

The Effect of Response Strategies on Spill-Over Effects of Another Company its Crisis

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Abstract

The current research studies the effect of response strategies on the consumer brand evaluation of a company that is affected by spill-over effects. The aim of this study is to gain insights in the problem of the spill-over effect and to find out which response strategies companies should use in order to reduce the negative spill-over effects of other companies' product-harm crises. The present study analyses if there are any differences in effects on consumer brand evaluation of a spill-over affected company, between a Denial strategy, an Attack the accuser strategy and no response. This study is done on the basis of an online survey. I found that conducting a Denial or an Attack the accuser strategy does not make a significant difference in consumer brand evaluation compared to remaining silent. Furthermore, I found that repairing harmed consumers' trust in a company is hard and response strategies do not help in getting back consumers' trust. Brand image and reputation is something that should be handled and maintained with care because when it gets lost, it is hard to get back.

Keywords: Response strategy, Spill-over effect, Product-harm crisis.

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Introduction

“The scandal has cast a cloud over the whole European car industry” (BBC News, 2015). This quote relates to the Volkswagen scandal in 2015. Volkswagen made use of illegal software that gave distorted outcomes to the cars in emission tests. As soon as this came out, the share of Volkswagen dropped by 23 percent (Kresge & Weiss, 2015). Besides that, the total costs of compensating duped consumers and fines raised to a at least 18 billion American dollars (Kresge & Weiss, 2015). This scandal resulted in a distrust in the whole car industry (Dauer & Geiger, 2015). Therefore the Volkswagen scandal also caused crises at many other car (parts) companies. (Dauer & Geiger, 2015).

The Volkswagen example reveals that whenever a company is struck by a product-harm crisis, it is not always just the concerning company that is getting affected negatively. Most of the time other companies in- and outside the related sector can also be affected negatively (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). This effect is called ‘The spill-over effect’ (Lee & Rim, 2016; Borah & Tellis, 2016). The spill-over effect can be negative if the whole sector is linked to the scandalized company (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). In the current society, news is spreading faster than ever. Thus, news about crises or scandals can result in immediate (spill-over) effects and reactions of consumers because of the fast travel speed of certain bad news (Borah & Tellis, 2015).

Even though multiple studies have been conducted on the existence of spill-over effects of product-harm crises, there is hardly any research available about how affected companies can reduce this spill-over effect and how they should respond to consumers and society. It is hard to prevent that a company suffers from the crises of competitors. Therefore companies have to focus on reducing the negative spill-over effects. This could be done with certain response strategies in order to increase consumer evaluations positively. The present

research will study what response strategy will generate the most positive consumer brand evaluations after a company has been affected by spill-over effects of a product-harm crisis.

More specifically, this research will focus on the two response strategies ‘denial’ and ‘attack the accuser’. However, the effectiveness of response strategies could be dependent on whether or not a consumer already thinks the company is part of the scandal (Gruenfeld & Wyer, 1992). This introduces a moderator in this research. This moderator will be ‘trust’ versus ‘distrust’ and should measure the consumer beliefs about the company before being affected by the conducted response strategy. In this research I assume that the company that is affected by negative spill-over effects, has no guilt or involvement in the product-harm crisis.

In this research, the objective is to gain insights in the problem of the spill-over effect and to find out which response strategies companies should use in order to reduce the negative spill-over effects of other companies’ crises. These response strategies can help the company in retaining a positive brand image and in reducing the damage taken as a consequence of another company its product-harm crisis.

Literature overview

Currently there is some literature available about the spill-over effect of product-harm crises among companies. Besides that, there is also some literature about response strategies to reduce spill-over effects regarding scandalized companies. However, there is hardly any research about response strategies for companies that have been affected by the negative spill-over effects from another company its crisis. Such response strategies would focus on reducing the negative spill-over effects on consumer brand evaluations. The present research will study what response strategy will generate the most positive consumer brand evaluations after a company is affected by spill-over effects of a product-harm crisis. The consumer brand

evaluation can be tested on many aspects that cannot all be studied in the current research. Therefore, in the present research I define and study consumer brand evaluations on basis of the four aspects: ‘word-of-mouth communication’, ‘brand attitude’, ‘(re)purchase intentions’ and ‘Trust’. I define ‘word-of-mouth communication’ as the degree to which consumers would talk about the company in a positive or negative way, and ‘brand attitude’ as the personal feelings consumers have towards the company and about being associated with it. Furthermore, I define ‘trust’ as the degree to which consumers have faith in the company and its position, and ‘(re)purchase intentions’ can be specified as the likelihood that a consumer will do business with the company (again) (Bruner, 2013). Those aspects are chosen out of the Marketing Scales Handbook (Bruner, 2013), because existing brand evaluation literature is extensive on these four aspects, which benefits the understanding of the results of this study regarding consumer brand evaluation. The current research will therefore measure the consumer evaluation of response strategies of companies affected by spill-over effects on these four aspects.

Product-harm crisis

Before there is being dealt with (negative) spill-over effects, a certain crisis has to occur. Dawar and Pillutla (2000) claim that a product-harm crisis is a “well-publicized occurrence wherein products are found to be defective or dangerous” (p. 215). Product-harm crises occur more often due to strict product-safety legislation and increasing customer demands (Dawar & Pillutla, 2000). Negative effects of a product-harm crisis can concern shrinking market share, reduced product sales, increase in prices, change in purchase intentions and an increase in sales of other companies (Laufer & Coombs, 2006).

Since the effect of a product-harm crisis was known by companies, research has been done about how companies can overcome a product-harm crisis (e.g. Cleeren, Van Heerde, &

Dekimpe, 2013) or how they should respond when a company goes through a product-harm crisis (e.g. Laufer & Coombs, 2006). Observers always draw conclusions in product-harm crisis about who is responsible for the mistakes and thus who is to blame (Weiner, 1986). In addition, the extent to which a company is blamed for a certain crisis, is linked to the notoriety (reputation) of a company (Laczniak, DeCarlo, & Ramaswami, 2001). A company that is well-known among consumers, gets attributed less blame for certain problems compared to a more unknown company (Laczniak, DeCarlo, & Ramaswami, 2001). Laczniak, DeCarlo and Ramaswami (2001) found that well-known brands were less affected by effects of negative word-of-mouth communication compared to more unknown brands. In the present research, negative word-of-mouth communication is one of the aspects that will be examined to measure consumer evaluations on certain response strategies.

Spill-over effect

Whenever a product-harm crisis occurs, it is not only the direct related (scandalized) company that is negatively affected. Often the effects of a product-harm crisis spill over to other related companies (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). I define spill-over effects as the (negative) effects that a company receives due to another company its product-harm crisis.

In *figure 1* the phenomenon of spill-over effects is clarified.

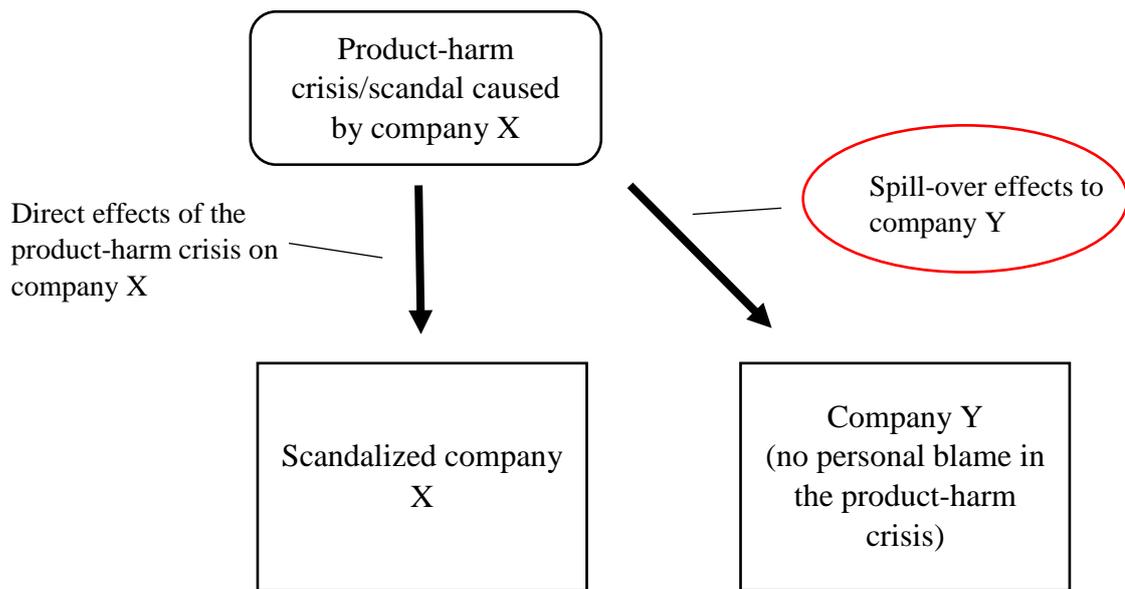


Figure 1 Reproduction of spill-over effects

A brand is part of a certain category (sector or branch) (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). The spill-over effect of a brand scandal/product-harm crisis depends on a few factors. First, the position of the brand in the category/branch (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). When a brand is a typical example of the product category, the category is likely to be influenced as a whole (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). Thus, whenever a certain well-known brand is scandalized, it is likely that effects spill over more easily to other companies in the category. Secondly, the position of the concerning attribute related to the scandal plays a role (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). Whenever a scandal concerns a specific attribute that is typical for the category, it is more likely that the scandal will spill over and affect the category in its entirety (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). For example, Roehm and Tybout (2006) found that whenever a scandal at Burger King happens concerning their hamburgers, it is likely that the effects of the product-harm crisis will spill-over to the whole fast food sector. This is because a hamburger is seen as a specific attribute for the fast food sector. Therefore the position of the scandalized brand in the category and the position of the concerning scandalized attribute, should be taken into account when discussing the results of the current research.

As many studies have shown, a product-harm crisis can have negative effects on a scandalized company (e.g. Dawar & Pillutla, 2000; Laufer & Coombs, 2006). Those negative effects can spill over to other companies in the sector (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). However, in some situations competing companies can benefit from another company's crisis (Ma, Zhang, Wang, & Li, 2013). To clarify the theory, I name the company that caused the crisis, the crisis-company and the company that is affected by negative spill-over effects, the non-crisis company. The scandalized crisis-company will shrink in market share while in crisis and customers are possibly moving to other companies in the related sector (Ma, Zhang, Li, Wang, 2010). Those other non-crisis companies will obtain a temporary growth in market share, while the crisis-company is still in crisis (Ma et al., 2010). The crisis-company should try to repair its image and get back customers that temporary moved to another company in the sector. The non-crisis companies should try to keep those new temporary customers to retain their grown market share, because after the crisis it is likely that the customers move back to their originally chosen brand (Ma, Zhang, Li, & Wang, 2010). To repair image and get back customers, companies in a product-harm crisis can apply response strategies that inform consumers about the company its involvement in the crisis. Those strategies will be clarified in the next section.

Response strategies

Multiple studies have been conducted to find response strategies for companies in a product-harm crisis. However, these studies concerned companies directly in a product-harm crisis (e.g. Coombs, 2006; Laufer & Coombs, 2006; Coombs, 2007). A response strategy is defined as a response of a company to the public (consumers), with the aim to reduce the harm of a crisis (Laufer & Coombs, 2006).

Laufer and Coombs (2006) state that consumers react different to product-harm crises based on the reputation of the company in the product-harm crisis and that the fit of the response strategy depends on the amount of blame a company gets. *Table 1* shows response strategies that have been examined in a study of Coombs (2006). Coombs (2006) argues that the effectiveness of certain strategies depends on consumer believes. The effectiveness of a Denial response (see *table 1*) depends strongly on whether the consumer believes the company has any personal blame in the crisis (Coombs, 2006). Therefore deny response fit best in situations to fight rumours or unfair accusations (Coombs, 2006).

Table 1 Crisis Response Strategies

Deny Response Option

Attack the accuser: Crisis manager confronts the person or group claiming something is wrong with the organization.

- The organization threatened to sue the people who claim a crisis occurred.

Denial: Crisis manager asserts that there is no crisis.

- The organization said that no crisis event occurred.

Scapegoat: Crisis manager blames some person or group outside of the organization for the crisis.

- The organization blamed the supplier for the crisis.

Diminish Response Option

Excuse: Crisis manager minimizes organizational responsibility by denying intent to do harm and/or claiming inability to control the events that triggered the crisis.

- The organization said it did not intend for the crisis to occur and that accidents happen as part of the operation of any organization.

Justification: Crisis manager minimizes the perceived damage caused by the crisis.

- The organization said the damage and injuries from the crisis were very minor.

Deal Response Option

Ingatiation: Crisis manager praises stakeholders and/or reminds them of past good works by the organization.

- The organization thanked stakeholders for their help and reminded stakeholders of the organization's past effort to help the community and to improve the environment.

Concern: Crisis manager expresses concern for the victims.

- The organization expressed concern for the victims.

Compassion: Crisis manager offers money or other gifts to victims.

- The organization offered money and products as compensation.

Regret: Crisis manager indicates the organization feels bad about the crisis.

- The organization said it felt bad that the crisis incident occurred.

Apology: Crisis manager indicates the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks stakeholders for forgiveness.

- The organization publicly accepted full responsibility for the crisis and asked stakeholders to forgive the mistake.

Note. From “The Protective Powers of Crisis Response Strategies” by T. Coombs, 2006, *Journal of Promotion Management*, 12(3), p. 248.

The present research will study whether some of the strategies from *table 1*, can also be conducted by companies to defend themselves against spill-over effects from another companies product-harm crisis.

The current research will be done with the condition that the firms that are affected by negative spill-over effects, have no guilt or personal blame in the product-harm crisis. This excludes strategies concerning any kind of apology or compensation because these strategies can only be conducted when a company has personal blame in the crisis. Thus, the ‘diminish’ and ‘deal’ response options from *table 1* are not relevant in the spill-over situation. Therefore the two response strategies that will be examined in the present research are: ‘Denial’ and ‘Attack the accuser’. ‘Denial’ and ‘Attack the accuser’ conform with our assumption that the companies affected by spill-over effects have no guilt or personal blame in the product-harm crisis. The results will be compared to ‘no response’ of a company, a situation in which a company remains silent after any accusation regarding blame in the product-harm crisis.

Denial. Denial of a product-harm crisis should be used to rectify misunderstandings about the company and its products/services (Laufer & Coombs, 2006). Denial is often used to show consumers that they are out of danger or that the company has no personal blame in the crisis (Coombs, 2006). The ‘denial’ strategy can be an effective strategy to reduce spill-over effects whenever consumers are already affected by spill-over effects (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). Therefore I define a ‘denial strategy’ as a strategy that aims on proving that certain accusations on a company are not true.

Denial can come along with differentiation (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). When the denial strategy is conducted with the aim of showing consumers that the company is different compared to the scandalized company, consumers are likely to link the scandal just to the scandalized company (Roehm & Tybout, 2006). In the Volkswagen scandal, this can for example be done by other car companies by showing consumers that they make use of other car emission tests or software.

Thus, I presume that the ‘denial’ strategy can reduce spill-over effects and can reduce negative thoughts about the company affected by spill-over effects. Whenever a company remains silent when it gets accused of personal blame in a crisis, consumers could think the company conceals information regarding the crisis. Therefore denial can show innocence. If the company has no personal blame in the crisis, the company can convince consumers by denying the accusation and showing proof of innocence. Whenever consumers believe the denials, they could rectify their negative thoughts about the company. This could repair the brand image and reduce harm on consumer evaluations regarding the accused company. Thus,

H1: Consumers evaluate a brand more positively after a company affected by spill-over effects conducts the ‘denial’ response strategy, compared to no response of the company.

Attack the accuser. Often it is the media that directly or indirectly accuses companies of having personal blame in another company its crisis. In the Volkswagen scandal, the media together with some individual advisers, raised questions about emission test manipulation throughout the whole car industry after the Volkswagen scandal came out (e.g. AD Nieuws, 2015). The ‘attack the accuser’ strategy is used to fight accusations like those, in order to reduce its spill-over effects. This strategy can be defined as confronting the person or group that claims the non-crisis company has guilt or personal blame in the product-harm crisis (Cooley & Cooley, 2011). Just like ‘denial’, the ‘attack the accuser’ strategy aims to show consumers that the non-crisis company has no guilt or personal blame in the product-harm crisis (Coombs, 2006). If non-crisis companies can show the accuser has no proof or that the accuser is unreliable, consumers might let the accusation pass. Therefore this strategy often attacks the validity and credibility of the accuser (Hearit, 1996). This gives the non-crisis

company a 'morally superior position' (Hearit, 1996, p. 236). Being in the role of asking questions provides status to the non-crisis company and could avoid that people draw conclusions about the accusations on the non-crisis company (Hearit, 1996).

The 'attack the accuser' strategy displaces the attention of consumers on the validity and credibility of the accuser instead of the accused company. Thus whenever the 'attack the accuser' strategy is conducted, the consumer could (temporarily) forget the accusations on the company or even reject the accusations. This consequently could reduce the negative thoughts among consumers about the accused company. This could reduce the negative spill-over effects on the consumer brand evaluations. Therefore I presume:

H2: Consumers evaluate a brand more positively after a company affected by spill-over effects conducts the 'attack the accuser' response strategy, compared to no response of the company.

Furthermore, I expect that a 'denial strategy' is more effective compared to the attack the accuser strategy, because consumers could prefer a more defensive attitude of the company that comes along with a denial strategy compared to the aggressive attitude of the company when it conducts an 'attack the accuser strategy'. However I predict that both strategies result in a higher consumer brand evaluation compared to 'no response'. Therefore I hypothesize:

H3: Consumers evaluate a brand more positively after a company affected by spill-over effects conducts a 'denial strategy', compared to an 'attack the accuser strategy' and to 'no response'.

Trust vs distrust

Literature has shown that the effectiveness of response strategies can be affected by the consumer brand evaluation before the response strategy is conducted (Gruenfeld & Wyer, 1992; Roehm & Tybout, 2006). The evaluations of consumers before the response strategy 'denial' is conducted by a crisis-company, determines the effectiveness of the 'denial' response strategy (Gruenfeld & Wyer, 1992). Denying a matter that already was believed to be false because of spill-over effects (trust), could lead to an increase in believes that the matter is true (boomerang effect) (Gruenfeld & Wyer, 1992; Roehm & Tybout, 2006). This implies that whenever consumers think that accusations on a company are false (trust) and subsequently a company conducts a denial strategy, consumers could come to the believe that the accusations are actually true (distrust).

I presume that the brand evaluation after the 'denial' strategy is conducted by a non-crisis company, differs between consumers that are not affected by spill-over effects (trust) and consumers that already are affected by spill-over effects (distrust). Consumers that are not affected by spill-over effects and thus still trust the accused company, could evaluate a denial as unnecessary or as incomprehensible. Consumers could not understand the notion of denying something that already is not believed by consumers. Literature states that this can increase suspicions among consumers and therefore 'denial' could backfire on the initial intention of reducing suspiciousness and spill-over effects (Gruenfeld & Wyer, 1992; Roehm & Tybout, 2006). Consequently this could lead to a lower brand evaluation of the non-crisis company and therefore I hypothesize:

H4a: Consumer trust in the company moderates the effect of the 'denial' strategy on consumer brand evaluation (H1), such that for low consumer trust, a 'denial' strategy will have positive effects on consumer brand evaluations compared to no response, whereas for high consumer trust, 'denial' will have negative effects on consumer brand evaluations compared to no response.

Because the 'attack the accuser' strategy has the same aim of proving innocence as the 'denial' strategy, the moderator trust could have the same effect on the 'attack the accuser' strategy as on the 'denial' strategy. Therefore I presume on the basis of the literature regarding denial in general, that the consumers might evaluate the 'attack the accuser' the same way as the 'denial' strategy. Whenever a consumer is not affected by spill-over effects, the 'attack the accuser' strategy could raise questions for the consumer. The consumer could judge an attack on an accuser as an unnecessary action or an action to shift the focus of consumers away from the non-crisis company to the accuser. This could increase suspicions and consequently lower the consumer brand evaluation. Therefore I presume:

H4b: Consumer trust in the company moderates the effect of the 'attack the accuser' strategy on consumer brand evaluation (H2), such that for low consumer trust, a 'attack the accuser' strategy will have positive effects on consumer brand evaluations compared to no response, whereas for high consumer trust, 'attack the accuser' will have negative effects on consumer brand evaluations compared to no response

Figure 2 clarifies the hypotheses and its directions (positive/negative).

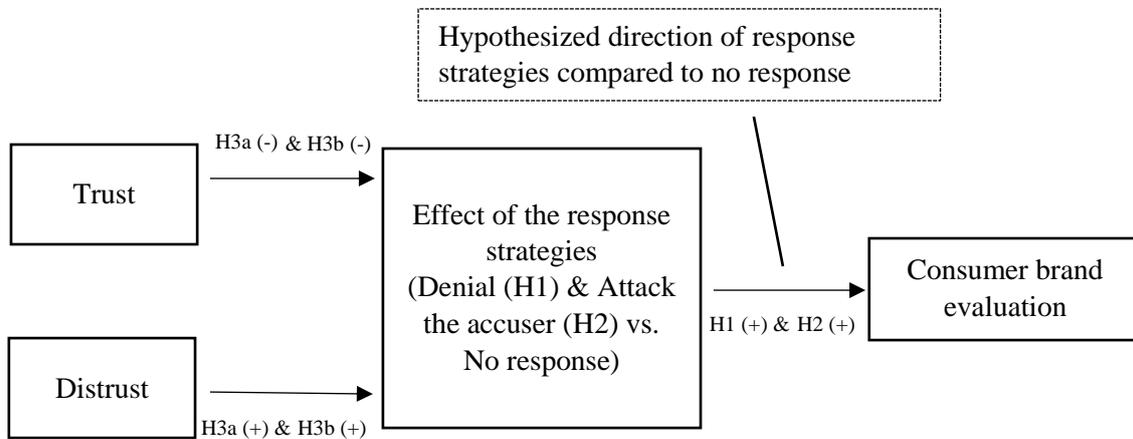


Figure 2 Response strategy model. Hypothesized directions of the response strategies and the moderator on the consumer brand evaluation.

Method

Participants

Ninety-two people from the Netherlands participated in this study (48 males and 44 females, $M_{\text{age}} = 28.37$, $SD = 12.60$). Originally I gathered 120 responses with the questionnaire. However, due to incompleteness, 28 responses had to be deleted and those responses were not used in the analysis for the results. Most of those incomplete responses stopped before the questions concerning the dependent variables, which could indicate that respondents thought the news items were too difficult or too long to read. Three respondents came half way the questions concerning the dependent variables. These three responses were deleted as well, because of uncertainty about the seriousness of the answers of the respondents. The participants were recruited voluntarily and participated in an online survey distributed via email and social media. Participants were assigned randomly to the different conditions concerning combinations of the Denial, Attack the accuser and Control (No response) conditions combined with a the trust or distrust condition. Therefore, the full design

is a 3 (response strategies: Denial, Attack the accuser, No response) × 2 (Trust, Distrust) model. The dependent variable in this model is the consumer brand evaluation. The consumer brand evaluation was measured on the basis of Attitude, (Re)purchase intentions, Trust and Positive word of mouth.

Procedure and variables

Demographic characteristics of participants. First of all, questions about participants their gender and age were asked.

Trust vs. Distrust (moderator). Then, I manipulated participants their trust in the different conditions. In the trust conditions, participants read the following:

“A description of company AB: Company AB is a car company that is founded in 1927. The car company is seen as respectable and is known as a reliable car brand by many consumers. The company prioritizes transparency in their production and business processes. Company AB has never been named negatively in the media. The current CEO of the company is known for his high involvement with personnel and consumers. Since the establishment of company AB, they have never been related to a scandal in the car branch.”

Participants in the distrust condition read the following:

“A description of Company AB: ‘Company AB is a car company that is founded in 1927. The car company is seen as unrespectable and is known as an unreliable car brand by many consumers. The company does not prioritizes transparency in their production and business processes. Company AB has often been named negatively in the media. The current CEO of the company is known for his low involvement with personnel and consumers. Since the establishment of company AB, they have been related to a large car scandal twice.’”

After the manipulation of trust, all participants were asked to read the following news item:

“In 2015 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) discovered an emission scandal at the car producer Volkswagen. The scandal concerned software in diesel engines that could recognize whether a car was taking part in an emission test. Whenever this was the case, the software changed the car’s performances to improve the results of the emission test, such that the car resembled lower emissions. After the scandal, multiple media accused company AB of using similar software to improve emission test results. However, company AB has not been officially accused by the EPA. Company AB is a competitor of Volkswagen in the car branch.”

To control whether the trust manipulation has worked, three questions concerning the participants' trust in company AB after the news statements, were asked. This is done by using a seven-point scale of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) with the following statements: ‘I trust company AB’, ‘I rely on company AB’, ‘Company AB is a honest brand’ and ‘Company AB is safe’. Participants had to fill in their level of agreement on those statements (1 = totally disagree, 7 = totally agree). A factor analysis showed a clear one factor solution, which implies the items in the scale can form a scale. A reliability analysis showed that the scale is reliable ($\alpha = .92$).

Then, participants were randomly allocated to the different conditions concerning the response strategies. Each condition consists of a different news statement in which has been elaborated on the response strategies. The participants in the control condition (no response) did not get any news statement with a response strategy of Company AB, and were directed to the section with the questions concerning their brand evaluation. Participants were randomly assigned to either the Denial strategy, Attack the accuser strategy or the control group without

any response strategy. In the Denial strategy condition, participants were reading the following:

“Company AB responded on the accusations that company AB uses the same software that was used in the scandal of Volkswagen, with the following statement: ‘We from company AB have high priorities on safety, quality and environment. We deny any allegation on our company regarding the use of software that gives misleading results in emission- or any kind of tests. Since the establishment our company in 1927, we put hard and fair work into our cars. This is what makes us one of the most respected car producers of the world. Besides that, we aspire transparency to the consumers and therefore we publish sustainability reports every year on our website.’ Those sustainability reports contain emission information of company AB’s cars and their production processes. The reports can be found on their website.”

Participants in the Attack the Accuser strategy condition read:

“Company AB responded on the accusations that company AB uses the same software that was used in the scandal of Volkswagen with the following statement: ‘We from company AB have high priorities on safety, quality and environment. Since there is no proof of those accusations on our company, we question the credibility of the media that accuses our company of making use of software that gives misleading results in emission tests. Media recently brought a lot of fake news to the world, creating a lot of doubts about the validity of the media. Accusations like those on our company are unfounded. We therefore will take legal actions against the media sources to fight the unfounded accusations they published against our company.’”

After the response strategy was conducted and explained by a news statement, participants in the Denial and Attack the Accuser conditions were asked to fill in some

questions regarding their consumer brand evaluation on the aspects Attitude, (Re)purchase intentions, Trust and Positive word of mouth. The control group without a conducted response strategy was assigned directly to this section with questions regarding their brand evaluation of company AB, after they read the first two news statements.

Attitude. The attitude of participants towards company AB was measured with three statements of the 'Attitude Toward the Organization' scale from Woo, Fock and Hui (2006). The statements are: 'I am enthusiastic about using Company AB services and facilities.', 'I feel that Company AB has a higher reputation than other car companies.' and 'I am proud of being one of Company AB's customers'. The participants had to fill in how much they agreed to the statements on a seven-point scale (1 = totally disagree, 7 = totally agree). A factor analysis showed a clear one factor solutions, which implies the items form a scale. A reliability analysis showed that the scale is reliable ($\alpha = .90$).

(Re)purchase intention. To measure the (re)purchase intentions of the participants, statements of the 'Repurchase Intention scale' of Heitmann, Lehmann and Herrmann (2007) and the 'Purchase intention scale' of Voorhees, Brady and Horowitz (2006) were used because not every item in each scale was relevant in this study. A combination of statements of both scales presented a better scope of the purchase intentions of participants in this study. The statements were: 'I will buy a car of company AB in the future', 'I will do business with company AB in the future' and 'If I already had a car of Company AB, it is very likely that I would purchase a car of Company AB again'. Participants were asked to fill in their level of agreement on a seven-point scale regarding the statements (1 = I totally disagree, 7 = I totally agree). A factor analysis showed a clear one factor solutions, which implies the items can form a scale. A reliability analysis showed that the scale is reliable ($\alpha = .90$).

Trust. Again trust will be measured to compare the trust of participants after company AB conducted a response strategy, to their trust before company AB conducted a response strategy. This is done again by using the seven-point 'Trust in Brand' scale of Chaudhuri and Holbrook (2001) with the following statements: 'I trust company AB', 'I rely on company AB', 'Company AB is a honest brand' and 'Company AB is safe'. Participants had to fill in their level of agreement on those statements (1 = totally disagree, 7 = totally agree). A factor analysis showed a clear one factor solutions, which implies the items can form a scale. A reliability analysis showed that the scale is reliable ($\alpha = .94$).

Positive word-of-mouth. This aspect of consumer brand evaluation measures the extent to which a consumer would recommend company AB to others. This is done with the seven-point 'Word-of-Mouth' scale of Arnett, German and Hunt (2003) which included the two following statements: 'I will recommend company AB to my colleagues or friends', 'I will bring up company AB in a positive way' and 'In social situations, I will often speak favourably about Company AB. (1 = I totally disagree, 7 = I totally agree). A factor analysis showed a clear one factor solutions, which implies the items can form a scale. A reliability analysis showed that the scale is reliable ($\alpha = .93$).

Results

Manipulation check

To check whether the manipulation of trust was successful, an independent-samples t-test was conducted to compare the scores on trust between the different trust conditions (trust vs. distrust). Participants in the Trust condition ($M = 5.04$, $SD = 1.13$) reported more trust than the participants in the Distrust condition ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .86$), $t(90) = 9.53$, $p < .001$. The success of the manipulation of trust did not differ between Male ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.44$) and

Female ($M = 4.00$, $SD = 1.41$), $t(90) = .30$, $p = .77$. Therefore I can analyse the results of Male and Female evenly.

Main effects

According to the hypotheses I set, a consumer evaluates a brand more positively after a company affected by spill-overs conducts a ‘Attack the accuser’ or ‘Denial’ strategy, compared to no response. The findings did not support our predictions. A 3 (response strategies: Denial, Attack the accuser, No response) \times 2 (Trust, Distrust) ANOVA was conducted with Total consumer brand evaluation as a dependent variable. The Total consumer brand evaluation is the mean of the scores of participants on the Attitude, (Re)purchase intentions, WOM and Final trust scales. The ANOVA showed no main effect for response strategies $F(2, 86) = .52$, $p = .60$, $\eta^2 = .01$. However, the Post Hoc test (Tukey) showed significant differences on Overall brand evaluation scores between two response strategies. The Denial strategy ($M = 4.62$, $SD = 1.56$) showed higher Overall brand evaluations compared to the Attack the accuser strategy ($M = 3.71$, $SD = 1.11$), $p = .01$, but no significant differences on Overall brand evaluation between the Control condition and the Denial or Attack the accuser condition. Besides that, the ANOVA showed a main effect of trust manipulation $F(1, 86) = 46.66$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .35$. Participants in the Trust condition evaluated the brand (Company AB) higher on the Overall brand evaluation aspect ($M = 5.11$, $SD = 1.16$) compared to participants in the Distrust condition ($M = 3.27$, $SD = 1.20$). Furthermore, the ANOVA showed no interaction effect $F(2, 86) = 1.56$, $p = .22$, $\eta^2 = .04$. In more detail, the Post Hoc test showed a significant higher score in Overall brand evaluation in the Trust – Denial condition compared to the Distrust – Denial condition, Distrust – Attack the accuser condition and the Distrust – Control condition. Similarly, the Trust – Control condition had significant higher Overall brand evaluation scores compared to the Distrust –

Denial condition and the Distrust – Attack the accuser condition and the Distrust – control condition, all significant differences met the assumption of $p < .001$. Furthermore, a marginally significant difference was found between the Distrust – Denial condition and the Trust – Attack the accuser condition ($p = .08$). All other comparisons of combinations of conditions were not significant. See Table 2 for more details.

Table 2 provides an overview of all comparisons of the conditions.

Table 2

Differences in Brand Evaluation Scores Between the Conditions

<u>Dependent Variable</u>	<u>Denial</u>		<u>Attack the Accuser</u>		<u>Control</u>	
	<u>Trust</u>	<u>Distrust</u>	<u>Trust</u>	<u>Distrust</u>	<u>Trust</u>	<u>Distrust</u>
	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)	M(SD)
Overall brand evaluation	5.42(.95) ^a	3.10(1.35) ^b	4.53(1.01) ^{ac}	3.34(.95) ^{bc}	5.04(1.39) ^a	3.28(1.42) ^{bc}
Attitude	5.98(1.42) ^a	3.03(1.36) ^b	5.04(1.12) ^{ac}	3.52(1.29) ^{bc}	5.54(1.62) ^a	3.29(1.79) ^{bc}
(Re)purchase intentions	5.35(1.02) ^a	3.73(1.87) ^{bc}	4.37(1.10) ^{abc}	3.42(1.16) ^b	5.02(1.59) ^{ac}	3.49(1.36) ^b
Positive word-of-mouth	4.86(1.00) ^a	2.73(1.50) ^b	4.30(1.18) ^{ac}	3.23(.99) ^{bc}	4.63(1.26) ^a	3.13(1.51) ^{bc}
Final trust	5.49(.92) ^a	2.91(1.30) ^b	4.42(1.08) ^{ac}	3.21(.99) ^{bc}	4.97(1.31) ^a	3.22(1.31) ^{bc}

Note. The letters in superscript show whether the conditions significantly differ from each other on scores of the Dependent variable in that row. Same letters in superscript mean no significant differences, different letters mean significant differences. Table 2 is based on a significance level of $p < .08$.

To get further details, I did an ANOVA analysis separately for every scale of brand evaluations as well.

Attitude

A 3 (response strategies: Denial, Attack the accuser, No response) × 2 (Trust, Distrust) ANOVA was conducted with Attitude as a dependent variable. The ANOVA showed no main effect for response strategies $F(2, 86) = .17, p = .85, \eta^2 < .001$. However, the Post Hoc test

(Tukey) showed significant differences on Attitude scores between two response strategies. The Denial strategy ($M = 4.97$, $SD = 1.98$) showed higher Attitude scores compared to the Attack the accuser strategy ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.41$), $p = .03$, but no significant differences on Attitude scores between the Control condition and the Denial or Attack the accuser condition. Besides that, the ANOVA showed a main effect of trust manipulation $F(1, 86) = 49.17$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .36$. Participants in the Trust condition evaluated the brand (Company AB) higher on the Attitude aspect ($M = 5.64$, $SD = 1.46$) compared to participants in the Distrust condition ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.47$). Furthermore, the ANOVA showed no interaction effect $F(2, 86) = 1.60$, $p = .22$, $\eta^2 = .04$. In more detail, the Post Hoc test showed significant higher Attitude scores in the Trust – Denial condition compared to the Distrust – Denial condition ($p < .001$), the Distrust – Attack the accuser condition and the Distrust – Control condition ($p < .001$). Similarly, the Trust – Control conditions had significant higher attitude scores compared to the Distrust – Denial condition ($p < .001$), the Distrust – Attack the accuser condition ($p < .001$) and the Distrust – Control condition ($p < .001$). the Distrust – Denial condition and the Trust – Attack the accuser condition ($p = .04$) the Distrust – Attack the accuser condition and the Trust – Control condition ($p < .001$) and the Trust – Control condition and the Distrust control condition ($p < .001$). Furthermore, the Trust – Attack the accuser condition showed significant higher attitude scores compared to the Distrust – Attack the accuser condition ($p = .04$) and a marginally significant difference was found between the Trust – Attack the accuser condition and the Distrust – Control condition ($p = .06$). All other comparisons of combinations of conditions were not significant. See *Table 2* for more details.

(Re)purchase intentions

A 3 (response strategies: Denial, Attack the accuser, No response) \times 2 (Trust, Distrust) ANOVA was conducted with (Re)purchase intentions as a dependent variable. The ANOVA

showed no main effect for response strategies $F(2, 86) = 1.54, p = .22, \eta^2 = .04$. However, the Post Hoc test (Tukey) showed significant differences on (Re)purchase intention scores between two response strategies. The Denial strategy ($M = 4.79, SD = 1.56$) showed higher (Re)purchase intentions scores compared to the Attack the accuser strategy ($M = 3.71, SD = 1.21, p = .01$), but no significant differences on (Re)purchase intention scores between the Control condition and the Denial or Attack the accuser condition. Besides that, the ANOVA showed a main effect of trust manipulation $F(1, 86) = 21.79, p < .001, \eta^2 = .20$. Participants in the Trust condition evaluated the brand (Company AB) higher on the (Re)purchase intentions aspect ($M = 5.04, SD = 1.29$) compared to participants in the Distrust condition ($M = 3.51, SD = 1.39$). Furthermore, the ANOVA showed no interaction effect $F(2, 86) = .48, p = .62, \eta^2 = .01$. In more detail, the Post Hoc test showed a significant higher (Re)purchase intention score in the Trust – Denial condition compared to the Distrust – Denial condition ($p = .02$), the Distrust – Attack the accuser condition ($p < .001$) and the Distrust – Control condition ($p < .001$). Similarly, the Trust – Control conditions showed higher (Re)purchase intention scores compared to the Distrust – Attack the accuser ($p = .01$) and the Distrust control condition ($p = .03$). All other comparisons of combinations of conditions were not significant. See *Table 2* for more details.

Positive word-of-mouth

A 3 (response strategies: Denial, Attack the accuser, No response) \times 2 (Trust, Distrust) ANOVA was conducted with WOM as a dependent variable. The ANOVA showed no main effect for response strategies $F(2, 86) = .10, p = .93, \eta^2 < .001$. The Post Hoc test (Tukey) showed no significant differences on WOM scores between different response strategy conditions. Besides that, the ANOVA showed a main effect of trust manipulation $F(1, 86) = 34.41, p < .001, \eta^2 = .29$. Participants in the Trust condition evaluated the brand (Company

AB) higher on the WOM aspect ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 1.13$) compared to participants in the Distrust condition ($M = 3.01$, $SD = 1.29$). Furthermore, the ANOVA showed no interaction effect $F(2, 86) = 1.31$, $p = .28$, $\eta^2 = .03$. In more detail, the Post Hoc test showed a significant higher WOM score in the Trust – Denial condition compared to the Distrust – Denial condition ($p < .001$), Distrust – Attack the accuser condition ($p < .001$) and the Distrust – Control condition ($p < .001$). Similarly the Trust – Control condition showed higher WOM scores compared to the Distrust – Denial condition ($p = .002$), the Distrust – Attack the accuser condition ($p = .01$) and the Distrust control condition ($p = .01$). Furthermore, a marginally significant difference was found between the Distrust – Denial condition and the Trust – Attack the accuser condition ($p = .06$). All other comparisons of combinations of conditions were not significant. See *Table 2* for more details.

Final Trust

A 3 (response strategies: Denial, Attack the accuser, No response) \times 2 (Trust, Distrust) ANOVA was conducted with Final Trust as a dependent variable. The ANOVA showed no main effect for response strategies $F(2, 86) = .80$, $p = .45$, $\eta^2 = .02$. However, the Post Hoc test (Tukey) showed significant differences on Final Trust scores between two response strategies. The Denial strategy ($M = 4.60$, $SD = 1.62$) showed higher Final Trust scores compared to the Attack the accuser strategy ($M = 3.59$, $SD = 1.15$), $p < .001$, but no significant differences on Final trust scores between the Control condition and the Denial or Attack the accuser condition. Besides that, the ANOVA showed a main effect of trust manipulation $F(1, 86) = 55.06$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = .39$. Participants in the Trust condition evaluated the brand (Company AB) higher on the Final Trust aspect ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.15$) compared to participants in the Distrust condition ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.16$). However, the ANOVA showed a marginally significant interaction effect $F(2, 86) = 2.50$, $p = .09$, $\eta^2 = .06$.

Indicating that the effect of the trust manipulation on Final trust scores depends on the response strategy condition. In more detail, the Post Hoc test showed a significant higher Final Trust score in the Trust – Denial condition compared to the Distrust – Denial condition ($p < .001$), the Distrust – Attack the accuser condition ($p < .001$) and the Distrust – Control condition ($p < .001$). Similarly, the Trust – Control condition scored significantly higher on Final Trust scores compared to the Distrust – Denial condition ($p < .001$), the Distrust – Attack the accuser condition ($p < .001$) and the Distrust control condition ($p < .001$). Furthermore, Trust – Attack the accuser condition scored significantly higher on Final Trust scores compared to the Distrust – Denial condition ($p = .05$). All other comparisons of combinations of conditions were not significant. See *Table 2* for more details.

Comparison of pre- and post-response strategy Trust

I measured trust to check whether the trust manipulation was successful. In the section with questions concerning the consumer brand evaluation, trust was measured again. This enables us to analyse the effects of response strategies on trust. For the analysis, a variable (Trust Difference) was made that showed the difference in trust before and after a response strategy was conducted. A 3 (response strategies: Denial, Attack the accuser, No response) × 2 (Trust, Distrust) ANOVA was conducted with Trust Difference as a dependent variable. The ANOVA showed no main effect for the Trust manipulation $F(2, 86) = .36, p = .55, \eta^2 < .001$. Furthermore it showed no main effect for the Response Strategies $F(2, 86) = .79, p = .46, \eta^2 = .02$ and no interaction effect $F(2, 86) = 1.29, p = .28, \eta^2 = .03$. Post Hoc tests show no significant differences in Trust Difference scores between the conditions. This implies that different response strategies do not affect trust evaluations differently.

Summary of the analysis

In short, the findings do not support the hypothesis. The results show that there are no significant differences between the response strategy conditions. This implies that conducting a Denial strategy, Attack the accuser strategy or remaining silent, results in the same consumer brand evaluations. Furthermore, the results show that trust does not function as a moderator on the effects of response strategies on consumer brand evaluation.

General Discussion

Multiple studies have been conducted on the existence of spill-over effects of product-harm crises. However, there is hardly any research done about how companies affected by negative spill-over effects, can reduce those spill-over effects and how they should respond to the society. This research studied whether certain response strategies (Denial and Attack the accuser) affected the consumer brand evaluations differently compared to the control group (No response). Furthermore, literature stated that trust in advance of a conducted response strategy, can moderate the effects of that response strategy. The possible moderation of trust on the effects of response strategies was studied in this research as well.

The results found are based on an analysis of the data that was collected through an online questionnaire. The current study shows that conducting an Attack the accuser response strategy is not a better option than remaining silent. However, conducting a Denial strategy, results in a more positive brand evaluation compared to an Attack the accuser strategy and a non-significant higher brand evaluation compared to no response. This implies that conducting a response strategy does not result in differences in brand evaluations after spill-over effects have occurred, compared to remaining silent. Furthermore, the current research

shows that trust does not moderate the effects of the Denial and Attack the accuser response strategies and that distrust does not positively affects the effects of response strategies.

Theoretical and practical contributions

As already has been said, there is hardly any research done about how companies affected by negative spill-over effects, can reduce those spill-over effects and how they should respond to the society. However, the current research studied the effects of response strategies after a company is affected by spill-over effects. This could give new insights in the problem of spill-over effects and the difficulty of defending a company against spill-over effects, or at least open a study field that exhibits the phenomenon of response strategies and their effects on spill-over affected companies.

The current study provides information about the importance of brand image that has been built up through years of time. It shows that it is hard to repair a company its brand image after a company has been linked to several scandals or has been named negatively in the past, because consumers will lose trust in the company which is hard to redeem. Furthermore, the present research shows that response strategies do not affect the consumers' trust in a certain company since there are no differences in trust evaluations between the different response strategies and no differences in Trust comparison between the different response strategies.

Besides the area of consumer behaviour, the present research can contribute to emotion research as well. The present research shows that negative events in the past can influence the consumers trust emotion in a negative way and that it is hard to get back consumers' trust. Consumers whose trust in a company is affected by events in the past, base their current evaluations of the company on those events in the past. As this study shows,

consumers that have distrust in a company due to events in the past, evaluate simple rumours without any evidence of truth based on their distrust from the past.

Furthermore, it could be interesting to analyse the theoretical findings of the current research from a more practical point of view. Even though there are differences in brand evaluation between the 'denial' and the 'attack the accuser' strategy, there are hardly any differences between those strategies compared to 'no response' independently. Therefore Cost-benefit analysis would probably show that there are no profitable differences between 'denial', 'attack the accuser' and 'no response', because conducting response strategies directly cost time and money, whereas remaining silent does not. This implies that in practice, 'no response' could be the most profitable option out of those three.

The findings of the present study should be taken into account by people that can put those theoretical findings in practice. Employees in departments of Marketing or Public Relations are an example of people that can put those theoretical findings in practice. Knowing and understanding the importance of a company its brand image can help those employees in the decision making concerning response strategies or investments in retaining a positive brand image.

Limitations

When evaluating this research, three ascertains can be made. At first, the present research has studied the effects of response strategies on spill-over effects with an example of the car industry. A car is a high involvement product for consumers since it is a relative expensive product that is bought for a long-term use. This could increase the amount of information consumers gather before buying a car compared to a low involvement product. Furthermore, consumers could value information more in the buying process of a high involvement product like a car, compared to a low involvement product like a pen, because

the purchase of a car has more financial impact. This implies that the results of the current study could be different when it would be done with a low involvement product. Future research could take this into account and elaborate on this present research with a wider perspective on the differences between high- and low involvement products.

Secondly, in the buying process of a car, a lack of getting all necessary information could mostly only affect yourself. For example products that are bought for your baby or child bring along more responsibility which could increase the value and amount of information consumers get. This was demonstrated in the China baby powder crisis in 2008 when six babies were killed and 300,000 became ill due to melamine in baby powder of one in every 5 baby-powder suppliers in China. Up until this day, this resulted in an avoidance of Chinese baby powder by consumers from all over the world (BBC, 2010; Leisha Chi, 2017). Therefore the results of this study could be different for a product that directly affects others as well. Therefore, in future studies on response strategies and spill-over effects, products with more responsibility directly to others, should be analysed as well

Finally, the amount of participants that filled in the questionnaire is very little. Ninety-two participants were divided over the six conditions. This amount is too little to ensure sufficient power of the study (Faber & Fonseca, 2014). A small sample size increases influences of each participant on the overall results of the study. Consequently, this increases the chances of making premises on false or unreliable data, which has less impact in larger sample sizes. Therefore we need to be careful in interpreting and generalizing the results. Future research should iterate the current study and further elaborate with a larger sample size.

Conclusion

In the end we can state that the relative integral study field of reducing spill-over effects with help of response strategies, needs to be expanded and further elaborated. The current findings indicate and highlight the importance of brand image. Negative events in the past form the basis for consumer evaluation about events in the present. The negative events in the past harm consumers' trust and lower their likeliness of making repurchases which is hard to repair. This should be remembered not only by the people in Marketing or Public Relation departments, but by every person representing a certain company. As Warren Buffet once said: "It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. Remember that and you'll do things differently."

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Appendix

Appendix I – The survey

Q1.1 Welcome to this study. On a regular basis, companies appear in the news. With this study we try to obtain better insights in consumer thoughts and reactions on news items about companies. First of all, you will be asked to fill in some information about yourself. After that you will read a description of a company named 'Company AB'. Imagine this company would really exist. Next, you will read a short news item about the car producer Volkswagen. Finally, we will ask you some questions about Company AB. The information that you give us in this study will be treated fully confidential and anonymous. Your name or information will not be revealed nor linked to specific answers. This questionnaire will take 3-5 minutes. Whenever you click "I agree", you will confirm that you have read the text above and agree with the content. After that click on the arrow at the bottom of the page to continue.

I agree (1)

I do not agree (3)

Condition: I do not agree Is Selected. Skip To: End of Survey.

Q47 First of all, please fill in some information about yourself.

Q1.2 What is your age? Please move the slider to the correct answer.

_____ 1 (1)

Q1.3 What is your gender? Please fill in the most appropriate answer.

Man (1)

Woman (2)

Q1.6 Are you in possession of a driving license?

Yes (1)

No (2)

Q39 In the next section, we will ask you to read a description of 'Company AB' and a news item about 'Company AB'. After that we will ask you some questions about your thoughts about 'Company AB'.

Q3.1 Imagine Company AB is an existing company: A description of company AB: Company AB is a car producing company that is founded in 1927. The car company is seen as respectable and is known as a reliable car brand by consumers. Company AB has never been named negatively in the media. Since the establishment of company AB, they have never been related to a scandal in the car branch.

Q35 Then a news item appears. Now you read the following news item: "In 2015 the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) discovered an emission scandal at the car producer Volkswagen. The scandal concerned software in diesel engines that could recognize whether a

Q40 In the following section you will read a news item about the response of 'Company AB' on the accusations made in the previous news item.

Q33 Now a news item appears with a response of Company AB on the accusations against them: "Company AB responded on the accusations that company AB uses the same software that was used in the scandal of Volkswagen, with the following statement: 'We from company AB have high priorities on safety, quality and environment. We deny any allegation on our company regarding the use of software that gives misleading results in emission tests. Since the establishment our company in 1927, we put hard and fair work into our cars. This is what makes us one of the most respected car producers of the world. Besides that, we aspire transparency to the consumers and therefore we publish sustainability reports every year on our website.' Those sustainability reports contain emission information of company AB's cars and their productions processes. The reports can be found on their website."

Q42 Now we would like to ask you some questions concerning your thoughts regarding Company AB and its cars, based on the items you just read. Please click on the arrow at the bottom of the page to continue

Q41 In the following section you will read a news item about the response of 'Company AB' on the accusations made in the previous news item.

Q34 Now a news item appears with a response of Company AB on the accusations against them: "Company AB responded on the accusations that company AB uses the same software that was used in the scandal of Volkswagen with the following statement: 'We from company AB have high priorities on safety, quality and environment. Since there is no proof of those accusations on our company, we question the credibility of the media that accuses our company of making use of software that give misleading results in emission tests. Media recently brought a lot of fake news to the world, creating a lot of doubts about the validity of the media. Accusations like those on our company are unfounded. We therefore will take legal actions against the media sources to fight the unfounded accusations they published against our company.'"

Q43 Now we would like to ask you some questions concerning your thoughts regarding Company AB and its cars, based on the items you just read. Please click on the arrow at the bottom of the page to continue

Q38 Based on the items you just read, we would like to ask you some questions concerning your thoughts regarding Company AB and its cars. Please click on the arrow at the bottom of the page to continue.

Q14.2 Please fill in your level of agreement on the following statements on a scale of 'Totally disagree' to 'Totally agree'.

	Totally disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Undecided (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Totally agree (7)
I would recommend Company AB to my colleagues or friends (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would bring up Company AB in a positive way (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
In social situations I would often speak favorably about Company AB (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q45 Now the question concerning you trust will be asked again. This time we ask for your final trust evaluation after the items you read before.

Q15.1 Please fill in your level of agreement on the following statements on a scale of 'Totally disagree' to 'Totally agree'.

	Totally disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Somewhat disagree (3)	Undecided (4)	Somewhat agree (5)	Agree (6)	Totally agree (7)
I trust company AB (1)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I rely on Company AB (2)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company AB is a honest brand (3)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Company AB is safe (4)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q46 This is the end of this questionnaire. If you want to participate in online surveys more often, you can fill in your email address below. You will receive an email with an invitation to participate as soon as Wageningen University does an online study again. Your answers will never be linked to you email address.