anger. Other emotions shown were frustration and cynicism. As seen by Vignal Lambert and Barki's (2017) matrix, the best crisis response strategy should have been accommodative. H&M seemed to recognize this and tried to utilize the approach but made some mistakes in the eyes of some of the stakeholders which lead to those people expressing their unhappiness with the apology.

Due to the racism crisis, H&M ended up also having incidents of vandalism in several stores located in South Africa. In response to this, H&M posted another statement on 13th of January 2018. The statement (see figure 30) said:

We are aware of the recent events in several of our South African stores. Out of concern for the safety of our employees and customers we have temporarily closed all stores in the area. We strongly believe that racism and bias in any shape or form, deliberate or accidental, are simply unacceptable. We stress that our store staff had nothing to do with our poor judgement of producing the children's hoodie and the image. (H&M, 2018d)

This statement is slightly different than the previous ones, since this was prompted by actual physical action of stakeholders who showed their anger. The statement gathered 1.400 comments, 7.000 retweets and 21.000 likes. This is much more than the previous apology, so it could be assumed that this incident once again brought more attention to the crisis and people were prompted to share their opinions and express their emotions regarding the situation.

Therefore, H&M had to keep making these statements to address the situation and try to control it.

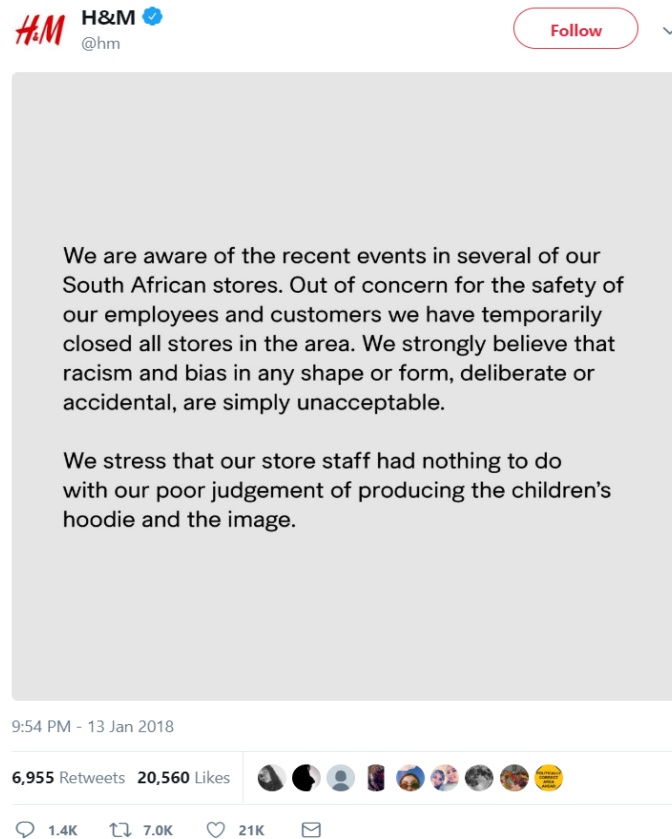


Figure 30. H&M's second Twitter statement. (H&M, 2018d)

H&M begins the statement by informing their audience that they will be temporarily closing down their South African stores to avoid future attacks. This implies that H&M has been a victim of the crisis and will be taking actions to protect itself and particularly store staff. Next, they acknowledge that even if the crisis was started by an accident (in their eyes, at least) H&M as a company is against racism of any kind. Calling the image of the hoodie poor judgement and the racism of it “accidental” takes some of the responsibility away from H&M, and they are again trying to put themselves in the accidental cluster that Coombs (2007) mentions in his SCCT theory. This statement could therefore be seen as using a mixture of the “diminish” and “rebuild” strategies of Coombs’ (2007) SCCT, since they imply that they have been the victim of the

attacks but also take responsibility by admitting that even if the racism of the image was accidental it was still unacceptable.

At the end H&M mentions that their “poor judgement” with the hoodie design was not the fault of the store staff. This shows that people higher up in the organizational chain were responsible, but they still do not blame any singular department or a person but keep talking about it as “our” fault. This separates the store employees from the rest of the organization to protect them, since they are the ones who have to deal with their customers face-to-face. It should also be pointed out that H&M does not apologize anymore in this tweet and it almost feels like they focus more on being the victim of these attacks, which fits the “bolstering” strategy mentioned by Coombs (2007).

The replies to the post seem to mainly consist of some stakeholders telling H&M they did nothing wrong, while others argue amongst themselves about whether the image of the hoodie was racist or not (see figure 31). Stakeholders showing sympathy towards H&M mentioned

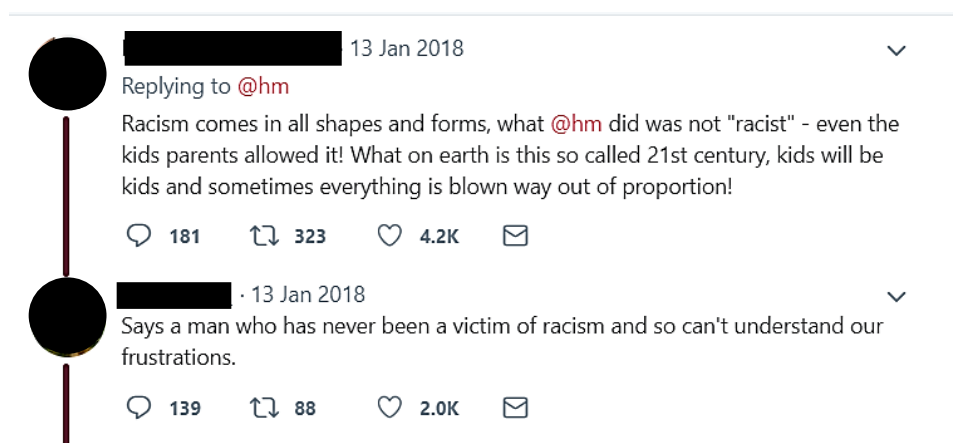


Figure 31. Example of stakeholders arguing with each other.

things such as “Racism comes in all shapes and forms, what @hm did was not 'racist'”, “You did nothing wrong, H&M. I’m on your side.” and “H&M didn’t do anything wrong. Y’all too

sensitive.” This shows that many people did not see the image as racist and were ready to defend H&M on their behalf. These people also seem to shift the blame over the crisis towards the people who got offended, so they seem to view the crisis origin as external.

On the other side, those who still believed that the image was racist mention things such as “What really troubling me is the fact that people keep telling H&M they did NOTHING WRONG. When H&M knows EXACTLY what they did wrong.” and “The way some people lashed out against this is not the way to do things. Stand up for what you believe in by standing up for it the right way.” This shows that the replies in response to this statement were seemingly less negative towards H&M and more understanding, but at the same time people are showing frustration towards each other.

The idea that H&M needs more diversity inside their organization is also mentioned again; “There doesn't need to be a "process" to make sure this doesn't happen again. You need diversity. Diversity at every level of your company.” Similarly, several comments reacted to the



Figure 32. Stakeholder's reaction to the wording of H&M's second Twitter statement

wording “we are aware” and left replies such as “‘we are aware’?? if you WERE AWARE you wouldnt have made these hoodies & offended a whole community. Bye” and at least one commenter also expressed their dislike on the wording “poor judgement” by posting a picture of clothes they claim could be described as designs made with poor judgement (see figure 32) and including the comment: “This is poor judgement. The other is an excuse to act badly...” This once again brings up the fact that stakeholders can focus on the wording of the statements and thus organizations need to be careful when choosing how to express themselves.

When it comes to the attacks itself, stakeholders expressed opinions both agreeing and disagreeing with the action. Examples of these are replies such as “Attacking hm stores is ridiculous! They r innocent people working there” and “for every action there is a reaction, paraphrasing one hell of a giant that ever lived. So that's what you deserve H&M”. This shows the extremes of the feelings that some stakeholders were expressing during the crisis.

In conclusion, when it comes to this second Twitter statement, H&M’s strategy was more defensive and seemed to belong in the diminish, rebuild and bolstering categories of Coombs’ (2007) SCCT. Therefore, H&M also seems to place itself in the victim cluster of the SCCT. Similarly, since many of the stakeholders seemed to also believe that the origin of the crisis was external, the situation belonged mainly in the SCCT’s victim cluster from the audiences point of view as well. Therefore, in accordance with Jin et al’s (2007) ICM model and Liu et al’s (2011) SMCC model, crisis responsibility for this additional crisis was seen as low and the main emotional responses shown were frustration and sympathy. Anger seemed to be a secondary emotion, and mostly aimed at other stakeholders. As seen by Vignal Lambert and Barki’s (2017) matrix, the best crisis response strategy should have been defensive, and H&M seemed to know this or just chose well since that is the strategy they went with. Weiner’s (1986) and Jin et al’s (2011) theories about outcome and attribution dependent emotions are also visible here since the

emotional responses to this second Twitter statement are different from the emotional responses to the first Twitter post, which again shows that as times goes on stakeholders' reactions can change.

The final Twitter statement posted by H&M was posted on the 16th of January, 2018. It was the same “WE ARE LISTENING” message that they posted on Facebook. The tweet consisted of an image of the message, instead of text, so that they could fit the longer message inside one tweet. The image includes the large title saying “WE ARE LISTENING”, and the text underneath it is the same as the one they posted on Facebook (see figure 33)



Figure 33. H&M's third statement on Twitter. (H&M, 2018e)

Since the text is the same as the one posted to Facebook, it will not be analyzed here again. Just like the Facebook post, this tweet gathered the least amount of interactions from the audience. The tweet gathered approximately 160 replies, 250 retweets and 1250 likes. This could

mean that towards the end of the crisis timeline, these statements did not gather as much attention anymore, or people did not feel like interacting as much anymore, since this post was made 9 days after the crisis started.

Based on the replies, people still had very divided responses to the statement (see figure 34). There were still some angry and frustrated comments, but many of them have turned towards demanding H&M to employ more people of color; this was expressed through comments such as “Not going to @hm until they have a black CEO” and “I wonder how many black people / people of colour are employed by this “global leader”... 🙄 #ShouldaAskedSomebody”. This is likely in response to H&M mentioning the “global leader”, but since stakeholders have brought up this



Figure 34. Example of replies to H&M's 3rd tweet.

opinion in response to the other statements as well, this demand for diversity seems to be important for many of the stakeholders. The second example also shows the sarcastic tone some of the responses had.

On the other side, when it comes to more positive emotions, people who did not believe the hoodie was racist, are once again showing sympathy by saying that H&M did nothing wrong: “Everyone without an agenda and understand what H&M is about knows this is completely out of proportion. Great company, fantastic people and owners with high and solid values.” Similarly, forgiveness, in the sense that many have commented that they accept the apologies, is also visible. A good example of this is a comment saying “I honestly believe that this was unintentional, but very hurtful to say the least I'm black and proud. I've forgiven H&M and will shop at your stores again. We've come too far Not forgive.”

In conclusion, when it comes to this last Twitter apology, based on the Coombs' (2007) SCCT categories, H&M's crisis response strategy was a mix of rebuilding and bolstering. Similarly, since some of the audience seemed to believe that the origin of the crisis was internal and some external, in the eyes of the stakeholders the situation belonged respectively in the SCCT's preventable and victim clusters. Therefore, in accordance with Jin et al's (2007) ICM model and Liu et al's (2011) SMCC model, crisis responsibility was seen by some as high and some as low, which explains why the main emotional responses were a mix of anger and frustration, and sympathy and forgiveness. Some also expressed these emotions through sarcasm. As seen by Vignal Lambert and Barki's (2017) matrix, the best crisis response strategy should have been accommodative, and H&M seemed to know this and tried to utilize it but made some mistakes in the eyes of some of the stakeholders which lead to those people expressing their unhappiness with the apology. However, overall H&M seemed to succeed with their crisis communication and was able to take control over the situation towards the end.

4.2.3 Findings

From the beginning, the stakeholders' responses were divided between anger and sympathy. Since the angry stakeholders are more likely to be harmful for the organization, H&M seemed to acknowledge this by trying to use the accommodative rebuilding strategy of Coombs' (2007) SCCT. All of H&M's statements showed aspects of both diminishing and rebuilding, with some bolstering mixed in. However, the second Twitter statement, which they posted after some of their South African stores were attacked, focused much more heavily on bolstering than the others, since H&M focused on being the victim of the attacks. H&M also only really apologized in the first statements posted on Facebook and Twitter, and after that focused on other things. It was also noticeable that H&M kept saying that the situation was "unintentional", "a mistake" or "accident", so they were using the strategies diminish category to push the perspective that the situation was accidental.

The more posts they made, the less reactions and comments they gathered. Stakeholders' emotional responses were very divided from the beginning, but as time went on, less and less people interacted with the statements. For example, H&M's last statement published on Twitter, had very few interactions from stakeholders compared to the other posts, so it could be assumed that people were less interested in sharing their opinions, and perhaps they many of them had already accepted the apologies. However, those who did comment, seemed to feel very strongly about the situation.

The additional crisis, where people attacked stores in South Africa, temporarily brought attention back to the crisis again, and H&M had to release more statements. The fact that that statement gathered the most likes out of all of them, despite having the least amount of replies, might mean that the attacks made even more people feel like H&M was the victim of the crisis and those people were showing their support through likes. Similarly, since many people now

saw H&M as the victim of these attacks, the analyzed replies to the statement seemed to show more sympathy, and even some of those who expressed anger, were directing it towards the people who were taking part in the attacks.

Overall, the main emotions expressed in response to the statements were anger, disappointment, sympathy and amusement. These differences in reactions could be explained by the fact that people attributed different levels of responsibility on the organization for the crisis, and their emotional responses depended on said level. Additionally, it was noticeable that the idea of H&M not having any or enough people of color working for them is brought up a lot. Whether this is true or not is not really adressed by the company in these statements, but they do talk about hiring a “global leader” to assist them in the future. As a final observation, I would say that although H&M did have some problems with their crisis communication, they succeeded to calm the situation down in the end.

5 DISCUSSION

The previous chapter analyzed two cases where organizations had to apologize for something their stakeholders saw as racist behavior. Both Dove's and H&M's cases were started by an image that went viral online, and both brands released multiple statements regarding the situation on the social media platforms Twitter and Facebook. The analysis went through the contents of the statements as well as the responses the audience left in the comment section of said posts. By doing this, the thesis aimed to answer the main research question which was "How did the stakeholders respond to the organizations' crisis communication methods on Twitter and Facebook during a racism related crisis?".

The analysis showed that in both cases the audiences' reactions were split, ranging from anger to sympathy, based on how the stakeholders interpreted the situation. One common aspect that was noticeable in both cases was the fact that people often expressed their overall feelings about the case, and most stakeholders did not show a direct reaction to the actual statements. However, those who did, showed mostly anger towards the wording of the statement, which shows that the way the apology statements are written can also have an effect on stakeholders' emotional responses. If the stakeholders deemed that the apology was not good enough, or if the stakeholders believed that the organization was trying to diminish the situation when it was preventable, the statement received negative feedback.

In addition to the overall aim, the thesis also focused on the communication from the audience's perspective. I will now go through each research question and answer them.

RQ1. What were the main arguments that came up in the comments left on the apologetic posts made by the organizations?

In both cases, and in all the statements made by the organization, both negative and positive reactions were visible. Since these cases deal with racism, it was clear that the stakeholders' views on what is and is not racist heavily affected the responses they left in the comments. Stakeholders were divided between those who believed that the organizations' behavior was racist and those who believed it was not racist. Therefore, they often resorted to arguing with each other and many were calling the people who were offended "too sensitive".

Those who left comments asserting that the organization should have known better, and that their staff should be more diverse so that these issues would not happen, clearly put the blame on the organization and them responsible for the crisis. On the other hand, those who left comments saying that the organization did nothing wrong and that the brand should not have to apologize clearly believed that the images were not racist. In conclusion, it could be said that those who believed that the crisis origin was external, believed that the images were not racist, whereas those who saw the crisis origin as internal seemed to believe that the images were racist.

This supports Jin et al's (2007) ICM model and Liu et al's (2011) SMCC model, which showed that the crisis origin and level of crisis responsibility are the main aspects affecting stakeholders' reactions.

RQ2. What type of emotions were expressed in the comments and do they fit in the categories suggested by earlier theories?

The main emotions found from the comments that were analyzed were explicit anger and sympathy. Additionally, emotions such as displays of sadness, disappointment, frustration and cynicism were also found. In Dove's case the stakeholders seemingly first expressed negative emotions and then became more divided as time passed. In H&M's case, stakeholders' emotional

responses were divided from the beginning. Based on Coombs' (2007) SCCT categories, Dove first used crisis response strategies that were a mix of diminishing and rebuilding, and later changed their approach to mainly rebuilding with some aspects of bolstering in their statements. H&M on the other hand used a mixture of the diminish, rebuild and bolstering strategies in all of their statements, with a larger emphasis on bolstering in their later statements.

Since Dove's audience seemed to first believe that the origin of the crisis was internal, the situation first belonged in the SCCT's preventable cluster. Therefore, according to Jin et al's (2007) ICM model and Liu et al's (2011) SMCC model, the stakeholders in Dove's case would have seen Dove's crisis responsibility as high in the beginning. The fact that the stakeholders' main emotional response was anger supports these theories. H&M on the other hand was split between the preventable and the victim cluster throughout the crisis, with perhaps even an emphasis on the victim cluster towards the end, after the attacks that happened in their stores. Therefore, since the audience was split between seeing H&M's crisis responsibility level as either high or low, the emotions expressed in the comments were also divided between positive and negative. This also supports the earlier mentioned models, since H&M's stakeholders expressed both anger and sympathy from the beginning. However, I would say that SCCT does not fully explain how cases such as this, where the stakeholders are so divided on the crisis origin, should be handled. Thus, this creates some problems for analysis as well as crisis management, which is why there should be more research done on this aspect of crisis communication.

In Dove's case, as time went on, the later apology posts were received much better than the first, possibly because of the fact that based on Jin et al's (2007) ICM model, some of the audience members seemed to come to the understanding that the origin of the crisis was external. Thus, as stated by the SCCT theory, those stakeholders most likely started to believe that Dove was a victim of the crisis and that their level of responsibility was low. In cases like this, Jin et

al's (2011) and Austin et al's (2012) theories about outcome and attribution dependent emotions were useful. Since the stakeholders' views on the crisis origin and responsibility changed over time, the emotional responses were split between anger and sympathy. These differences in reactions could be explained by the fact that people attributed different levels of responsibility on the organization for the crisis, and their emotional responses depended on said level.

Other emotions shown in Dove's case were frustration, sadness, disbelief and cynicism. In H&M's case the additional emotional responses included amusement, disappointment, cynicism and frustration. These responses were mainly shown in response to the wording or the content of the statements. Since the cases are from two consecutive years, it was also interesting to see how the reactions to these racism related cases changed, especially since some were responding with more amusement in the later case. At the same time, some expressed frustration and anger regarding the fact that these racism-related issues kept happening. Some of these humoristic and cynical comments could be explained by the fact that these racism-related crisis situations have been gotten so much media attention in recent years. Thus, some stakeholders may be getting tired and annoyed of all the accusations of racism, and others might get more and more angry at the fact that it keeps happening, which may have affected their reactions.

Overall, based on the findings of the analysis, the results do somewhat fit in the categories mentioned in earlier research by Coombs (2007), Jin et al (2007) and Liu et al. (2011), and as seen in Vignal Lambert and Barki's (2017) matrix, but there were also some exceptions. Therefore, it might be worthwhile to do more research in the future on cases like these where the audience is so strongly split between to "clusters", to see how these theories and models could be further developed and to help organizations deal with this type of crises. In fact, utilizing the traditional theories and models may not provide best results when trying to please all sides of the audience. Based on the finding of this thesis, a response strategy that is both accommodative and

bolstering may be the best choice since it seemed to work in these cases no matter if the stakeholders saw the origin of the crisis as internal or external.

These cases also proved that the first post is seemingly very important, since in both cases the first apology posts gathered the largest number of shares and reactions. Thus, they will gather a large audience, and organizations need to take this into account. In later statements, both Dove and H&M used the same text on both Facebook and Twitter, which could mean that the brands had time to form a more unified message that they wanted to present on both platforms.

RQ3. Were there differences in the dominating emotions expressed between the Twitter and Facebook responses?

In the Dove case, it was interesting that although the second tweet by Dove included the same text, and therefore the same strategies, as the second post they made on Facebook, the emotions expressed in the replies that were analyzed were slightly more varied and more positive than on Facebook. The post on Twitter also gathered only 891 comments, while the post on Facebook gathered 1.800 comments. Comparing this to the fact that the first statement on Twitter gathered over 9.000 replies, whereas the first Facebook statement gathered approximately 7.900 comments, it could be that Dove's stakeholders on Twitter were more ready to reply in anger in the beginning of the crisis, or at least more eager to share and interact with the statements that made them feel stronger emotions.

In the H&M case stakeholders' emotional responses on both social media sites were very much divided between positive and negative from the beginning, and like the Dove case, as time went on, less and less people interacted with the statements. The first Facebook statement by H&M gathered the most comments (approximately 11.000) out of all the statements by a large

margin and in the comments of that post many stakeholders were expressing their anger, although some sympathy was also visible. The huge amount of comments on the first Facebook statement compared to the first Twitter statement could possibly be explained by the fact that the crisis technically started on Facebook. The second Facebook statement only gathered 520 comments, which is significantly less than the first one, and the stakeholders' reactions were divided between anger and sympathy. This could mean that by the time of this last statement, most people had probably already moved on. Additionally, H&M did not post about the attacks to their stores on Facebook, which is an interesting choice and might mean that they did not wish to bring more attention to it. Since this tactic seemingly worked, it could be something that other brands can learn from and possibly use in their own crisis communication.

On Twitter, their first statement gathered about 3.200 replies, which were divided between anger and sympathy. The second statement regarding the store attacks gathered 1.400 replies and the responses were slightly more on the side of sympathy, or anger towards the people attacking the stores, which means that more of the stakeholders likely started seeing H&M as the victim. Finally, the third Twitter statement only gathered 158 replies, and the responses were divided between sympathy and anger, which possibly means that only those people who felt strongly about the situation were expressing their thoughts by replying to the statements.

This shows that in both cases the last Facebook statement and the last Twitter statement gathered the least amount of interactions from the audience. The more posts they made the less reactions and comments they gathered. It could be assumed that people were less interested in sharing their opinions, and perhaps that many of them had already accepted the apologies. However, those who did comment, seemed to feel very strongly about the situation.

The additional crisis, where people attacked stores in South Africa, temporarily brought attention back to the crisis again and H&M had to release another statement. The fact that that

statement gathered the most likes out of all of them, despite having the least amount of replies, could point to the fact that the attacks made more people feel like H&M was the victim of the crisis and those people were showing their support through likes. The analyzed replies to the statement also showed sympathy, and even some of those who expressed anger were directing it towards the people who were taking part in the attacks. This indicates that many people started to see H&M as a possible victim in the crisis. Overall, the findings of this thesis seem to both support and contradict earlier research on the topic. Similar to Novak and Richmond's (2019) study on the anti-racism campaign by Starbucks in 2015 called #RaceTogether, the findings of this study show that even with good intentions, things can go wrong. As seen by the cases studied in this thesis, the ads technically only became a problem when some of the stakeholders started criticizing them. This means that the organizations might not be aware of a problem until someone else brings it up and it starts spreading.

However, the findings of this specific study also somewhat contradict some parts of the study by Roshan, Warren and Carr (2016) who mentioned that many organizations in their study did not take advantage of or behaved differently to what crisis communication theories and models have suggested. As seen by Vignal Lambert and Barki's (2017) matrix, the best crisis response strategy for Dove should have been accommodative. In H&M's case, the accepted response could have been either defensive or accommodative, but since the angry stakeholders are more likely to be harmful to the organization, accommodative strategies could be deemed as the best option. Both of the brands seemed to be aware of the options covered in these theories, since they both used accommodative approaches in their initial statements. However, they both also made some mistakes in the wording of statements in the eyes of some of the stakeholders, which lead to those people expressing their unhappiness with the apologies. However, I would also agree with Roshan, Warren and Carr (2016) that there is still potential for these organizations

to get better at crisis communication on social media, and that they could do more to use it to its full potential.

6 CONCLUSIONS

This thesis looked into how stakeholders responded to Dove and H&M's crisis communication methods on Twitter and Facebook during a racism related crisis. The main theories and models used in this thesis included the situational crisis communication theory developed by Timothy Coombs (2007), the social-mediated crisis communication model by Liu, Austin and Jin (2011), the integrated crisis mapping model by Jin, Pang and Cameron (2007), and the social media crisis communication matrix developed by Vignal Lambert and Barki (2017). These theories and models helped me analyze the social media messages and answer the main research questions.

The main question that this thesis aimed to answer was how stakeholders responded to the organizations' crisis communication methods on Twitter and Facebook during a racism related crisis. The analysis showed that, as predicted by earlier crisis communication theories, stakeholders expressed different emotions based on the crisis response strategies used by the organization, the origin of the crisis, and the level of responsibility attributed to the organization by the stakeholders.

However, there were also vast differences in the emotional reactions between audience members, depending on how they interpreted the crisis. Unlike other crisis situations, such as broken products, in racism related crises the fault of the crisis is based on whether the stakeholder believes racism was present or not. This caused some of the audience members to express anger and disappointment, while others expressed sympathy. Additional emotional responses found in the comments included frustration, disappointment, sadness, cynicism, and disbelief. Those who expressed more negative emotions such as anger, disappointment and frustration over the racism viewed the cases as having an internal origin and therefore attributing a high level of responsibility on the organization, whereas those who expressed sympathy towards the

organization and anger towards the other stakeholders who were offended viewed the crisis origin as external and therefore saw the organization as a victim,. Therefore, it could be concluded that stakeholders had different views and emotional responses based on the level of responsibility they attributed to the organization, which supports the theories included in Vignal Lambert and Barki's (2017) matrix.

However, since Coombs' (2007) theory only talks about how a crisis could be placed in one cluster (victim, accidental or preventable) it brought some problems for the analysis. When considering the crises studied in this thesis, the findings showed that Dove's and H&M's crises could be seen as both accidental and preventable. Coombs' (2007) SCCT theory does not take this into consideration, so there is a need for more work on this aspect of crises and crisis communication. Therefore, the traditional views on crisis communication are useful for social media use as well, but as suggested by Vignal Lambert and Barki (2017), using all the theories together and forming a larger whole may give organizations more information and better ways to prepare their crisis communication strategies.

The findings of this study could also provide valuable information for companies and organizations about how stakeholders may react in racism-related crisis situations. This study showed how important it is for organizations to stay aware of what people are saying on social media, since unawareness of the discussion might lead to them not knowing a crisis is beginning to form. Organizations need to also be aware of the history of racism, what type of things might be seen as racist (even if it is not meant to be) and how to apologize for their behavior and learn from it. This study also contributed to research on stakeholders' emotional responses in racism-related crisis and how stakeholders may express their emotions on Facebook and Twitter. This could bring new information for organizations while preparing for crises. The study showed that there is a connection between the strategies organizations use and how stakeholders respond

emotionally. Additionally, the findings indicate that when people are angry, they may be more likely to interact with the statements and that successful apologies seemingly receive less responses and shares.

Finally, it should also be mentioned that this study has some limitations that could be addressed in further research. This thesis only showed two cases of one crisis type, since both cases were started by an image suddenly going viral, so I think in the future it would be beneficial to analyze many different types of crises. In addition to that, since this study was qualitative, other studies could be made utilizing a quantitative approach. This could even allow researchers to use the help of computer software which is able to go through all the comments instead of just some of them, which could bring more accurate results of the quantities of all the emotions expressed in the comments. Furthermore, it might also be valuable to study these reactions to racist incidents in other areas outside of the beauty and fashion industry, as well as study how, for example, men react compared to women, Black people react compared to White people, or how younger people react compared to older people when it comes to accusation of racism. This would bring valuable information for a more varied range of organizations, who are trying to plan their crisis communication or manage an ongoing crisis. Finally, this thesis only studied the statements and stakeholder responses posted on Facebook and Twitter, so perhaps research could be done on other social media platforms, such as Instagram and YouTube, to see if other social media channels show similar or differing results.

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