

ABSTRACT

Title of Dissertation: WHEN LOVE BECOMES HATE(?):
THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN CONSUMER-
BRAND RELATIONSHIPS AND CRISIS
SITUATIONS

Liang Ma, Doctor of Philosophy, 2016

Dissertation directed by: Professor Elizabeth L. Toth
Department of Communication

This study had three purposes. First, it aimed to re-conceptualize organization-public relationships (OPRs) in public relations and crisis communication. This OPR re-conceptualization helps find out when the OPR buffering effect or the OPR love-becomes-hate effect happens. Second, it aimed to examine how consumer emotions are influenced by OPRs and influence consumer behavioral intentions. Third, it aimed to address the current problematic operationalization of the concept of consumer.

Three pilot studies and one main study were conducted. Apple and Whole Foods were the two brands examined. One crisis that undermined the self-defining attributes shared between the brand and its consumers and another crisis that did not were examined for each brand. Almost 500 Apple consumers and 400 Whole Foods consumers provided usable questionnaires.

This study had several major findings. First, non-identifying relationship and identifying relationship were different constructs. Moreover, trust, satisfaction, and

commitment were not conceptually separate dimensions of OPRs. Second, the non-identifying relationships offered buffering effects by increasing positive attitudes and tempering anger and disappointment. The identifying relationships primarily offered the love-becomes-hate effects by increasing anger and disappointment. Third, if the crisis was relevant to consumers' daily lives, brand response strategies were less effective at mitigating consumer negative reactions. Moreover, apology-compensation-reminder strategy was more effective compared to no-comment strategy. However, the apology-compensation-reminder strategy was no more effective than other strategies as long as brands compensate to the victims. Identifying relationships increased the effectiveness of response strategies. If the crisis did not undermine the self-defining attributes shared between consumers and brands, the response strategies worked even better.

This study contributes to crisis communication research in multiple ways. First, it advances the OPR conceptualization by demonstrating that non-identifying relationship and identifying relationship are different concepts. More importantly, it advances the theory building of OPRs' influences on crises by finding out when the buffering effect and the love-becomes-hate effect happen. Second, it adds to emotion research by demonstrating that strong OPRs can lead to negative emotions and positive emotions can have negative behavioral consequences on organizations. Third, the precise operationalization of the concept of consumer gives more insights about consumer reactions to crises.

WHEN LOVE BECOMES HATE(?):
THE INTERPLAY BETWEEN CONSUMER-BRAND RELATIONSHIPS
AND CRISIS SITUATIONS

by

Liang Ma

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Advisory Committee:
Professor Elizabeth L. Toth, Chair
Professor Nicholas Joyce
Professor Brooke Fisher Liu
Professor Erich Sommerfeldt
Professor Laura Stapleton

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Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my dearest parents in China and my beloved husband. I am grateful for their love and support.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation project would not have been possible without the support and help of many people. I especially would like to thank my amazing academic advisor and dissertation committee chair, Dr. Elizabeth L. Toth. I would like to express my deep appreciation to Dr. Edward L. Fink, who guided me through my quantitative methodology. I also owe the success of this project to the help and insightful feedback of my committee members including Drs. Nicholas Joyce, Brooke Fisher Liu, Erich Sommerfeldt, and Laura Stapleton.

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Chapter 1 Purpose of Study

Consumer responses to brand crises are far from uniform. For example, Nike has been criticized by activists for its sweatshops in low-wage countries since 1996 (Nisen, 2013; Wazir, 2001). Yet, Nike's sales have still grown in the last decade (Statista, 2015), and its consumers have not abandoned it. Alternatively, Martha Stewart's insider trading scandal made her company lose millions of dollars in revenue during the legal process (Sutel, 2004). Different consumer responses may be due to the interplay between consumer-brand relationships, brand attributes, and crisis situations. But little research, beyond case studies, has considered these concepts and their interactions. Yet, these concepts and their interactions seem to be important factors in deciding how brands when faced with crises can maintain positive consumer-brand relationships and accommodate consumer needs and emotions. This study proposes to contribute research that fills this gap by examining the interplay between consumer-brand relationships, brand attributes, and crisis situations.

This study proposed that different types of consumer-brand relationships, namely non-identifying and identifying relationships, may interact with brand attributes and crisis situations to influence consumer brand attitudes and emotions in crises and the effectiveness of brand crisis responses at mitigating consumer negative reactions. Its primary goal is to clarify the influence of OPRs in crisis situations by redefining the relationship concept and examining its effects in different crisis situations. It may show that strong OPRs do not always protect organizations, or may even damage organizations in crises. The secondary goal is to add to research on the role of emotions in crisis communication by examining OPRs as predictors of emotions in crises. Finally,

consumers are a public the support of which is vital to brand recovery from a crisis; thus a third goal is to advance our understanding of consumers as a public in a crisis.

Statement of Problem

Three problems in the current crisis communication research are discussed in this sub-section. First, both the *buffering effect* and *love-becomes-hate* effect of OPRs on organizational crisis communication have been found in previous research, but research is unclear when one effect, but not the other, happens. Second, though research on emotions in crisis communication is thriving, little is known about how OPRs affect emotions and how emotions affect behaviors. Third, the current operationalization of the concept of consumer is problematic.

Effective relationships with publics are valuable intangible assets that benefit organizations (Grunig, 2006; Ni, 2008). Organization-public relationships (OPRs) occur when an organization and its publics depend on each other, and “this interdependence results in consequences to each other that organizations need to manage” (Hung, 2005, p. 396). Organizational benefits of effective OPRs include better organizational reputation (Yang, 2005) and higher consumer intention to speak positively of organizations (Hong & Yang, 2009).

Using Rawlins’ (2006) definition of stakeholders and Grunig and Repper’s (1992) definition of publics, this study considers consumers to be a public of an organization facing a crisis. A consumer is defined as one who purchases and uses a product (Webster, 2000). According to Rawlins (2006), stakeholders are any groups that can influence and be influenced by an organization’s goals. Consumers are a common group of stakeholders for an organization (Rawlins, 2006). Grunig and Repper (1992) defined

publics as those stakeholders that recognize problems or issues and decide to take some actions about the problems or issues. In an organizational crisis, consumers engage in negative word-of-mouth communication and lower their purchase intention (Grappi & Romani, 2015; Lee, 2005). These consumer reactions to a crisis make consumers a group of publics to an organization in a crisis.

OPRs influence organizational crisis communication (Brown & White, 2011; Coombs, 2007a). According to Fearn-Banks (2001), a crisis is a “major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization as well as its publics, services, products, and/or good name. It interrupts normal business transactions and can, at its worst, threaten the existence of the organization” (p. 480). A crisis can seriously hamper the organization’s performance (Coombs, 2007b).

Effective crisis communication mitigates the damage of a crisis on organizations (Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Crisis communication is the continuing dialogue between an organization and its publics through the pre-crisis, crisis, and post-crisis stages (Fearn-Banks, 2002). Because the primary value of public relations to organizations is building positive and long-lasting relationships with publics (Hung, 2005), how OPRs influence a public’s attitudes toward an organization and emotions in a crisis situation and the effectiveness of the organization’s crisis response strategies are important questions to answer.

Researchers have examined how OPRs influence organizational crisis communication (Brown & White, 2011; Cheng, White, & Chaplin, 2012; Coombs, 2007a; Einwiller, Fedorikhin, Johnson, & Kamins, 2006; Kim, 2014; Lyon & Cameron, 2004; Park & Reber, 2011; Turk, Jin, Stewart, Kim, & Hipple, 2012). The findings, however,

are mixed. On the one hand, positive and last-lasting OPRs are demonstrated to mitigate threats posed to public attitudes toward organizations experiencing crises, also called *the buffering effect* (Brown & White, 2011; Cheng et al., 2012; Coombs, 2007a; Einwiller et al., 2006; Kim, 2014; Park & Reber, 2011). On the other hand, sometimes publics who have good relationships with organizations are the organizations' most outspoken antagonists when the latter fail to meet public expectations (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux, 2009; Johnson, Matear, & Thomson, 2011). This "love becomes hate" effect has appeared in service failures (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006, p. 31), when service providers fail to fulfill their service promises (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2011). Grégoire and Fisher (2008) found that consumers who have good relationships with a brand are more likely to engage in retaliatory behaviors after service failures. The love-becomes-hate effect raises the question whether organizations can rely on strong OPRs to carry them through crises.

Moreover, studies examining how OPRs influence public emotions in crises are limited (Grappi & Romani, 2015). Anger and sympathy have been shown to influence publics' behaviors, such as negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) communication and purchase intentions (Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Grappi & Romani, 2015). Consumer NWOM communication is defined as a consumer saying negative things about an organization to other people (Coombs & Holladay, 2007). Research has shown that responsibility attributed to an organization in a crisis triggers anger and reduces sympathy (Coombs & Holladay, 2005). However, it is unclear whether and how OPRs influence emotions. Investigating how OPRs may influence public emotional responses will improve understanding of the role of OPRs in a crisis and help researchers and

practitioners better predict public emotions and behaviors in a crisis.

Some discrete emotions that potentially influence behaviors have been neglected in crisis communication research. Anger and sympathy have received the most attention in research on public emotions in a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2005; Grappi & Romani, 2015; Jin, 2014). Other fields have investigated the impact of other discrete emotions on consumer behaviors (Xie & Heung, 2012; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004). Understanding of other emotions in a crisis, such as disappointment, could advance public relations theory on the influence of emotions on crisis mitigation. Disappointment has been found to influence consumer behaviors after service failures (Xie & Heung, 2012; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004). Whether disappointment is promising to explain consumer responses in a crisis situation is not clear.

Organizations need to win and maintain consumer support in crises. Consumers often equate a brand's manufacturer (the company) with the brand (Aggarwal, 2004), which is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or a combination of them intended to identify the goods and services of one seller" (Kotler, 1991, p. 442). Marken (2001) argued that branding indicates how consumers feel about an organization, its products, and their relationship with it. Because consumers have direct contact with the branded products not the manufacturing companies and consumer perception of brand indicates their perception of the organization according to Marken (2001), brand is used to represent organization in this study.

Public relations scholars shared marketing scholars' interest in the concept of brand (Bush, 2007; Chung, Lee, & Heath, 2013; Hallahan, 2007; Hsieh & Li, 2008; Hutton, Goodman, Alexander, & Genest, 2001; Ries & Ries, 2002). Hallahan (2007)

suggested public relations scholars to examine the role of brand and other cognitive constructs in order to comprehensively understand publics' relationships with an organization. Public relations scholars have examined how public relations help manage a brand (Chung et al., 2013; Hutton et al., 2001), launch new brands (Ries & Ries, 2002), and improve brand loyalty (Bush, 2007; Hsieh & Li, 2008). However, little is known about how consumer-brand relationships influence crisis communication. This study contributes to the brand literature in public relations by examining the influences of consumer-brand relationships in organizational crisis communication.

Consumer-brand relationships may influence consumer evaluation of and emotional and behavioral reactions to crises. Moreover, consumer-brand relationships may influence the effectiveness of brand crisis response strategies. That is, consumer-brand relationships may influence how much a consumer's brand attitudes and supportive behaviors recover and negative emotions decrease after receiving brand crisis response strategies. Examining the effects of consumer-brand relationships on consumer reactions and effectiveness of brand response strategies adds greater conceptual specificity to consumer research and brand recovery from a crisis.

The participants of consumer research in crisis communication often include those who are and are not consumers of an organization's products (Grappi & Romani, 2015; Lee, 2005). This lack of operationalization of the concept of consumer may be problematic because those participants who are not consumers of a brand may not have a relationship with the brand. The lack of a consumer-brand relationship may make these participants respond to a crisis differently as compared to consumers. To overcome this methodological limitation of prior research, this study only recruited participants who

purchased and used a product of a brand to use a more precise operationalization of the concept of consumer.

Theoretical Framework

To advance our knowledge of these three aspects discussed in the previous subsection, this study employs consumer-brand relationship concepts developed in the marketing literature (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Grégoire & Fisher, 2006; Johnson et al., 2011; Lisjak, Lee, & Gardner, 2012; Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, & Sen, 2012) bringing these consumer-brand relationship concepts into OPR and crisis communication research. A marketing conceptualization by Johnson et al. (2011) suggests that consumer-brand relationships can be *self-neutral* and/or *self-relevant*. The self-neutral and self-relevant concepts by themselves do not make clear the differences between these two types of relationships. Hereafter, self-neutral relationship will be referred as non-identifying relationship, and self-relevant relationship will be referred as identifying relationship.

According to the marketing literature (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2009; Johnson et al., 2011), a non-identifying relationship includes three dimensions: satisfaction, trust, and commitment. An identifying relationship, or identification with a brand¹ (Bhattacharya & Sen, 2003; Lisjak et al., 2012; Stokburger-Sauer et al., 2012), is based on self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand (Dutton, Dukerich, & Harquail, 1994). Dutton et al. (1994) argued that a consumer and a brand share the same self-defining attributes when the consumer's "self-concept has many of the same characteristics he or she believes define" the brand (p. 239). These attributes are

¹ Therefore in this dissertation, identifying relationship and identification with a brand are used interchangeably.

“distinctive, central, and enduring” characteristics (Dutton et al., 1994, p. 239) or “the essence of the brand” (Greyser, 2009, p. 592) that the consumer believes the brand possesses. According to Johnson et al. (2011), a brand represents *who I am* for a consumer when the identifying relationship exists.

The identifying relationship concept is missing from the current OPR concept in crisis communication. Current OPR conceptualization in crisis communication is similar to the non-identifying relationship, if one considers the most accepted conceptualization of OPRs from Hon and Grunig (1999). They discussed OPR as a multi-dimensional concept, including satisfaction, trust, commitment, and control mutuality. Based on how each of these dimensions is defined (Hon & Grunig, 1999), this dissertation argues that an identifying relationship is not included in Hon and Grunig’s (1999) conceptualization of OPRs, because none of their OPR dimensions reflects identification. Therefore, in the following sections of this dissertation, OPRs in crisis communication research will be considered synonymous to non-identifying relationships.

Relationship marketing literature has enlightened consumer research in public relations (Hong & Yang, 2009; Kruckeberg, Starck, & Vujnovic, 2006). Johnson et al.’s (2011) conceptualization of non-identifying and identifying relationships in the marketing literature is a more nuanced understanding of consumer-brand relationships than how OPR is conceptualized in crisis communication. According to Coombs and Holladay (2015), compared to non-identifying relationships that may be considered as *parasocial*, identifying relationships are close relationships to stakeholders. Johnson et al.’s (2011) conceptualization captures both the parasocial and close relationships that can possibly establish between consumers and organizations.

A second theoretical framework for this dissertation is situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) (Coombs, 2007a, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). Coombs and his colleagues (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2002) examined how attribution of responsibility by publics threatens an organization's reputation. According to SCCT (Coombs, 2007a), pre-crisis OPRs² also influence public interpretation of a crisis. SCCT suggests that positive pre-crisis OPRs reduce the negative effects of a crisis on organizational reputation, and negative pre-crisis OPRs amplify the negative effects of a crisis on organizational reputation.

SCCT argues that organizations need to choose response strategies based on the attributed responsibility and prior-crisis OPRs in order to optimally protect organizational reputation (Coombs, 2007a, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). According to SCCT, publics perceive a crisis as *preventable* when an organization knowingly misbehaves; when a crisis is perceived to be preventable, publics attribute a considerable amount of responsibility to the organization (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). SCCT recommends that during a preventable crisis organizations use *rebuild* responses as their primary response strategies. That is, an organization needs to offer a full apology and/or compensation (Coombs, 2007a) in order to optimally protect organizational reputation. SCCT (Coombs, 2007a) also recommends using *bolstering* strategies to supplement rebuild strategies when organizations have positive pre-crisis relationships with publics. That is, an organization needs to thank publics for their efforts during a crisis and/or remind them of the organizational past good deeds, or even portray the organization as a

² Another factor influencing public evaluation of a crisis that SCCT suggests is crisis history. That is, whether the crisis is one-time or repetitive. This dissertation, however, will not examine the effect of crisis history.

victim of a crisis (Coombs, 2007a). A victim is one “who has suffered physically, mentally, or financially from the crisis” (Coombs, 2014, p. 142).

Introduction of Proposed Theoretical Model

This study proposed that non-identifying and identifying relationships may function differently during a preventable crisis, depending on whether the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between consumers and a brand. Because consumer identifying relationships occur when a consumer defines him/herself by the attributes defining the brand (Einwiller et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2011; Lam, Ahearne, Hu, & Schillewaert, 2010), the consumer may consider a crisis as threatening his/her identifying relationships when a preventable crisis situation undermines the shared defining attributes between the consumer and the brand.

Specifically, this study proposed that when a preventable crisis situation does not undermine the shared defining attributes between a consumer and a brand, both non-identifying and identifying relationships (a) buffer a crisis’ negative effects on consumer brand attitudes, (b) decrease consumer anger and disappointment toward the brand, and (c) increase consumer sympathy toward the brand. Consumer attitudes and emotions then lead to their behavioral responses to the brand, such as NWOM communication and purchase.

On the other hand, when a preventable crisis situation undermines the shared defining attributes between a consumer and a brand, non-identifying relationships may still buffer the negative effects of a crisis on consumer brand attitudes and emotional responses to the crisis. However, identifying relationships may amplify the negative effects of the crisis situation on consumer brand attitudes and emotional and behavioral

responses to the brand. In this case, the love-becomes-hate effect may take place. When a brand's misconduct undermines the self-defining attributes shared with consumers, this misconduct threatens the identifying relationships. As a result, this threat to identifying relationships may trigger consumer negative evaluative and emotional responses and consequent retaliatory behaviors.

Equally important, this study argued that identifying relationships and crisis situations may also influence the effectiveness of a brand's crisis response strategies. SCCT (Coombs, 2007a) recommends that organizations with positive OPRs use rebuild strategies coupled with bolstering strategies in a preventable crisis. Reminding consumers of past good relationships may elicit their goodwill for the organization, as argued by SCCT. However, this study argued that it is equally possible that bolstering strategies may make perceived violation of relational norms stronger, and thus make brand crisis response strategies less effective.

To sum up, across two crisis situations (undermining self-defining attributes vs. not undermining self-defining attributes), non-identifying relationships are hypothesized to buffer the negative effects of crises. When a crisis does not undermine self-defining attributes shared between consumers and a brand, identifying relationships buffer the negative effects of the crisis. But when a crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between consumers and a brand, identifying relationships amplify the negative effects of the crisis. Consumer brand attitudes (Lyon & Cameron, 2004; McDonald, Sparks, & Glendon, 2010) and emotions (Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Grappi & Romani, 2015; Xie & Heung, 2012; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004) then influence consumer behaviors. Therefore in different crisis situations, the effects of consumer-brand relationships on

consumer intentions of NWOM communication and purchase are mediated by consumer brand attitudes, anger, sympathy, and disappointment. Attributed responsibility to a brand was included in the model as a control variable, because the effect of attributed responsibility on public evaluation of a crisis has been well supported in research (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Dean, 2004; Ma & Zhan, 2016). The proposed model is summarized in Figure 1(a) and Figure 1(b). Equally important, the second part of the dissertation examined how identifying relationships and crisis situations may also influence the effectiveness of a brand's crisis response strategies. That is, (1) the possible effects of identifying relationships on the effectiveness of the response strategies; (2) the possible effects of threat to self-defining attributes on the effectiveness of the response strategies; and (3) the effectiveness of each response strategy at mitigating consumer negative reactions to crises.

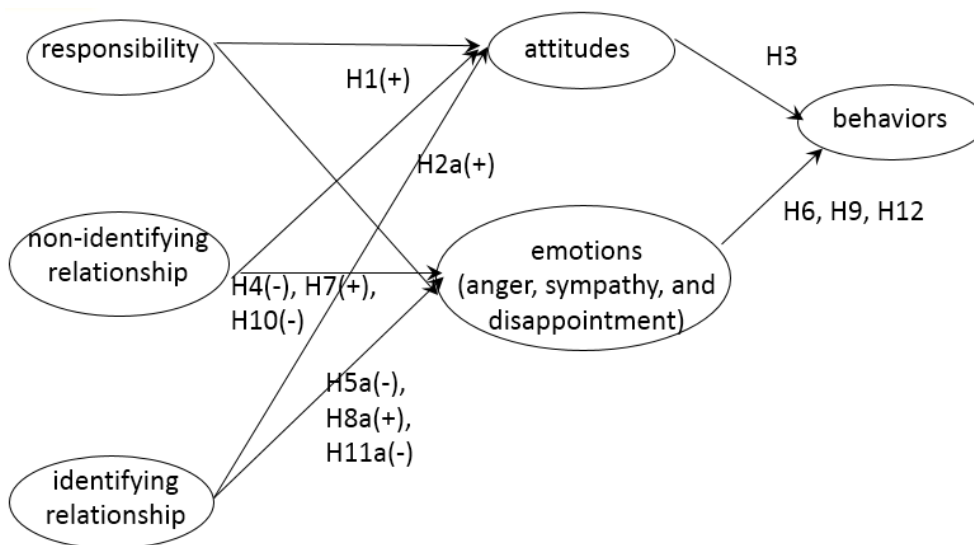


Figure 1(a). Consumer-brand relationship influence model to be tested under the condition that crises do not undermine self-defining attributes shared between consumers and brands

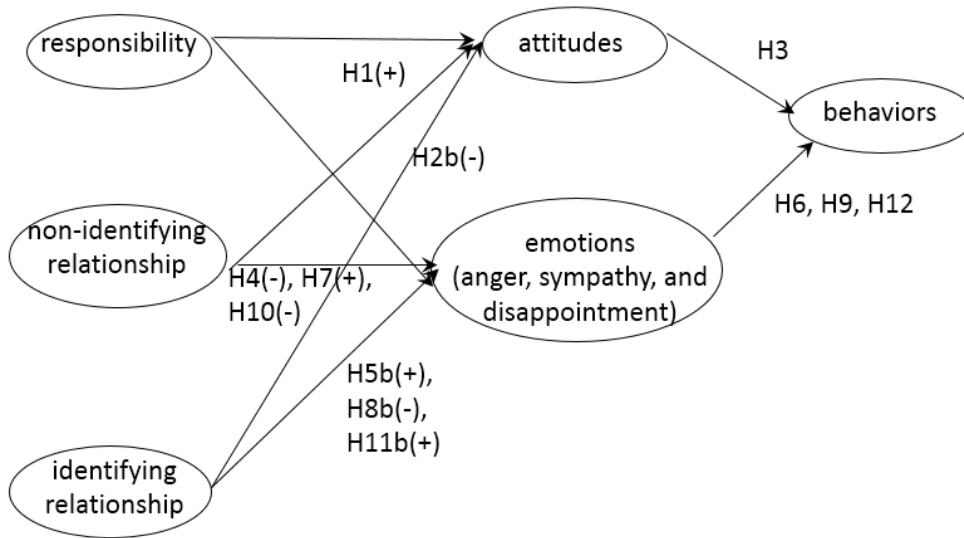


Figure 1(b). Consumer-brand relationship influence model to be tested under the condition that crises undermine self-defining attributes shared between consumers and brands

Overview of the Method

To test these proposed ideas, a 2 (crisis situations) \times 8 (brand response strategies)³ \times 2 (brands) factorial quasi-experiment was conducted, in which crisis situations and brand crisis responses were manipulated but consumer-brand relationships were measured. Crisis situation conditions included one that does and one that does not undermine self-defining attributes shared between consumers and a brand. Brand crisis response strategy conditions were designed according to the SCCT recommendations that organizations involved in a preventable crisis use rebuild and bolstering strategies, if the organizations have positive pre-crisis OPRs. In addition, two different brands were used in the quasi-experiment in order to enhance the external validity of this research, which is to what extent the results of a study can be generalized to other populations or settings

³ For each response strategy condition, please refer to Appendix A.

(Anderson & Bushman, 1997).

Contributions

Relationship research has been the identity of public relations research (Coombs & Holladay, 2015). This dissertation advances our understanding of OPRs in crisis communication by clarifying when OPRs will protect or work against organizations. Second, publics' emotions influence their support for organizations (Coombs & Holladay, 2005; Grappi & Romani, 2015; Jin, 2014). This dissertation forwards our understanding of how OPRs influence publics' emotions. Third, consumers are a vital group of stakeholders, but the current operationalization of the concept of consumer is problematic. This dissertation advances our knowledge on consumers with a more precise operationalization of this concept.

This dissertation helps to understand the role of OPRs in crisis communication in several ways. First, it redefines the concept of OPRs in crisis communication by considering the consumer-brand relationship marketing literature. More importantly, the interactions between non-identifying and identifying relationships and crisis situations potentially provide a theoretical framework to explain the mixed findings regarding the value of OPRs during a crisis.

This dissertation also contributes to research on the role of emotions in crisis communication by examining how identifying relationships affect anger and sympathy and adding an examination of the role of disappointment. In addition, this dissertation contributes to consumer research in crisis communication. Consumers are vital to organizational survival. By using a more precise operationalization of the concept of consumer, this dissertation will add knowledge about consumer evaluation of a crisis and

acceptance of brand crisis response strategies.

This dissertation helps crisis communication professionals understand the impact of consumer goodwill on brand recovery. The possible dark side of consumer-brand relationships may give the professionals more insight about when it is safe to rely on consumer goodwill and when it is better not to mention a brand's past good relationships, or this mentioning will amplify the negative impact of a crisis.

Chapter 2 Review of Literature

In this section, non-identifying and identifying relationships are defined in detail. Their influences on consumer attitudes toward brands in crises and on consumer⁴ emotions are discussed. Then, the research on how emotions influence behaviors is discussed. Lastly, research on brand crisis response strategies is discussed. Hypotheses and research questions are proposed after the discussion of the relevant research.

Consumer-Brand Relationships

Johnson et al. (2011) suggested that consumer-brand relationships can be non-identifying and/or identifying, depending on how branded products fulfill consumers' needs. Some products are purchased only because of their functional use, and some products are purchased because they help a consumer build his/her self-concept (Bhat & Reddy, 1998; Sirgy, 1982), which is defined as "the totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to him/herself as an object" (Rosenberg, 1979, p. 7). According to Johnson et al. (2011), the difference between non-identifying relationships and identifying relationships is whether the relationships are tied to consumer self-concept.

Johnson et al.'s (2011) factor analysis results showed that non-identifying and identifying relationships are different types of consumer-brand relationships. A consumer can be very satisfied and committed to his/her relationship with a brand when he/she thinks that it is trustworthy, but this does not mean that the relationship defines him/her (Johnson et al., 2011). In other words, the relationship does not stand for who s/he is.

⁴ Brand was defined in the ninth paragraph of the statement of problem subsection, crisis in the fourth paragraph of the statement of problem subsection, and consumer in the third paragraph of the statement of problem subsection.

Non-identifying relationship. The OPR definition in public relations is very similar to Johnson et al.'s (2011) non-identifying relationship. Public relations scholars (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 1997; Hung, 2007; Park & Reber, 2011) defined OPR quality as a multi-dimensional concept that includes satisfaction, commitment, trust, and control mutuality.⁵ Hon and Grunig (1999) defined the four indicators of OPR quality as follows. Satisfaction refers to how much each party favors the other party. Commitment refers to how much each party thinks and feels that the relationship deserves to be maintained and enhanced. Commitment includes continuance and affective commitment. Trust refers to the degree to which each party is confident and willing to open themselves to the other party. Trust in an organization means that the organization is perceived to be fair, able and willing to keep its word. Control mutuality refers to the degree to which each party in the relationship agrees that there exists legitimate power to influence each other.

Johnson et al. (2011) argued that non-identifying relationship does not relate to consumer self-concept. According to these scholars, when a consumer purchases branded products purely for their functional use, the consumer-brand relationships are non-identifying. De Wulf, Odekerken-Schröder, and Iacobucci (2001) suggested that conceptualization of relationship quality had acknowledged the importance of satisfaction, trust, and commitment, although there was still on-going discussion on which dimensions comprise consumer-brand relationship quality. Johnson et al. (2011) argued that none of these dimensions necessarily indicate that a consumer self-concept is wrapped up in

⁵ Hon and Grunig (1999) also included communal relationship and exchange relationship as two indicators for OPR quality/outcome, but they also pointed out that these two dimensions are types of relationships.

his/her relationship with a brand. As an example of non-identifying relationship, a consumer of paper kitchen towels “Bounty” may always purchase it, because s/he benefits from the product quality. However, this relationship does not relate to his/her self-concept.

Identifying relationship. Identifying relationships have been defined as consumer use of defining attributes of a brand to define him/herself (Einwiller et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2011). Greyser (2009) called a brand’s defining attributes “the essence of the brand:” “the distinctive attributes/characteristics most closely associated with the brand’s meaning and success” (p. 592). For example, Harley-Davison’s consumers pursue “safe rebellion,” which is the essence or the defining attribute of this brand according to Baskin (2013, para. 2).

Identifying relationships help consumers define themselves or build their self-concepts in multiple ways (Einwiller et al., 2006; Johnson et al., 2011; Lam et al., 2010; Sirgy, 1982). Hollenbeck and Kaikati (2012) found that consumers use brands to confirm and manage their self-concept. These scholars found that college student Facebook users frequently display brand information in their posts, comments and stories related to recreation, volunteer activities, personal goals, and personal interests. College Facebook users also favor certain brands by clicking the “like” icon. Hollenbeck and Kaikati (2012) further found that college students on Facebook used brands to manage others’ perceptions of them. In addition, people perceive themselves more positively consistent with a brand’s appealing personality after using the brand’s product for a short period of time (Fennis, Pruyn, & Maasland, 2005; Park & John; 2010).

Consumer identifying relationships are beneficial for brands in multiple ways

(Hong & Yang, 2009; Kressman et al, 2006; Lam et al., 2010). Hong and Yang (2009) found that consumer-company identification increases positive word-of-mouth intention. Kressmann et al. (2006) found that when consumers think their self-perceptions and a brand's meaning are congruent, they are more loyal to the brand. Lam et al. (2010) found that consumers who identify with an incumbent brand are less likely to switch to a new brand when the new brand was introduced to the market. Moreover, the effects of identifying relationships become stronger over time (Lam et al., 2010).

Non-identifying and identifying relationships may affect consumer brand attitudes and their emotions in a crisis. The following sections define crises categories, brand attitudes, and consumer emotions. The hypotheses regarding how the non-identifying and identifying relationships influence consumer brand attitudes and their emotions are proposed.

Crisis Categories

Under the SCCT framework, Coombs and Holladay (2002) found that 13 crisis types can be grouped into three clusters based on how much responsibility publics attribute to an organization: victim cluster, accidental cluster, and preventable cluster. These crisis clusters, however, have not been tested empirically beyond Coombs and Holladay's (2002) study. The validity of Coombs and Holladay's (2002) crisis clusters needs more empirical support.

Coombs (2007a) summarized the three crisis clusters. According to Coombs (2007a), the victim cluster refers to publics attributing a low amount of responsibility to an organization when the organization is also victimized by the crisis. Victim cluster crises include natural disaster, product tampering, rumor, and workplace violence.

Coombs (2007a) argued that the accidental cluster refers to publics attributing a minimal amount of responsibility to an organization when the crisis is unintentionally caused by the organization's actions. Accidental cluster crises include challenges, technical-error accidents, and technical-error product harm. According to Coombs (2007a), the preventable cluster refers to publics attributing a considerable amount of responsibility to an organization when the organization is fully aware that its actions are inappropriate, risk stakeholder well-being or violate laws/regulations but still take these actions. Preventable cluster crises include organizational misdeed, human-error accidents, and human-error product harm. Coombs and Holladay (2002) found that each crisis cluster poses a threat at different levels to organizational reputation, with victim cluster posing least threat and preventable cluster posing most threat.

A different crisis typology from that of Coombs and Holladay (2002) was offered by Greyser (2009), who argued that crises include those that undermine a brand's essence or defining attributes and those that do not. Greyser (2009) listed some examples of crises that threatened brand defining attributes. For example, the priest sex abuse scandal of the Catholic Church threatened "trust and faith," a defining attribute of the church (and most religions) (p. 593). Similarly, Martha Stewart's brand was defined by her image of being reliable and wholesome (Greyser, 2009). Stewart's brand essence was undermined when she was accused of illegal investments. However, Greyser's (2009) crisis typology has not been empirically tested.

This dissertation is the first study that combines and tests SCCT crisis categories and Greyser's (2009) categories. According to Coombs and Holladay (2002), clarifying crisis categories will make crisis communication more efficient because practitioners can

prepare for each crisis cluster instead of each crisis type. Using attributed responsibility and threat to a brand's defining attributes as crisis categorization criteria, this dissertation proposes that a preventable-type crisis may undermine a brand's defining attributes.

From the perspective of a consumer who has an identifying relationship with a brand, a crisis that threatens the brand's defining attributes will undermine the identifying relationships which is built on the defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand. For example, suppose that a consumer has an identifying relationship with a luxury brand because it represents the consumer's economic status. A preventable-type crisis situation example that would not undermine the defining attribute of a luxury brand would be that the brand pollutes the environment. The issue of pollution has nothing to do with the brand luxury attribute, and therefore this crisis would not threaten the consumer identifying relationship. On the other hand, a preventable-type crisis situation example that would undermine the defining attribute of a luxury brand would be that the same brand is made with cheap materials and low-wage labor, but is advertised as using expensive materials and experts to hand-craft the products. The issue of cheap manufacturing threatens the brand luxury attribute, and therefore this crisis would threaten the consumer identifying relationship.

A preventable-type crisis that undermines brand defining attributes may pose different levels of threat to consumer brand attitudes, compared to a preventable-type crisis that does not undermine brand defining attributes. The following section will introduce the concept of brand attitudes, and how non-identifying relationships and identifying relationships and crisis situations may interact to influence brand attitudes.

Brand Attitudes

Attitudes toward an object are defined as tendencies to evaluate an object with some degree of positivity or negativity (Ajzen, 2008). Therefore, consumer attitudes toward a brand or organization refer to how much a consumer evaluates the brand or the organization positively or negatively (Grappi & Romani, 2015; Holbrook & Batra, 1987; Park, MacInnis, Priester, Eisingerich, & Iacobucci, 2010; Thomson, MacInnis, & Park, 2005).

Marketing research has long suggested that brand attitudes influence consumer behaviors (Park et al., 2010). Consumer positive brand attitudes predict consumer brand loyalty and consumer support for an organization (Lyon & Cameron, 2004; McDonald et al., 2010; Thomson et al., 2005). In the following three hypotheses, this dissertation proposed that the non-identifying and the identifying relationships may influence consumer brand attitudes differently, which in turn influence consumer behaviors in crises.

Effects of Non-identifying and Identifying Relationships on Attitudes in Crises

Effects of non-identifying relationships on attitudes in crises. Within the SCCT framework, Coombs and Holladay (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2001) explained why the buffering effects of strong OPRs occur. They argued that a crisis is part of a continuous OPR, and therefore a public's interpretation of the crisis situation and its evaluation of the organization are shaped by past interactions with the organization. Coombs and Holladay (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2001) argued that when pre-crisis relationships are positive and a crisis has negative implication for the organization, a public may hesitate to change its favorable perceptions of the organization and therefore the pre-crisis relationship buffers any negative impact. In this case, "the

favorable relationship history becomes a bank account of goodwill” that an organization can draw upon in a crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2001, p. 324). Conversely, when pre-crisis relationships are negative, a crisis may reinforce public negative perceptions of an organization (Coombs & Holladay, 2001).

The effects of pre-crisis OPRs have been examined with different crises types and different organizational settings. Coombs and Holladay (2001) first examined the effects of OPRs in an accidental crisis situation. They found *velcro effects*; that is, an organization’s reputation suffered more when pre-crisis OPRs were negative, although positive pre-crisis OPRs did not protect an organization’s reputation.⁶

Several studies have supported the buffering effects (Brown & White, 2011; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; Johnson et al. 2011; Lyon & Cameron, 2004; Park & Reber, 2011; Turk et al., 2012) of OPRs on publics’ attribution of responsibility to organizations in crises. Brown and White (2011) examined how OPRs affected a public’s attribution of responsibility to an organization. These scholars found that positive OPRs decreased an organization’s attributed responsibility, regardless of the organization’s crisis responses. Because other scholars have shown that attributed responsibility influenced a public’s evaluation of an organization (Coombs, 2007a; Dean, 2004; Ma & Zhan, 2016), the finding regarding the effects of OPRs on attribution of responsibility supported OPRs’ buffering effect on a public’s attitudes toward an organization.

Claeys and Cauberghe (2014) found that after suspected fraud was attributed to top management, consumers’ perceptions of a retailer company that had a positive pre-

⁶ The fact that Coombs and Holladay’s (2001) findings did not support buffering effect may be due to their experimental manipulation of OPRs. Relationships in real life take more time to establish (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014).

crisis reputation were less influenced either by the crisis itself or by following negative media publicity, compared to a retailer company that had a negative pre-crisis reputation. They found that the effect of pre-crisis reputation on post-crisis reputation was mediated by attributed responsibility (Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014).

Even during preventable-type crises in which a public attributes a considerable amount of responsibility to an organization, a public with positive OPRs may hesitate to change its attitudes toward an organization (Lyon & Cameron, 2004; Park & Reber, 2011). Park and Reber (2011) found that a public with positive OPRs perceived an organization as more trustworthy after a preventable crisis, compared to a public with negative OPRs, even when both groups held the organization accountable. Lyon and Cameron (2004) also found that an organization that had a positive pre-crisis reputation was perceived as more likeable and pro-social after a crisis, even when a public thought that the organization had caused the crisis. Dean (2004) further found that in a food poisoning crisis, a public had better attitudes toward a brand with a positive reputation because of its social responsibility commitment, compared to a brand with a negative reputation regarding social responsibility.

Despite all the informative research regarding buffering effects of non-identifying relationships, it is unknown whether undermining the defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand in a crisis affects the buffering effects of non-identifying relationships on consumer brand attitudes. This dissertation argued that such buffering effects of non-identifying relationships occur, regardless of whether a preventable crisis situation undermines self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand. Because non-identifying relationships are not built on the defining attributes shared

between a consumer and a brand, non-identifying relationships are not be threatened, regardless of whether a crisis situation undermines the shared defining attributes.

Hypothesis one examines the effects of non-identifying relationships on consumer brand attitudes in a crisis:

H1: The stronger a non-identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the more positive his/her brand attitudes are in a preventable crisis, regardless of whether the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

Effects of identifying relationships on attitudes in crises. A crisis is a threat to the brand. According to Lisjak et al. (2012), when a consumer identified with a brand, a bond with the brand became part of his/her extended self. A threat to the brand was considered as a threat to the self, and a consumer tended to defend that bond and the meaning derived from the bond (Cheng et al., 2012; Einwiller et al., 2006; Lisjak et al., 2012). As a result, identifying relationships buffer the negative impact of crises on brands.

The buffering effects of identifying relationships have been supported empirically (Einwiller et al., 2006; Einwiller & Johar, 2013; Lisjak et al., 2012; Trump, 2014). Consumer identification with a brand buffered the impact of negative information on consumer evaluation of the brand, whether the negative information was about the brand's financial performance (Einwiller et al., 2006) or from negative media comments (Lisjak et al., 2012). However, the buffering effect disappeared when the negative information was extreme (Einwiller et al., 2006). Einwiller and Johar (2013) also found that when a consumer identified with a brand, his/her attitudes toward the brand were not affected by an accusation of wrongdoing against the brand, regardless of whether and

how the brand responded. Similarly, Trump (2014) found that the brand attitudes of consumers that strongly identified with a brand were not affected by negative information regarding a product failure when the failure did not affect consumers personally.

Counter-intuitively, Lisjak et al. (2012) found that a negative editorial regarding a brand may even make consumer brand attitudes more favorable, when a consumer strongly identified with a brand and had low implicit self-esteem. This effect was under the condition that a consumer's sense of self was prompted by categorizing words that described his/her favorable and unfavorable personal traits. This interaction between implicit self-esteem and negative information was not found on consumers who weakly identified with a brand, regardless of whether their self was prompted (Lisjak et al., 2012).

Despite the support of buffering effects of identifying relationships, this study proposed that the buffering effects of identifying relationships only occur in a preventable crisis when it does not undermine the defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand. This study also proposed that identifying relationships will amplify the negative impact of a preventable crisis, when it undermines the defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand.

When a crisis situation does not undermine the shared defining attributes, it may not threaten the identifying relationships from a consumer perspective. In this case, a consumer who strongly identifies with a brand may choose to defend the brand and protect his/her self-concept. S/he may hesitate to change his/her attitudes toward the brand and their shared defining attributes. Dawar and Lei's (2009) findings indirectly suggested this possibility. They found that for consumers who were familiar with a brand,

their evaluation of the brand was only affected when the brand's "key proposition is unsubstantiated or false" (Dawar & Lei, 2009, p. 509), such as Gatorade not re-hydrating. Hypothesis 2a examines the effects of identifying relationships on consumer brand attitudes when a preventable crisis does not undermine shared defining attributes between a consumer and a brand.

H2a: The stronger an identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the more positive his/her brand attitudes are in a preventable crisis, when the crisis does not undermine self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

On the other hand, the buffering effects of identifying relationships on consumer brand attitudes may not always work (see H2b). For example, Grégoire and Fisher (2006) measured consumer-brand relationship qualities such as trust, satisfaction, commitment, and identification. These scholars found that when a brand was perceived to have caused service failures, the buffering effects of a good quality relationship disappeared. Specifically, consumers with high and low quality relationships showed similar magnitude of intention to retaliate against a brand.⁷

Literature on service failures suggests that the love-becomes-hate effect may occur. Consumers with good consumer-brand relationships sometimes can become a brand's most outspoken antagonists and worst enemies when their expectations are not met by a service provider (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2009; Johnson

⁷ Grégoire and Fisher's (2006) relationship quality measures included both non-identifying and identifying relationships. Johnson et al. (2011) pointed out that the effects of these two types of relationships may cancel out each other if the effects were in opposite directions.

et al., 2011). Consumer-brand relationships contribute to consumer perceived betrayal, which in turn leads to consumer retaliation against a brand (Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2009). Johnson et al. (2011) found that the stronger the identifying relationship was, the more likely a consumer would retaliate against a brand when s/he exited the relationship. Retaliatory behaviors in their study included NWOM communication and complaining to a third party (Johnson et al., 2011). Grégoire et al. (2009) also found that after service failures, over time the retaliation desire of a consumer with a favorable relationship decreased more slowly and his/her avoidance desire of the brand increased more rapidly, compared to a consumer with a less favorable relationship.

Although the love-becomes-hate effect of consumer-brand relationships has been found in service failure settings, it is unclear whether such love-becomes-hate effect of identifying relationships occurs in crises when defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand are undermined. This dissertation proposes that when a preventable crisis undermines shared defining attributes, consumer identifying relationships may negatively affect consumer brand attitudes for two reasons. First, as Einwiller et al. (2006) pointed out, violations of shared self-defining attributes may destroy the foundations of identifying relationships. Equally important, such a crisis may violate consumer expectations based on identifying relationships. A consumer who has an identifying relationship with a brand may expect the brand to maintain the shared defining attributes. A preventable crisis that undermines the shared defining attributes violates his/her expectations. Stronger identifying relationships may mean stronger expectations and therefore stronger violation. Hypothesis 2b examines the effects of identifying relationships on consumer brand attitudes when a preventable crisis

undermines shared defining attributes between a consumer and a brand.

H2b: The stronger an identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the more negative his/her brand attitudes are, when a preventable crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

Effects of attitudes on consumer behaviors. The more positive the attitudes a consumer has toward a brand, the more supportive s/he may be to the brand (Lyon & Cameron, 2004; McDonald et al., 2010). Lyon and Cameron (2004) found that consumer positive attitudes toward a company increased purchase intention in crises that were caused by the company. McDonald et al. (2010) also found that attitudes negatively predicted NWOM communication intention across different crises that organizations were or were not responsible for. Hypothesis three is proposed to replicate the findings of Lyon and Cameron (2004) and McDonald et al. (2010).

H3a: The more positive attitudes a consumer has toward a brand, the less NWOM intention s/he has.

H3b: The more positive attitudes a consumer has toward a brand, the more purchase intention s/he has.

Consumer emotions, such as anger and sympathy, are also found to predict their behaviors (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Grappi & Romani, 2015). Disappointment may also be promising to explain consumer behaviors (Xie & Heung, 2012; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004). The following section discusses studies relating to how consumer non-identifying and identifying relationships influence anger, sympathy, and disappointment toward brands and how these three discrete emotions in turn affect

intentions of NWOM communication and purchase. Nine hypotheses are proposed regarding the influences of consumer-brand relationships on consumer emotions and the influences of consumer emotions on their behavioral intentions.

Emotions and Their Roles in Crises

Because consumer emotional responses are based on evaluations of a crisis situation (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Grappi & Romani, 2015), a definition of emotion that reflects this appraisal basis of emotion is used. Lazarus (1991a) defined emotion as “organized cognitive-motivational-relational configurations whose status changes with changes in the person-environment relationship as this is perceived and evaluated (appraisal)” (p. 38). Discrete emotions that are promising to explain consumer’s behaviors include anger, sympathy, and disappointment.

Consumer anger. Bonifield and Cole (2007) defined anger as “a strong feeling of displeasure or hostility” (p. 87). A person gets angry when s/he thinks: (1) his/her personal well-being or goals are threatened or harmed by another party and (2) that party has control of the threat or harm (Lazarus, 1991b; Nguyen & McColl-Kennedy, 2003). In other words, a person gets angry when the threat or offense is against *me* and *mine* (Lazarus, 1991b). Choi and Lin (2009) found that anger was the primary emotion that consumers expressed during a preventable-type product recall crisis.

Effects of non-identifying relationships on consumer anger. OPRs influence how a consumer attributes responsibility to an organization in crises (Brown & White, 2011; Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2001). Because attributed responsibility increases anger (Choi & Lin, 2009; Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2005), OPRs may indirectly decrease anger toward a brand via decreasing attributed responsibility to

the brand. Grégoire and Fisher (2006) also found that when consumers did not think a service failure was under a brand's control, consumers with strong consumer-brand relationships were less likely to engage in retaliatory behaviors against the brand.

Consumer non-identifying relationships may reduce anger when consumers hold a brand responsible for a crisis. Grappi and Romani (2015) examined how a brand's reputation influenced consumer emotions and supportive behaviors in a preventable crisis. They found that across different brand response strategies, brand reputation decreased consumer anger. Johnson et al. (2011) also found that consumer non-identifying relationships reduced *hatred* toward brands, even when consumers exited from their relationships with the brands.

However, it is unknown whether undermining self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand affects how a non-identifying relationship decreases anger. This study proposed that a consumer non-identifying relationship decreases anger in a preventable crisis, regardless of whether the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand. Because non-identifying relationships are not built on the self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand, it is not threatened, regardless of whether a preventable crisis situation undermines the self-defining attributes. In this case, the consumer reservoir of goodwill based on non-identifying relationships may mitigate anger toward the brand. Hypothesis four examines how a consumer non-identifying relationship influences anger toward a brand.

H4: The stronger a non-identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the less anger s/he feels toward the brand in a preventable crisis, regardless of whether the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the

consumer and the brand.

Effects of identifying relationships on consumer anger. Johnson et al. (2011)

found that identifying relationships increased consumer hatred toward brands, even when consumers exited from their relationships with the brands. Nevertheless, it is unclear how identifying relationships influence consumer anger or whether this influence depends on crisis situations. This dissertation proposed that when a preventable crisis does not undermine self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand, a consumer identifying relationship may decrease anger toward the brand. Similar to how a consumer identifying relationship may influence brand attitudes, a consumer who has an identifying relationship with a brand may choose to defend the brand and protect his/her self-concept. Therefore, s/he may mitigate anger toward the brand in order to protect his/her self-concept. Hypothesis 5a is proposed to examine the effects of consumer identifying relationships on anger toward a brand when a preventable crisis does not undermine shared self-defining attributes.

H5a: The stronger an identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the less anger s/he feels toward the brand in a preventable crisis, when the crisis does not undermine self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

However, when a preventable crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand, a consumer who has an identifying relationship with the brand may feel the brand destroyed the foundation of his/her identifying relationship (Einwiller et al., 2006) and violated the consumer expectations of the brand based on the identifying relationship. Holding stronger identifying relationships may mean stronger

expectations and therefore stronger violation, and this violation may lead to anger (Joskowicz-Jablonek & Leiser, 2013; Morrison & Robinson, 1997; Ward & Ostrom, 2006). Hypothesis 5b is proposed to examine the effects of consumer identifying relationships on anger when a preventable crisis undermines shared self-defining attributes.

H5b: The stronger an identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the angrier s/he feels toward the brand in a preventable crisis, when the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

Effects of anger on behaviors. The less anger a consumer holds toward a brand, the less intention s/he has to engage in NWOM communication, and the more intention s/he has to buy the brand's products (Coombs & Holladay, 2007; Grappi & Romani, 2015; McDonald et al., 2010). McDonald et al. (2010) also found that anger increased complaining intentions. H6 is proposed to replicate Coombs and Holladay (2007) and Grappi and Romani's (2015) results.

H6a: The angrier a consumer feels toward a brand, the more NWOM intention s/he has.

H6b: The angrier a consumer feels toward a brand, the less purchase intention s/he has.

Consumer sympathy. Wispé (1986) defined sympathy as "the heightened awareness of the suffering of another person as something to be alleviated" (p. 318). In other words, sympathy means "feeling sorry for" others because of what they are undergoing (Solomon, 1998, p. 520).

Effects of non-identifying relationships on consumer sympathy. Attributed responsibility reduces publics' sympathy toward an organization involved in a crisis (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2005; Lee, 2005). Therefore, by reducing attributed responsibility (Brown & White, 2011; Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2001), OPRs may increase consumer sympathy toward a brand.

A consumer who has a stronger non-identifying relationship with a brand may feel more sympathetic toward the brand involved in a crisis, regardless of the level of attributed responsibility. There is limited research examining how non-identifying relationships influence consumer sympathy toward a brand, but two studies provided indirect support for this possibility. Stockmyer (1996) found that consumers were more sympathetic toward their favorite brand compared to a less favorite brand, when the brand was victimized by a crisis, such as product tampering. Stockmyer (1996) further found that consumers were more likely to purchase the products of their favorite brand after such a crisis. Grappi and Romani (2015) found that across different brand crisis response strategies, brand reputation increased consumer sympathy toward a brand in a preventable crisis. The combination of confession responses and high consumer-brand reputation worked best to increase sympathy (Grappi & Romani, 2015).

The following hypothesis examined whether undermining self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand influences effects of consumer non-identifying relationships on sympathy, which has not been studied before. This study posited that consumer non-identifying relationships increase sympathy toward a brand in a preventable crisis, regardless of whether the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand. Similar to how non-identifying relationships

mitigate consumer anger toward a brand, the consumer reservoir of goodwill based on non-identifying relationships may increase consumer sympathy toward a brand.

Therefore, hypothesis seven is proposed as follows.

H7: The stronger a non-identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the more sympathetic s/he feels toward the brand in a preventable crisis, regardless of whether the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

Effects of identifying relationships on consumer sympathy. It is also unclear how consumer identifying relationships influence sympathy in different crisis situations. This study posited that when a preventable crisis does not undermine the self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand, identifying relationships may increase consumer sympathy toward the brand. When the self-defining attributes are not undermined, identifying relationships are not threatened and therefore they should increase consumer sympathy toward the brand, just like reputation increases consumer sympathy toward a brand (Grappi & Romani, 2015).

Other studies also indirectly supported this possibility. Parker and Axtell (2001) found that the more employees interact with their suppliers, the more employees take the perspectives of the suppliers. Davis (1983) found that perspective taking was positively related to empathic concern, which was feeling compassion, concern, and warmth for others. In addition, Westmaas and Silver (2006) found that perceived similarity to a cancer victim was positively correlated with people's sympathy toward the victim. Identifying relationships may increase consumer perceived similarity between him/herself and the brand and therefore increase consumer sympathy toward the brand.

Hypothesis 8a examines the effects of identifying relationships on consumer sympathy toward a brand when a preventable crisis does not undermine shared self-defining attributes.

H8a: The stronger an identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the more sympathetic s/he feels toward the brand in a preventable crisis, when the crisis does not undermine the self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

Conversely, when a preventable crisis undermines the self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand, a consumer with a strong identifying relationship may feel that the brand harms the identifying relationships and violates consumer expectations. As a result, the consumer may think that the brand deserves the consequences. This may reduce his/her sympathy toward the brand. Hypothesis 8b is proposed to examine the effects of identifying relationships on consumer sympathy toward a brand when a preventable crisis undermines shared self-defining attributes.

H8b: The stronger an identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the less sympathetic s/he feels toward the brand in a preventable crisis, when the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

Effects of sympathy on consumer behaviors. Consumer sympathy may influence his/her behaviors. Weiner (2004) argued that the more sympathy a person felt, the more likely s/he would help the victims and be supportive. Grappi and Romani (2015) found that the more sympathetic a consumer felt toward a brand, the less intention s/he had to engage in NWOM communication. Consumer sympathy toward a brand also

increased purchase intention (Grappi & Romani, 2015; Stockmyer, 1996). H9 is proposed to replicate Grappi and Romani (2015) and Stockmyer's (1996) results.

H9a: The more sympathetic a consumer feels toward a brand, the less NWOM intention s/he has.

H9b: The more sympathetic a consumer feels toward a brand, the more purchase intention s/he has.

Consumer disappointment. Disappointment arises when the outcome of an event fails to fulfill one's expectations (Bell, 1985; Frijda, 1986; Zeelenberg, Van Dijk, Manstead, & Vanr der Pligt, 2000), and the outcome is uncontrollable by oneself and it is caused by others (Frijda, Kuipers, & Ter Schure, 1989; Zeelenberg et al., 2000).

Consumers frequently felt disappointed when a brand failed to meet consumer expectations (Xie & Heung, 2012).

Van Dijk and Zeelenberg (2002) found that an individual can be either disappointed with the outcome of an event (such as when we fail to receive an award) or disappointed with a person (such as when a friend spreads a rumor behind one's back). According to Van Dijk and Zeelenberg (2002), outcome-related disappointment focused on the event. People felt they lost an opportunity to gain a pleasant outcome and felt hopeless. People also wanted to have a second chance when they were disappointed with the outcome (Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002).

Different from outcome-related disappointment, person-related disappointment focused on the agent and his/her actions (Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002). According to Van Dijk and Zeelenberg (2002), people felt disappointed at an agent when s/he held the agent responsible for an undesirable situation, and thought that the agent did something

the agent should not have done. People felt that the situation revealed the true nature of the agent and felt abandoned by the agent (Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002).

Effects of non-identifying relationships on consumer disappointment. There is limited research on how a consumer's relationships with a brand influence his/her disappointment with the brand when it fails to meet consumer expectations. This dissertation argued that when the attribution of responsibility is vague in a crisis, non-identifying relationships may temper consumer disappointment by reducing attributed responsibility to the brand. Positive OPRs reduce attributed responsibility (Brown & White, 2011; Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2001). A consumer may feel disappointed with a brand when s/he thinks the brand is responsible for undesirable outcomes. The less responsibility a consumer attributes to the brand, the less disappointed the consumer may feel.

Non-identifying relationships may also directly mitigate consumer disappointment. Xie and Heung (2012) found that in a hotel setting, even when relationships did not affect consumer perceptions of how much the service failure could have been controlled by the hotel, consumers with high quality brand relationships expressed a lower amount of negative emotions, measured by a combination of anger, offense, and disappointment.

According to Coombs (2007b), a crisis severely violates stakeholders' expectations on an organization, but it is unclear how non-identifying relationships influence disappointment in crisis situations and whether this influence depends on undermining self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand. This study proposed that consumer non-identifying relationships temper their disappointment in a

preventable crisis, regardless of whether the crisis undermines the self-defining attributes shared between a consumer and a brand. Because non-identifying relationships are not built on the basis of shared self-defining attributes, they may mitigate consumer disappointment so that the consumer can maintain his/her relationships with the brand.

Therefore, hypothesis ten is stated:

H10: The stronger a non-identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the less disappointed s/he feels with the brand in a preventable crisis, regardless of whether the crisis undermines the self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

Effects of identifying relationships on consumer disappointment. How consumer identifying relationships influence disappointment is also unclear. Person-related disappointment is other-oriented (van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002). This dissertation posited that when a preventable crisis does not undermine shared self-defining attributes, identifying relationships may reduce consumer disappointment with a brand, so that the consumer can preserve the identifying relationships and his/her self-concept. Schmalz and Orth (2012) found that consumers strongly attached to a brand tended to judge an unethical firm behavior as less unethical, compared to consumers less attached to a brand. It may indicate that consumers attached to the brand are motivated to make such a judgment in order to preserve their relationships with the brand. Xie and Heung's (2012) findings that brand relationships decreased consumer negative emotions during service failures also indirectly support this possibility. In addition, when consumer expectations for a brand based on shared self-defining attributes are not violated, his/her expectations based on identifying relationships are not violated. In this case, a consumer identifying

relationship may also decrease his/her disappointment with the brand. Therefore, hypothesis 11a is stated:

H11a: The stronger an identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the less disappointed s/he feels with the brand in a preventable crisis, when the crisis does not undermine self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

On the contrary, when a preventable crisis situation undermines shared self-defining attributes, a consumer with a strong identifying relationship may feel the crisis revealed the true nature of the brand and feel abandoned by the brand, and therefore they feel disappointed at the brand (Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002). Therefore, hypothesis 11b is stated:

H11b: The stronger an identifying relationship a consumer has with a brand, the more disappointed s/he feels with the brand in a preventable crisis, when the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

Effects of disappointment on consumer behaviors. Researchers found that consumer disappointment leads to behaviors that have consequences with a brand (Xie & Heung, 2012; Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2004). Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004) found that the more disappointed consumers felt after their service experiences, the more NWOM communication and complaining behaviors they engaged in. Xie and Hueng (2012) found that a combination of anger, offense, and disappointment increased consumer NWOM intention and decreased their purchase intention. Therefore, hypothesis 12 examines the influences of consumer disappointment on his/her behavioral intentions.

H12a: The more disappointed a consumer feels with the brand, the more NWOM intention s/he has.

H12b: The more disappointed a consumer feels with the brand, the less purchase intention s/he has.

To sum up, H1, H4, H7, and H10 are about the effects of the non-identifying relationships on consumer attitudes and emotions. H2, H5, H8, and H11 are about the effects of the identifying relationships on consumer attitudes and emotions. Each of these hypotheses about the identifying relationships has two parts indicating the moderation effect of the crisis situations. H3, H6, H9, and H12 are about how consumer attitudes and emotions influence their behavioral intentions. Please refer to Figure 1(a) and Figure 1(b) for the proposed model. Table 1(a) and Table 1(b) also summarized all the hypotheses.

A consumer relationship with a brand and its interplay with a crisis situation may also influence the effectiveness of brand crisis response strategies at mitigating consumer negative reactions. According to SCCT, OPRs influence the selection of brand crisis response strategies (Coombs, 2007a, 2014). Consumer identifying relationship is an important type of consumer-brand relationships. It is unclear: (1) how consumer identifying relationships influence his/her reactions to SCCT-recommended response strategies based on attributed responsibility and OPRs and (2) whether this influence depends on the crisis situations.

Table 1(a)

Hypotheses on the Effects of the Non-Identifying Relationships and the Identifying Relationships on Attitude, Anger, Sympathy, and Disappointment

Crisis that does not undermine shared self-defining attributes				Crisis that undermines shared self-defining attributes			
Non-identifying relationship	↑	Attitudes	↑ (H1)	Non-identifying relationship	↑	Attitudes	↑ (H1)
		Anger	↓ (H4)			Anger	↓ (H4)
		Sympathy	↑ (H7)			Sympathy	↑ (H7)
		Disappointment	↓ (H10)			Disappointment	↓ (H10)
Identifying relationship	↑	Attitudes	↑ (H2a)	Identifying relationship	↑	Attitudes	↓ (H2b)
		Anger	↓ (H5a)			Anger	↑ (H5b)
		Sympathy	↑ (H8a)			Sympathy	↓ (H8b)
		Disappointment	↓ (H11a)			Disappointment	↑ (H11b)

Table 1(b)

Hypotheses on the Effects of Attitude, Anger, Sympathy, and Disappointment on Intentions of NWOM Communication and Purchase

Attitude	↑	NWOM communication intention	↓ (H3a)
		Purchase intention	↑ (H3b)
Anger	↑	NWOM communication intention	↑ (H6a)
		Purchase intention	↓ (H6b)
Sympathy	↑	NWOM communication intention	↓ (H9a)
		Purchase intention	↑ (H9b)
Disappointment	↑	NWOM communication intention	↑ (H12a)
		Purchase intention	↓ (H12b)

SCCT-recommended Response Strategies

This section reviews the research regarding SCCT-recommended response strategies based on attributed responsibility and OPRs. It also discusses how OPRs influence the effectiveness of organizational crisis response strategies. Research questions are proposed after the relevant research is reviewed.

Crisis response strategies are an organization's words and actions to protect its reputation when faced with a crisis (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs & Holladay, 2002). After a crisis, an ethical organization offers information to protect publics' physical and psychological well-being, such as offering corrective actions (Coombs, 2004, 2007a). Then the organization can consider how to eliminate the reputational threat of a crisis, because a public expects the organization to explain why the crisis happened. According to Coombs (2007a), an organization must use response strategies to offer an explanation to counter reputation damage, and reduce publics' negative emotions and oppositions.

According to SCCT (Coombs, 2006, 2007a), there are three primary response strategies based on how much responsibility an organization accepts: (1) denial, (2) diminish, and (3) rebuild. Denial strategies accept the least amount of responsibility; diminish strategies accept a low amount of responsibility; and rebuild strategies accept a higher amount of responsibility. The more accommodative strategies are, the more concern an organization shows to the victims, and the more responsibility an organization is perceived to accept (Coombs & Holladay, 2004, 2005).

Coombs (2007a, 2014) explained how denial, diminish, and rebuild strategies match with crisis types. Denial strategies intend to sever the connection between the crisis and the organization. Denial strategies include *attacking the accuser* (the accusation

against the organization is false), *denial* (there is no crisis), and *scapegoat* (someone else is responsible for the crisis). Denial strategies are recommended for rumor and challenge. Diminish strategies include *excuse* (the organization has no control of the situation) and *justification* (the situation is not as bad as perceived). Diminish strategies are recommended for accidental-cluster crises. Rebuild strategies include *apology* (the organization takes responsibility and offers a full apology to the publics) and *compensation* (the organization offers material compensation to those affected by the crisis). Rebuild strategies are recommended for preventable-cluster crises. Compensation is also recommended for any crisis that has visible victims.

SCCT (Coombs, 2007a; Coombs, 2014; Coombs & Holladay, 2001) also suggests that an organization that has positive pre-crisis OPRs use bolstering strategies as secondary response strategies to supplement primary response strategies. According to Coombs (2014), bolstering strategies are only supplemental because these strategies focus on the organizations and using them alone “seem rather egocentric” (p. 149). According to Coombs (2007a), bolstering strategies rely on the reservoir of goodwill that an organization builds prior to a crisis. Bolstering strategies include *reminder* (the organization reminds publics about the past good deeds of the organization), *ingratiation* (the organization thanks publics for their efforts during the crisis), and *victimization/victimage* (the organization portrays itself as a victim of the crisis). To sum up, for an organization that has positive pre-crisis OPRs, SCCT recommends that the organization use a combination of rebuild and bolstering strategies during a preventable crisis.

Crisis communication research has found support for rebuild strategies being most

effective at protecting organizational reputation and reducing public opposition to organizations during preventable-type crises (Brown & White, 2011; Dean, 2004; Grappi & Romani, 2015; Lee, 2005; Lyon & Cameron, 2004; Park & Reber, 2011; Sheldon & Sallot, 2008), as SCCT predicts. Lee (2005) found that following a severe crisis, the more apologetically the organization responded, the less responsibility consumers attributed to the organization, and the better attitudes they had toward the organization after the crisis. Lyon and Cameron (2004) found that participants perceived a company that apologized as more likable and pro-social. Participants were also more likely to purchase and recommend the products of a company when an apologetic response was used, compared to when a defense response was used (Lyon & Cameron, 2004). Sheldon and Sallot (2008) also found that, during a politician's *faux pas* crisis, a public evaluated the politician more positively and was more supportive when apology was used, compared to when a bolstering strategy and corrective action were used. Grappi and Romani (2015) found that during a preventable crisis, confession resulted in less anger and more sympathy, compared to denial, excuse, or no comment.

Although rebuild strategies have been shown to be the most effective responses during a preventable crisis compared to denial and diminish strategies, it is unknown whether a threat to shared self-defining attributes between a consumer and a brand influences the effectiveness of strategies in general. In other words, it is unclear which crisis situation makes all the response strategies more effective at mitigating consumer negative reactions. Therefore, the following research questions are proposed.

RQ1a: How do the crisis situations influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at recovering consumer attitudes towards the brand?

RQ1b: How do the crisis situations influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at influencing consumer emotions?

RQ1c: How do the crisis situations influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at tempering consumer NWOM intention?

RQ1d: How do the crisis situations influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at increasing consumer purchase intention?

Brown and White (2011) found that reminder, a bolstering strategy, was more effective at reducing publics' attributed responsibility to the organization, compared to apology during a financial challenge crisis of a university. However, limited research has examined whether a combination of bolstering and rebuild strategies is more effective than rebuild strategies alone. The following research questions examine which response strategy is most effective in tempering consumer negative reactions.

RQ2a: Which response strategy is most effective in recovering consumer attitudes towards the brand, across two crisis situations?

RQ2b: Which response strategy is most effective in influencing consumer emotions, across two crisis situations?

RQ2c: Which response strategy is most effective in tempering consumer NWOM intention, across two crisis situations?

RQ2d: Which response strategy is most effective in increasing consumer purchase intention, across two crisis situations?

Influences of OPRs on the Effectiveness of Brand Response Strategies

Researchers have also examined how OPRs and brand pre-crisis reputation influence the effectiveness of brand responses to mitigate public negative reactions in

crises (Dean, 2004; Lyon & Cameron, 2004; Park & Reber, 2011; Sheldon & Sallot, 2008). Positive pre-crisis reputation does not make organizational crisis response strategies more effective at changing consumer attitudes (Dean, 2004; Lyon & Cameron, 2004). Park and Reber (2011) found that the interaction effect between organizational response strategy and OPR was not statistically significant on public attitudes toward the organization, indicating that positive OPRs did not make organizational response strategies more acceptable. Sheldon and Sallot (2008) found that performance history did not affect a politician's perceived trustworthiness. However, publics intended to support the politician more in a faux pas crisis when the politician had good performance history (Sheldon & Sallot, 2008).

Positive pre-crisis reputation may even damage a brand when the brand responds to a crisis inappropriately. Dean (2004) found that consumer attitudes towards a brand that had a good pre-crisis reputation suffered when the brand failed to respond appropriately, but consumer attitudes toward a brand that had a bad pre-crisis reputation were slightly improved with the brand's inappropriate response. Judging from these findings, it seems non-identifying relationships may have limited influences on the effectiveness of brand response strategies.

It is unclear how consumer identifying relationships influence the effectiveness of brand crisis response strategies in general. Consumers who have strong identifying relationships may consider a crisis as a threat to themselves (Lam et al., 2010). As a result, a self-defense mechanism may make it easier for a consumer to forgive a brand and therefore make the brand's crisis response strategies more effective. The following research questions examine how an identifying relationship influences the effectiveness

of brand response strategies.

RQ3a: How does a consumer identifying relationship with a brand influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at recovering consumer attitudes towards the brand?

RQ3b: How does a consumer identifying relationship with a brand influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at influencing consumer emotions?

RQ3c: How does a consumer identifying relationship with a brand influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at tempering consumer NWOM intention?

RQ3d: How does a consumer identifying relationship with a brand influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at increasing consumer purchase intention?

SCCT (Coombs, 2007a) recommends that an organization use bolstering strategies to supplement rebuild strategies during a preventable crisis, when the organization has positive OPRs with publics. Brown and White (2011) found that the reminder strategy was equally effective for the group with positive OPRs and the group with negative OPRs. In other words, positive OPRs did not increase the effectiveness of the reminder strategy (Brown & White, 2011). There is limited research examining whether combining bolstering and rebuild strategies is most effective when OPRs are positive.

If identifying relationships influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies, this influence may depend on the crisis situation. When a crisis situation does not

undermine shared self-defining attributes between a consumer and a brand, a consumer who has strong identifying relationship may feel it is hard to sever his/her tie with the brand. S/he may choose to forgive the brand and maintain the shared self-defining attributes. In this case, identifying relationships make the response strategies more effective. However, when a crisis situation undermines shared self-defining attributes between a consumer and a brand, a consumer with strong identifying relationships may feel the brand violated the relational expectations and therefore betrayed the consumer. In this case, identifying relationships may negatively affect the effectiveness of response strategies. The following research questions are proposed to examine this possible influence of consumer identifying relationship, depending on the crisis situations.

RQ4a: How does a consumer identifying relationship with a brand influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at recovering consumer attitudes towards the brand, when a crisis does vs. does not undermine shared self-defining attributes?

RQ4b: How does a consumer identifying relationship with a brand influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at influencing consumer emotions, when a crisis does vs. does not undermine shared self-defining attributes?

RQ4c: How does a consumer identifying relationship with a brand influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at tempering consumer NWOM intention, when a crisis does vs. does not undermine shared self-defining attributes?

RQ4d: How does a consumer identifying relationship with a brand influence the

effectiveness of brand response strategies at increasing consumer purchase intention, when a crisis does vs. does not undermine shared self-defining attributes?

Research question four examines the interaction among consumer identifying relationships, crisis situations, and response strategies. That is to say, whether the effectiveness of response strategies on influencing consumer attitudes, emotions and behavioral intentions depends on identifying relationships and crisis situations. I expect a linear interaction between identifying relationship and response strategies. Specifically, the identifying relationship may make response strategies more effective when a crisis does not undermine shared self-defining attributes between consumers and brands. When a crisis undermines shared self-defining attributes, identifying relationships may make response strategies more effective, as SCCT would predict. But it is equally possible that identifying relationships make response strategies, such as apology coupled with reminder, less effective, if identifying relationships reinforce consumer perception that brands violate the relational expectations based on identifying relationships.

Examining these hypotheses and research questions contributes to theory building and public relations practice in crisis communication. For theory, this dissertation helps clarify the influences of consumer-brand relationships in a crisis, probe the possible dark side of consumer-brand relationships, and add knowledge regarding how emotions are generated and influence consumer behaviors. Practically speaking, this dissertation provides advice on when to rely on the reservoir of consumer goodwill for brand recovery in a crisis.

Chapter 3 Method

In this section, first the general participant choice, the research design, and the validity of the study are discussed. Then the participants, procedures, and measurement of each pilot study are discussed. Because the results of each pilot study guided the following pilot study design and the main study, the results of each pilot study are also discussed in this section. Finally, the sample size justification for the main study is discussed.

Participants

Participants for all pilot studies and the main study were consumers of Apple and Whole Foods, which were two brands selected in Pilot Study 1 (see sub-section on Pilot Study 1), recruited through Mechanical Turk (MTurk) of Amazon.com. MTurk is an online platform for researchers to recruit and pay participants for studies (Berinsky, Huber, & Lenz, 2012). It has been widely used by scholars across the social sciences, such as communication (Hample & Anagondahalli, 2015), psychology (Buhrmester, Kwang, & Gosling, 2011), and political science (Berinsky et al, 2012).

Compared to convenience sampling of undergraduates, participants recruited via MTurk are more representative of the general population based on measures of income, age, socioeconomic status, and other demographic factors (Berinsky et al., 2012; Buhrmester et al., 2011; Mason & Suri, 2012). Therefore, MTurk participants should be more representative of the consumer population as compared to student samples. Mason and Suri (2012) reported demographic data of nearly 3,000 MTurk participants employed for five different studies over three years. The majority of their MTurk participants were females (55% females vs. 45% males). The median age of their sample was 30 years old,

and the mean age of their sample was about 32 years old. The majority of these participants earned roughly \$30,000 annually, although some participants reported earning over \$100,000 annually (Mason & Suri, 2012).

Data provided by MTurk participants also meet acceptable psychometric standards, including internal consistency reliability and test-retest reliability (Buhrmester et al., 2011). Buhrmester et al. (2011) also found that MTurk data is not meaningfully different from data from a large online sample with respect to psychometric features, such as Cronbach's alpha and test-retest reliability.

MTurk is also cost-effective for recruiting participants (Berinsky et al., 2012; Buhrmester et al., 2011). According to Buhrmester et al. (2011), researchers offer "nickels and dimes for 5-10 minute tasks" (p. 3). This cost is extremely affordable compared to other compensated recruitment, such as via private survey firms or other nonstudent campus samples (Berinsky et al., 2012). Meanwhile, the amount of compensation does not affect the quality of data, although it may affect the speed for collecting data to some extent (Buhrmester et al., 2011; Mason & Suri, 2012).

Research Design

Coombs and Holladay (2009) noted that crisis communication research has moved beyond case studies to experimental research. Campbell and Stanley (1963) defined an experiment as research in which independent variables are manipulated and their effects on dependent variables are observed. In a true experiment, random assignment of participants promotes internal validity and causal inference (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002), as random assignment allows the researchers conclude with certainty that the effects are indeed due to the manipulation and not due to some other underlying

variable(s) (Yale University's Institution for Social and Policy Studies, n.d.), such as individual differences.

The main study was an online experiment. Shadish et al. (2002) defined quasi-experiment as research in which units are not randomly assigned to conditions. In this study, crisis situations and brand crisis response strategies are manipulated and relationship variables are measured, resulting in a quasi-experiment. The researcher decided that an online quasi-experiment is much more efficient and feasible for participant recruitment, because participants were consumers of real brands who may or may not live in the areas close to campus.

An online experiment has its advantages and disadvantages compared to a traditional lab experiments (Dandurand, Shultz, & Onishi, 2008). According to Dandurand et al. (2008), the management of an online experiment is cost-effective and time-efficient. In addition, an online experiment increases the external validity of the study because the researchers can collect data from any Internet users from anywhere. With a lab experiment, the participants usually are confined within the area close to the lab. Moreover, taking an online experiment is more comfortable for participants because they can take it in a physical setting they choose and at a time they like. However, Dandurand et al. (2008) also pointed out that the environments where participants took the online study varied. For example, how much light and noise the participants had when they took the study could be different. This may decrease the internal validity of this study as some participants may get distracted. In addition, the dropout rate of an online experiment can be higher than that of a lab experiment.

The main study was a 2 (crisis situation) × 8 (absence vs. presence of apology ×

absence vs. presence of compensation × absence vs. presence of reminder) × 2 (brands: Apple and Whole Foods) factorial experiment design. The crisis situation manipulation had two conditions: a crisis situation undermining vs. not undermining shared self-defining attributes between a consumer and a brand. This study's crisis strategies manipulation included 8 conditions based on SCCT-recommended response strategies. According to SCCT (Coombs, 2007a), there are two rebuild strategies (apology and compensation) and three bolstering strategies (victimization, reminder, and ingratiation). Among the three bolstering strategies, a reminder strategy makes consumers recall the positive prior-crisis consumer-brand relationships. Therefore, a reminder strategy is directly related to prior-crisis consumer-brand relationships.

Victimization and ingratiation strategies were not examined in this study because of the following reasons. Portraying a brand as a victim of a crisis may not apply to a preventable crisis for which a brand is responsible. It also seemed illogical to thank consumers for their efforts in a crisis when the crisis just happens, because it takes time for consumers to show either their support or opposition to a brand. Equally important, I eliminated victimization and ingratiation from this research out of practical concerns, because this elimination reduced the number of experimental conditions and therefore number of participants needed to achieve a satisfactory level of statistical power. The various combinations of apology strategy, compensation strategy, and reminder strategy resulted in eight experimental conditions. For each brand crisis response strategy condition, please refer to Appendix A.

The use of multiple real brands helped increase the external validity of this research. Two real brands, Apple and Whole Foods, were selected from Pilot Study 1.

Because relationships take time to establish (Fombrun, Gardberg, & Sever, 2000), consumer relationships with real brands were measured, instead of using a fictitious brand and manipulating consumer-brand relationships.

This study used 11-point scales ranging from either 1 to 11 or -5 to 5. According to Dawes (2002), eleven-point scales produce more variance than scales such as five-point scales. More points on the scales also give participants more options to reflect their real perceptions and feelings. Compared to scales with fewer points, the eleven-point scales are more precise to measure constructs.

Three pilot studies preceded the main study. Pilot Study 1 was conducted to select real brands for the main study. Pilot Study 2 was conducted to validate the experimental stimuli. Pilot Study 3 was conducted to pretest the measurement scales of variables.

Please refer to Figure 2 for the flow chart of the process of the main study.

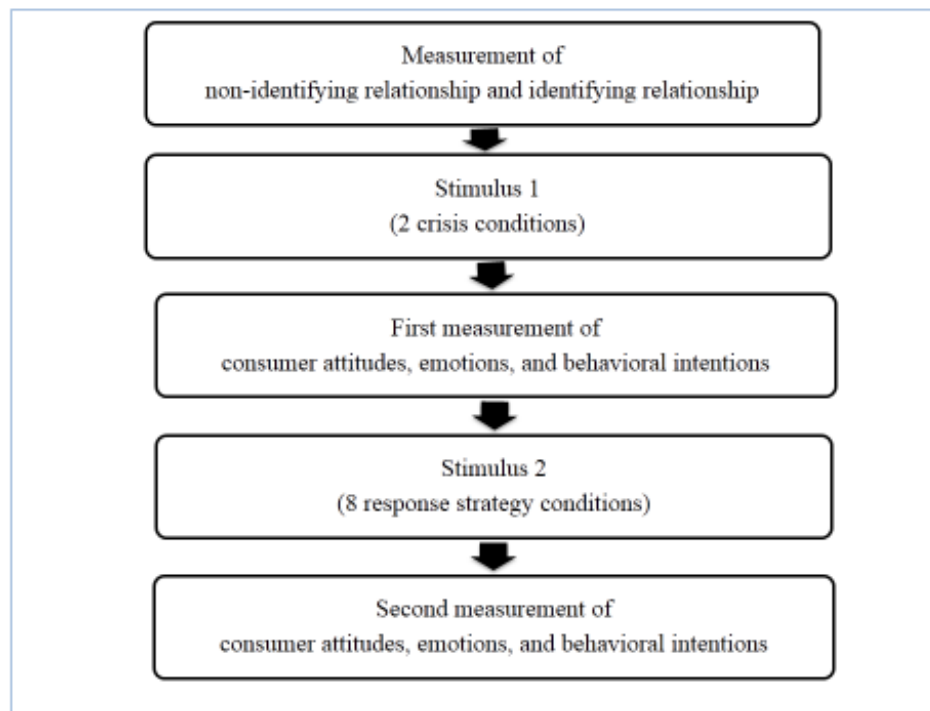


Figure 2. Flow chart of the process of the main study

Pilot Study 1

The purpose of Pilot Study 1 was to select two real brands with which consumers have identifying relationships. The brands selected also needed to have clear and distinct self-defining attributes shared with their consumers. The self-defining attributes emerged in Pilot Study 1 were used to design the crisis situations in Pilot Study 2. Please refer to Appendix C for the complete questionnaire used in Pilot Study 1.

Procedures. In order to ask the participants about their identifying relationships with a brand, identifying relationship (consumer-brand identification) was explained in simple words, so that the participants understood what was wanted. Then participants were asked four questions about their identifying relationships with ten most respected brands in America according to Corebrand's list.⁸ This list was selected because these brands are respected brands. In addition, popular brands make it easier to recruit consumers as participants.

Here the Brand IBM is used as an example. The first question was "Have you ever purchased and used an IBM product?" This question helped to identify participants that were IBM consumers. If their answer to this question was "No," the participants would not answer any more questions about IBM but were moved to the questions about the next brand. If their answer to the first question was "Yes," participants rated their identifying relationship with IBM from a 1 (*not at all*)-11 (*very much*) scale, "How much does IBM reflect who you are, or who you want to be, or how you want to present yourself to others?" If participants used ratings to indicate a response higher than the midpoint of 6, the following open-ended question was presented to them to find out the

⁸ For the whole list, please refer to Appendix B.

self-defining attributes shared between the participants and IBM, “What is the quality or qualities of IBM that reflect who you consider yourself to be, who you want to be, or how you want to present yourself to others? Please be as specific and detailed as you can.”

It was very possible that some brands that participants strongly identified with were not listed on CoreBrand’s list. Therefore, participants also had a chance to list the brands that they have strong identifying relationships with but not on the list. They rated their identifying relationships with these brands on a 1(*not at all*) -11 (*very much*) scale, and wrote in the self-defining attributes that they shared with these brands. Participants were also asked to name three brands that they do not identify with, rated their identifying relationships with these brands, and explained why they do not identify with these brands. The last section of the questionnaire included questions for demographic information, such as biological sex, race, age, and annual income.

Before the questionnaire was posted on M-Turk platform, it was tested in five in-depth interviews with college students at a large mid-Atlantic university to learn whether the explanation and the questionnaire were comprehensible. Each interview took about 30-50 minutes. The interviewees read the explanation of an identifying relationship and were asked whether the meaning was clear to them. They also interpreted an identifying relationship in their own words. Some minor revisions of the wording were made based on the interviewees’ feedback to make the explanation clearer. Sentences such as “you may identify with a brand because the brand’s personality confirms your sense of self when the brand’s personality is congruent to your actual self” was revised into “you may identify with brand X because it reflects who you consider yourself to be, represents how you think about yourself, or represents things that you value.” After reading the

explanation, the interviewees answered the questionnaire. The researcher discussed their answers to these questions to see whether they understood the questions. Some brands that the interviewees mentioned were also added to the questionnaire.

Participants. Three male undergraduates and two female undergraduates ($N = 5$) were recruited from a communication course for the in-depth interview. The participants were granted extra credit in exchange for being interviewed. Then, the survey was posted on Amazon M-Turk. Thirty-six participants were recruited ($N = 36$), including 18 males and 18 females. Each participant was compensated at \$0.30. Using this monetary compensation met the criteria in Buhrmester et al. (2011), because the researcher expected that the questionnaire would take about 15 minutes to complete at most.

Results. Three brands with which consumers shared clear and distinct self-defining attributes emerged from participants' answers to the questionnaire: Apple, Whole Foods Market, and Chevrolet. Twenty-two participants were Apple consumers, and 17 of them rated the strengths of their identifying relationships no less than the midpoint of 6. The self-defining attribute that these consumers shared with Apple was "innovativeness." Some Apple consumers also wrote that they identify with Apple because the brand is trendsetting, which could also be considered as one type of innovativeness.

Nine participants were Whole Foods consumers. Of them, five rated the strengths of their identifying relationships no less than the midpoint of 6. The self-defining attribute that Whole Foods and its consumers shared was "embracing of a healthy lifestyle."

Eleven participants were Chevrolet consumers. Of them, nine rated the strength of

their identifying relationships no less than the midpoint of 6. The attributes that Chevrolet's consumers shared with the brand were "being American-made" and "dependable." Because there are multiple sub-brands under Chevrolet and focusing on one sub-brand may increase the difficulty of recruiting consumers as participants, Chevrolet was dropped in the following studies. Therefore, this research used Apple and Whole Foods in the following pilot studies and main study.

Pilot Study 2

The purpose of Pilot Study 2 was to evaluate the effectiveness of the crisis situation manipulation. That is, one crisis situation needed to undermine the self-defining attributes shared between consumers and a brand, and another one not affect it. Specifically, for Apple, one crisis needed to undermine innovation, while the other crisis did not. For Whole Foods, one crisis needed to undermine embracing of a healthy lifestyle, while the other crisis did not.

The experimental manipulation of crisis situations underwent two rounds of revision to make the manipulation work more effectively. For example, in the early version of the Apple's stealing-technology crisis, Apple was only accused of stealing technology. In the later version, Apple was accused of stealing not only technology but also some features that consumers often use, such as split-screen. Revisions like this made the crisis connect to consumer usage of Apple products.

The other manipulation was eight conditions of brand response strategy that were written based on SCCT's definitions of each response strategy. According to O'Keefe (2003), a check on this kind of manipulation is unnecessary, "when message variation are defined in terms of intrinsic features, message manipulation checks...are unnecessary" (p.

251). In other words, the examined relationships are between the brand crisis response strategies and consumer reactions to crises, instead of between consumer perceptions of brand crisis response strategies and consumer reactions. Therefore, the effectiveness of this manipulation was not checked.

Participants. To be eligible to take Pilot Study 2, Pilot Study 3, and the main study, participants needed to either (1) have purchased and used for some time one or multiple products from Apple, or (2) have bought groceries at Whole Foods stores multiple times. Ninety-eight Apple consumers completed the experiment ($N = 98$), among which 40.8% were males ($N = 40$) and 53.1% were females ($N = 52$). Six participants did not respond to the question of gender. A majority of the participants were Euro-American ($N = 67$, 72.8%), followed by Asian-American ($N = 8$, 8.7%), African-American ($N = 7$, 7.6%), Native-American ($N = 3$, 3.1%), Hispanic-American ($N = 2$, 2.0%), and a combination of all the races or other race ($N = 5$, 5.1%). Six participants did not respond to the question of race. Forty-eight participants ($N = 48$) were assigned to Apple's tax avoidance crisis, and 50 participants ($N = 50$) were assigned to Apple's stealing-technology crisis.

Sixty-one Whole Foods consumers completed the experiment ($N = 61$), among which 45.9% were males ($N = 28$) and 49.2% were females ($N = 30$). Three participants did not respond to the question of gender. A majority of the participants were Euro-American ($N = 41$, 67.2%), followed by African-American ($N = 6$, 9.8%), Asian-American ($N = 5$, 8.2%), Hispanic-American ($N = 3$, 4.9%), and other race ($N = 3$, 4.9%). Three participants did not respond to the question of race. Thirty participants ($N = 30$) were assigned to the Whole Foods' anti-unionization crisis and thirty-one participants (N

= 31) were assigned to the Whole Foods' selling-unhealthy-food crisis.

Procedures. First, M-Turk participants answered closed-ended questions about their non-identifying and identifying relationships with the brand (please refer to Appendix E for scales). Then participants were randomly assigned to a crisis situation. Please refer to Appendix D for the conditions of the crisis situations and the conditions of brand response strategies. For Apple, the crisis undermining innovativeness was that Apple was convicted of stealing technology and design from Google Nexus. The crisis that did not undermine innovativeness was that Apple avoided its taxes by holding money in offshore accounts. For Whole Foods, the crisis undermining embracing of a healthy lifestyle was that Whole Foods sold unhealthy food. The crisis that did not undermine embracing of a healthy lifestyle was that Whole Foods fired two workers for unionization.

All the crisis situations were constructed based on real news stories. A public relations professional who was familiar with Associated Press style reviewed the crisis stimuli before they were posted on M-Turk, to make sure that all the crisis stimuli read like news stories. The participants were told to suppose that they read the news article published in the *New York Times*.

After reading a crisis scenario, participants answered a manipulation check question regarding the crisis situation. To check the Apple crisis manipulation, Apple consumers rated this question: "To what extent did the matter described in the news affect Apple's image as an innovative brand?" from 1 (not at all) to 11 (very much). To check Whole Foods crisis manipulation, Whole Foods consumers rated this question: "To what extent did the matter described in the news affect Whole Foods' image as a healthy

grocery store?” from 1 (not at all) to 11 (very much). The participants were then randomly assigned to one of the eight brand crisis response strategy conditions that corresponded to the crisis scenario that they read.

To ensure that the crisis situation manipulation sounded realistic, before exiting the survey all the participants used a rating scale on realism. Two realism items were “The matter described in the news that I just read sounds believable/real.” The rating was on a scale from 1 (*not believable/realistic at all*) to 11 (*very believable/realistic*).

Participants who read the Apple’s tax avoidance scenario perceived the news as being believable ($M = 7.00, SD = 3.04$) and realistic ($M = 7.43, SD = 3.03$). Participants who read the Apple’s stealing-technology scenario also perceived the news as being believable ($M = 7.38, SD = 2.48$) and realistic ($M = 7.23, SD = 2.37$). Participants who read the Whole Foods’ anti-unionization scenario perceived the news as being believable ($M = 8.34, SD = 1.76$) and realistic ($M = 8.48, SD = 1.83$), and so did participants who read the Whole Foods’ unhealthy foods scenario, as being believable ($M = 7.57, SD = 2.43$) and being realistic ($M = 7.60, SD = 2.40$). The participants were debriefed that the crises and brand crisis response strategies that they had read were fictional before they exited the study.

Manipulation Check Results. For Apple, the results of the independent sample t -test showed that participants perceived that the stealing-technology crisis ($M = 7.28, SD = 2.65$) posed a much higher threat to Apple’s innovative image, when compared to the tax avoidance crisis ($M = 5.63, SD = 3.51$), $t(87) = -2.63, p = .005$, one-tailed. This result indicated that the manipulation of the Apple crisis situations was effective. For Whole Foods, the results of the independent sample t -test showed that participants perceived that

the selling-unhealthy-food crisis ($M = 7.16$, $SD = 3.16$) posed a much higher threat to Whole Foods' healthy grocery store image, when compared to the anti-unionization crisis ($M = 4.67$, $SD = 3.44$), $t(59) = -2.95$, $p = .003$, one-tailed. This result indicated that the manipulation of the Whole Foods crisis situations was effective.

Discriminant validity of non-identifying and identifying relationships.

Because the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship were conceptualized as two related but different constructs, an exploratory factor analysis (EFA) was done to examine whether these two types of relationships were indeed different constructs. If so, the items measuring the non-identifying and the identifying relationships would load on two factors. One type of EFA, principal axis factoring (PAF) with oblimin rotation was done because the non-identifying and the identifying relationships were expected to be correlated.

Participants. Participants rated the scales of the non-identifying and the identifying relationships before they read the crisis situations. All the participants of Pilot Study 2 rated the same items about non-identifying and identifying relationships, regardless of whether they read the early or late version of the experimental stimuli. The revision of the stimuli did not affect participants' ratings on the relationship scales. Therefore, data on non-identifying and identifying scales from the participants of all three versions of the stimuli were included in the EFA.

Data from 205 Apple consumers were included, among which 41.5% were males ($N = 85$) and 47.8% were females ($N = 98$). Twenty-two participants did not respond to the question of gender. Most Apple consumer participants were Euro-American ($N = 129$, 62.9%), followed by African-American ($N = 17$, 8.3%), Asian-American ($N = 16$, 7.8%),

Native-Americans or Hispanic-American ($N = 6$, 2.9%), and a combination of all the races and other race ($N = 9$, 4.4%). Twenty-two participants did not respond to the question of race.

Data from 195 Whole Foods consumers were included, among which 39.5% were males ($N = 77$) and 52.8% were females ($N = 103$). Fifteen participants did not respond to the question of gender. Most Whole Foods consumer participants were Euro-American ($N = 124$, 63.6%), followed by African-American ($N = 14$, 7.2%), Asian-American ($N = 14$, 7.2%), Hispanic-American ($N = 11$, 5.6%), Native-American ($N = 7$, 3.6%), and a combination of all the races and other race ($N = 9$, 4.7%). Fifteen participants did not answer the question of race.

Measures. The instruments for consumer non-identifying relationships were taken from marketing literature. These measures have been reliable and valid in previous research. Specifically, the consumer non-identifying relationship was measured as a multi-dimensional construct including satisfaction, trust, and commitment. The scale used by Grégoire and his colleagues (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2009) has shown high reliability and construct validity (See Table 2). Trust was measured by four items, such as “I felt Apple/Whole Foods was very undependable/very dependable.” Satisfaction and commitment were each measured by three items. An example item of satisfaction was “I was satisfied with my relationship with Apple/Whole Foods.” An example item of commitment was “I put the efforts into maintaining this relationship for a long time.” Participants responded to the satisfaction and commitment scales from -5 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

Table 2

Reliability and Validity Evidence of Grégoire and Fisher's (2006) Relationship Scale

Studies	Reliability	Construct Validity
Grégoire & Fisher (2006)	Cronbach's Alpha satisfaction = .91; trust = .94; commitment = .71. EFA Factor Loading Satisfaction: .78, .77, .88 Trust: .88, .89, .83, .85 Commitment: .60, .81, .68	relationship quality negatively predicted desire for retaliation ($\beta = -.15, p < .05$).
Grégoire & Fisher (2008)	Cronbach's Alpha satisfaction = .91; trust = .94; commitment = .71. EFA Factor Loading Satisfaction: .92, .94, .83 Trust: .85, .92, .91, .87 Commitment: .84, .88, .91	Relationship quality increased sense of betrayal when consumers' perceived fairness was low ($\beta =$ $-.15, p < .01, \beta = -.14,$ $p < .01$).
Grégoire, Tripp, & Legoux (2009)	Cronbach's Alpha trust = .94; commitment = .92.	Relationship quality predicted perceived betrayal ($t_1 \beta = .17,$ $p < .001; t_2 \beta = .25,$ $p < .001; t_3 \beta = .29,$ $p < .001; t_4 \beta = .31,$ $p < .001$)

Although the reliability and construct validity of Grégoire and Fisher's (2006) relationship scale has been demonstrated in past research, because of the possibility that some items needed to be dropped due to low factor loadings resulting in too few items for one dimension, an alternative consumer-brand relationship scale from Fletcher, Simpson, and Thomas (2000) composed of items for satisfaction, trust, and commitment also was included. The alternative instrument has been used in the past (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000; Thomson, 2006; Johnson et al., 2011). Satisfaction was measured by three items such as "How content are you with your relationship with Apple/Whole Foods?" Three items, such as "How much can you count on Apple/Whole Foods," measured trust. Commitment was measured by three items such as "How devoted are you to your

relationship with Apple/Whole Foods?” Participants responded to Fletcher et al.’s (2006) scale from 1 = *not at all* to 11 = *very much*. Table 3 demonstrates the reliability and validity evidence of the scale for each dimension. Grégoire and Fisher’s (2006) non-identifying relationship scale was reliable in Pilot Study 2 and 3, and therefore Fletcher et al.’s (2000) relationship scale was not used in the data analysis.

Table 3

Reliability and Validity Evidence of Fletcher et al.’s (2000) Relationship Scale

Studies	Reliability	Construct Validity
Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas (2000)	Study 1 Cronbach’s Alpha satisfaction = .93; trust = .74; commitment = .94.	Study 1 Loading on perceived relationship quality (PRQ): Satisfaction = .73; Trust = .61; Commitment = .85.
	Study 2 Cronbach’s Alpha satisfaction = .91; trust = .78; commitment = .96.	Study 2 Loading on PRQ: Satisfaction = .86; Trust = .59; Commitment = .85.
Thompson (2006)	Cronbach’s Alpha satisfaction = .97; trust = .92; commitment = .98. EFA Factor Loading Satisfaction: .99, .95, .94 Trust: .96, .88, .72 Commitment: .97, .93, .91	Correlation between: attachment and satisfaction = .25 ($p < .05$); attachment and trust = .66 ($p < .05$); attachment and commitment = .66 ($p < .05$).
Johnson, Matear, and Thomson (2011)	Study 1 Cronbach’s Alpha self-neutral relationship quality = .88	Study 1 self-neutral relationships predicted negative WOM communication ($\beta =$ -.18, $p < .01$); third party complaining (β = -.20, $p < .01$); and

Study 2

hatred ($\beta = -.30$,
 $p < .01$).
 Self-neutral
 relationships
 predicted hatred ($\beta =$
 $-.15$, $p < .02$).

The identifying relationship was measured by using a self-brand connection scale from Escalas and Bettman (2003). This is a consumer-brand identification scale that has been commonly used in the marketing literature (Escalas & Bettman, 2003, 2005; Ferraro, Kirmani, & Matherly, 2013). The Escalas and Bettman's (2003) scale is an eight-item scale. An example item was "I use Apple/Whole Foods to communicate who I am to other people." Participants responded to all items from -5 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. Table 4 demonstrated the reliability and validity evidence of this scale.

Table 4

Reliability and Validity Evidence of Escalas and Bettman's (2003) Self-brand Connection Scale

Studies	Reliability	Construct Validity
Escalas & Bettman (2003)	Study 1: Cronbach's Alpha = .90 Study 2: Cronbach's Alpha = .93	Perceived fit into a reference group moderated the effect of group brand usage on self-brand connection (study 1: $F(1, 125) = 7.47, p < .01$; study 2: $F(1, 172) = 25.67, p < .001$). Desire to belong to an aspiration group moderated the effect of group brand usage on self-brand connection (study 1: $F(1, 125) = 7.74, p < .01$; study 2: $F(1, 169) = 9.57, p < .01$).
Escalas & Bettman (2005)	Study 1: Cronbach's Alpha = .93 Study 2: Cronbach's Alpha = .96	Brands image consistent with the ingroup increased self-brand connection (study 1: $F(1, 723) = 191.20, p < .001$; study 2: $F(1, 211) = 150.34, p < .001$)

The consumer-company identification scale from Einwiller et al. (2006) was included as an alternative identifying relationship scale, in case the Escalas and Bettman's (2003) scale had reliability issue in the following pilot studies. This consumer-company identification scale included eight items; such as "Apple/Whole Foods shares my values." Participants responded to all eight items from -5 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The reliability and validity evidence of the Einwiller et al.'s (2006) scale from past research was listed in Table 5. Escalas and Bettman's (2003) identifying relationship scale was reliable in Pilot Study 2 and 3, and therefore Einwiller et al.'s (2006) scale was not used in the data analysis.

Table 5

Reliability and Validity Evidence of Einwiller et al.'s (2006) Consumer-company Identification Scale

Studies	Reliability	Construct Validity
Einwiller, Fedorikhin, Johnson, & Kamins, (2006)	Cronbach's Alpha = .92 Items explained 66% of variance of a single factor	Identification increased consumer positive attitudes ($F(1,204) = 23.59, p < .01$) and positive behavioral intention ($F(1,204) = 23.91, p < .01$), positive perceptions of information about the company ($F(1,204) = 14.96, p < .01$).
Einwiller & Johar (2013)	Cronbach's Alpha = .89	Identification made a possible accusation more threatening ($F(1,128) = 12.17, p < .001$) and less believable ($F(1,129) = 71.52, p < .001$).

Apple. For Apple, the reliability of both the non-identifying and the identifying relationship scales was examined first. The non-identifying relationship scale (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006) was highly reliable ($\alpha = .96$). So was the identifying relationship scale (Escalas & Bettman, 2003) ($\alpha = .96$). The corrected item-total correlation of item eight of

the identifying relationship scale (.75) was much lower as compared to other items (at least .84). Further examination showed that item eight did not increase the reliability of the scale, and therefore item 8 was dropped from the identifying relationship scale.

PAF with oblimin rotation showed that two factors were extracted with an eigenvalue of more than one. Please refer to Figure 3 for the Scree Plot that demonstrated the eigenvalues of these two factors. The first factor, whose eigenvalue was 11.58, explained 68.11% of the variance of all items. The second factor, whose eigenvalue was 1.50, explained 8.83% of the variance of all items. The two factors together explained 76.93% of the variance of all items. While suppressing the factor loadings of less than .30, the result was that the items measuring trust and satisfaction primarily loaded on the second factor. Item three of commitment and all the identifying relationship items primarily loaded on the first factor. Item one and two of commitment loaded on both factors. The correlation between the two factors was .70. For the factor loading of each item, please refer to Table 6. This result showed that the identifying relationship conceptually was different from the non-identifying relationship. Commitment was a dimension of both identifying and non-identifying relationships. Trust and satisfaction were dimensions of the non-identifying relationship. To examine the validity of this structure, it was tested in a confirmatory factor analysis in Pilot Study 3 to see whether it would hold in another set of Apple consumer data.

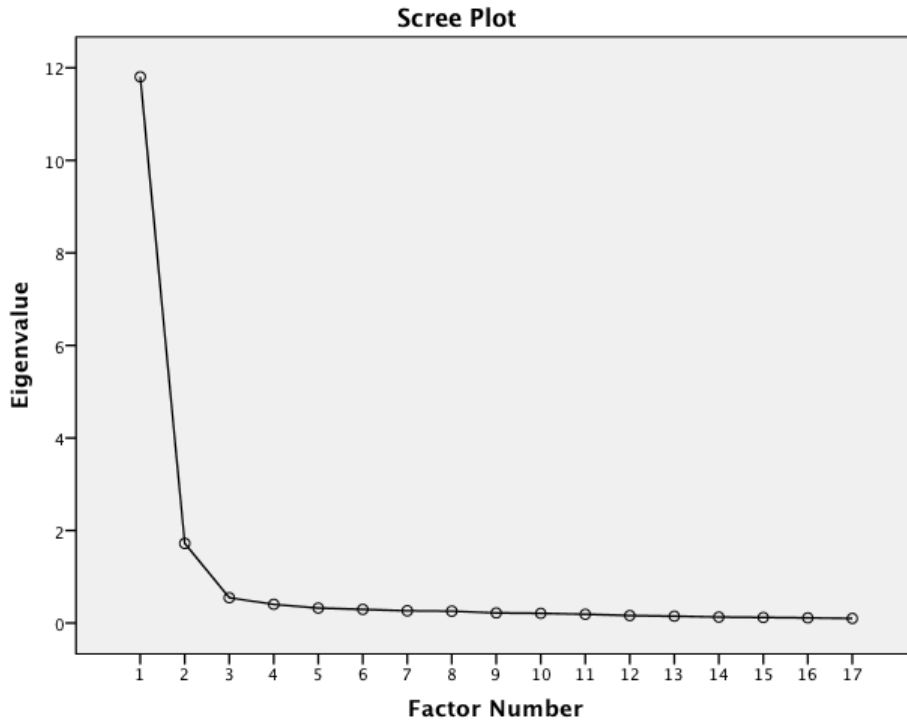


Figure 3. PAF scree plot of relationship items in pilot study 2-Apple

Table 6

Factor Loadings of Relationship Items in Pilot Study 2-Apple

Items	Factor	
	1	2
I feel that Apple is _____.	-.027	.921
I feel that Apple is _____.	-.185	.980
I feel that Apple is _____.	.123	.719
I feel that Apple is _____.	.053	.812
I am satisfied with my relationship with Apple.	.089	.856
My relationship with Apple is quite good.	.139	.806
I am happy with the effort Apple is making towards customers like me.	.155	.721
I am very committed to my relationship with Apple.	.593	.335
My relationship with Apple is something I intend to maintain for a long time.	.392	.508
I put effort into maintaining my relationship with Apple for a long time.	.713	.203
Apple reflects who I am.	.927	-.014
I can identify with Apple.	.676	.244
I feel a personal connection to Apple.	.797	.129

I use Apple to communicate who I am to other people.	.915	-.027
I think Apple helps me become the type of person I want to be.	.957	-.101
I consider Apple to reflect who I consider myself to be.	.935	-.046
I consider Apple to reflect the way that I want to present myself to others.	.902	-.022

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

Whole Foods. For Whole Foods, the reliability of both the non-identifying and the identifying relationship scales was examined first. The non-identifying relationship scale was highly reliable ($\alpha = .94$). So was the identifying relationship scale ($\alpha = .93$). However, the corrected item-total correlation of item eight of the identifying relationship scale (.60) was much lower as compared to other items (at least .72). Further examination showed that item eight did not increase the reliability of the scale, and therefore item 8 was dropped from the identifying relationship scale.

PAF with oblimin rotation showed that two factors were extracted with an eigenvalue of more than one. Please refer to Figure 4 for the Scree Plot that demonstrated the eigenvalues of these two factors. The first factor, an eigenvalue of 9.86, explained 57.99% of the variance of all items. The second factor, an eigenvalue of 1.81, explained 10.66% of the variance of all items. The two factors together explained 68.65% of the variance of all items. While suppressing the factor loadings of less than .30, the result showed that the items measuring trust and satisfaction primarily loaded on the second factor. Item one and three of commitment and all of the identifying relationship items primarily loaded on the first factor. Item two of commitment loaded on both factors. The correlation between the two factors was .63. For the factor loading of each item, please refer to Table 7. This result showed that the data from Whole Foods replicated the results of the Apple data, except that commitment item one did not cross-load on both factors.

The identifying relationship conceptually was different from the non-identifying relationship, which includes trust and satisfaction. Commitment was a dimension of both identifying and non-identifying relationships. To examine the validity of this structure, it was tested in a confirmatory factor analysis in Pilot Study 3 to see whether it would hold in another set of Whole Foods consumer data.

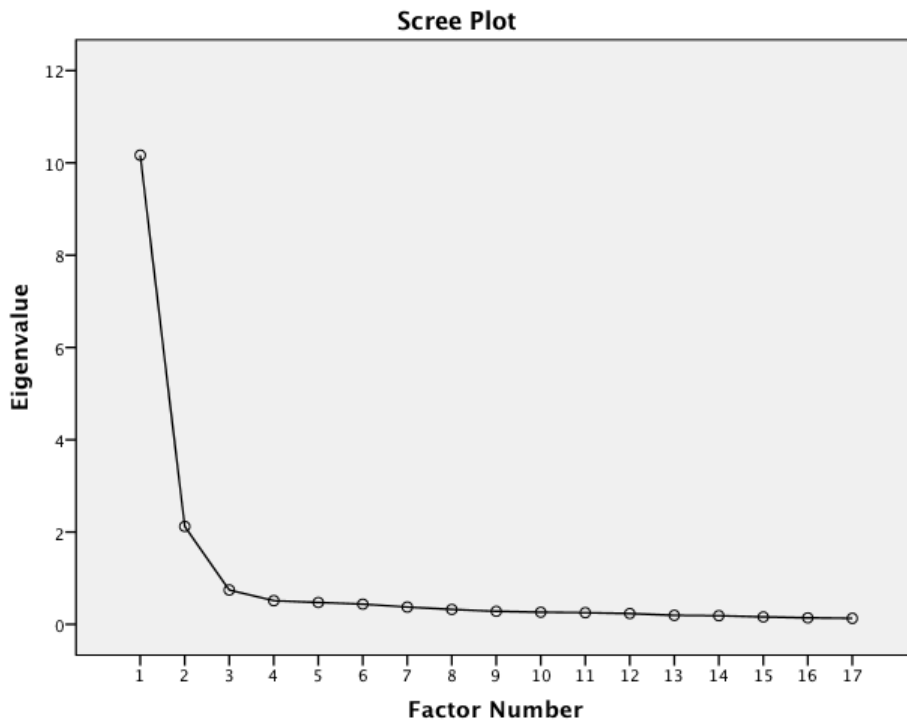


Figure 4. PAF scree plot of relationship items in pilot study 2-Whole Foods

Table 7

Factor Loadings of Relationship Items in Pilot Study 2-Whole Foods

Items	Factor	
	1	2
I feel that Whole Foods is _____.	-.013	.879
I feel that Whole Foods is _____.	-.049	.857
I feel that Whole Foods is _____.	.033	.775
I feel that Whole Foods is _____.	.022	.812
I am satisfied with my relationship with Whole Foods.	-.010	.815
My relationship with Whole Foods is quite good.	.093	.839

I am happy with the effort Whole Foods is making towards customers like me.	.019	.820
I am very committed to my relationship with Whole Foods.	.665	.223
My relationship with Whole Foods is something I intend to maintain for a long time.	.475	.448
I put effort into maintaining my relationship with Whole Foods for a long time.	.696	.127
Whole Foods reflects who I am.	.883	-.036
I can identify with Whole Foods.	.626	.279
I feel a personal connection to Whole Foods.	.705	.165
I use Whole Foods to communicate who I am to other people.	.838	-.138
I think Whole Foods helps me become the type of person I want to be.	.758	.049
I consider Whole Foods to reflect who I consider myself to be.	.933	-.093
I consider Whole Foods to reflect the way that I want to present myself to others.	.863	-.043

Note. Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Oblimin with Kaiser Normalization.^a

a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.

Pilot Study 3

The purpose of Pilot Study 3 was to pretest the reliability and dimensionality of all the measurements that were used in the Main Study. The procedures of Pilot Study 3 were the same with those of the Main Study. In other words, Pilot Study 3 was a small scale of the Main Study. Once measurements were shown to be reliable, more data were collected for the Main Study.

Participants. The participants were Apple and Whole Foods consumers recruited on Amazon M-Turk platform. The same eligibility statement used in Pilot Study 2 was used in the recruiting message again. This survey was expected to take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete and each participant was compensated \$0.30.

Three bogus questions were added in order to detect participants who answered

the questionnaire carelessly and eliminate them from the data analysis. Close examination of data in Pilot Study 2 revealed that some participants were not very attentive when they answered the questionnaire. For example, some participants chose 11 or 10 for all their questions. A bogus question was a question “with a clear correct answer” that helped to detect careless answers (Meade & Craig, 2012, p. 441). Participants were told that these questions were used to identify M-Turk respondents who are not answering the questions thoughtfully. The first bogus question was added when the non-identifying and identifying relationships were measured: “The answer to this question is 3, please choose 3.” The second bogus question was added when the outcome variables were measured after participants read the crisis scenario: “Please choose 5 as the answer to this question.” The third bogus question was added when the outcome variables were measured after participants read a brand response strategy: “Please select the third largest number from the responses below.”

Bentler and Chou (1987) recommended that the sample size needs to be at least five times the number of free parameters estimated when it comes to a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) model. There were 35 free parameters in the CFA model that was examined in Pilot Study 3. Therefore, at least 165 participants were needed for each brand.

Apple. Two hundred eleven participants completed the experiment; plus three participants who completed only the first part of the experiment were also included ($N = 214$). After excluding the participants who chose the wrong answer for at least one bogus

question,⁹ 177 participants were included in the data analysis ($N = 177$). The majority of Apple consumer participants were females ($N = 107, 60.5\%$) and males accounted for about 40% of the participants ($N = 69, 39.0\%$). One participant did not respond to the question of gender. Euro-Americans made up of 68.4% of all the Apple consumer participants ($N = 121$), followed by Asian-Americans ($N = 17, 9.6\%$), African-Americans ($N = 11, 6.2\%$), Hispanic-Americans ($N = 7, 4.0\%$), Native-Americans or Pacific Islanders ($N = 4, 2.2\%$), and a combination of all the races and other race ($N = 16, 9.1\%$). One participant did not respond to the question of race.

Whole Foods. Two hundred and two participants completed the experiment; plus five participants who only completed the first part of the experiment were also included ($N = 207$). After excluding the participants who chose the wrong answer for at least one bogus question,¹⁰ 157 participants ($N = 157$) were included in the data analysis. This sample size was only slightly below the sample size criterion recommended by Bentler and Chou (1987). Females accounted for 59.9% of all the Whole Foods consumer participants ($N = 94$) and males accounted for 33.8% of the participants ($N = 53$). Ten participants did not respond to the question of gender. Euro-Americans made up of 59.9% of all the Whole Foods consumer participants ($N = 94$), followed by African-Americans ($N = 14, 8.9\%$), Asian-Americans ($N = 13, 8.3\%$), Hispanic-Americans ($N = 8, 5.1\%$), a combination of all the races and other race ($N = 14, 8.9\%$), and Native-Americans ($N = 4, 2.5\%$). Ten participants did not respond to the question of race.

⁹ Seven participants chose the wrong answer for bogus question 1; nine participants chose the wrong answer for bogus question 2, and 26 participants chose the wrong answer for bogus question 3.

¹⁰ Eleven chose the wrong answer for bogus question 1; 15 answered bogus question 2 wrong; and 41 answer bogus question 3 wrong.

Procedures. Participants' non-identifying and identifying relationships were first measured. Then, participants were randomly assigned to one of the two crisis conditions. After reading about a crisis situation, participants answered close-ended questions regarding their attitudes toward Apple/Whole Foods, emotions, and behavioral intentions. All the close-ended questions of the surveys administered were randomized to eliminate ordering effects.

Participants were then randomly assigned to one of eight brand crisis response strategy conditions: no-comment, apology, compensation, reminder, apology-compensation, apology-reminder, compensation-reminder, and apology-compensation-reminder. After reading one response strategy, consumer attitudes toward Apple/Whole Foods, emotions, and behavioral intentions were measured again. Participants rated how realistic/believable the crisis situation was that they read, and their demographic information was also obtained. The participants were debriefed that the crises and brand crisis response strategies that they had read were fictional before they exited the study.

Measurements. In this sub-section, the reliability and validity evidence of the mediating and outcome construct scales in previous research is discussed. Then, their reliability in Pilot Study 3 is reported. Scale reliability was indicated by Cronbach's α , an internal consistency index. Cronbach's α was calculated with the software *SPSS*.

Brand attitudes. Brand attitude was measured by using the scale that is frequently used in marketing and crisis communication research (Grappi & Romani, 2015; Holbrook & Batra, 1987; Till & Busler, 2000; Trump, 2014). This four-item instrument is used to measure consumer general attitude valence of a brand. Participants answered this question, "Please indicate how you view Apple/Whole Foods," and they answered this

question on a scale from 1 = *dislike/negative/bad/unfavorable* to 11= *like/positive/good/favorable*. The scale has been shown to be reliable in past research. The reliability and validity evidence of this scale from past research is listed in Table 8.

Table 8

Reliability and Validity Evidence of Brand Attitudes Scale

Studies	Reliability	Construct Validity
Till & Busler, 2000 (three items: positive, favorable, like)	Study 1 Cronbach's Alpha = .92	Study 1 Endorse attractiveness had main effects on brand attitudes ($F = 44.15, p = .001$); product type did not have main effects on brand attitudes ($F = 1.14, p = .287$).
	Study 2 Cronbach's Alpha = .96	Study 2 Endorser type had main effects on brand attitudes ($F = 6.39, p = .012$); product type had main effects on brand attitudes ($F = 8.13, p = .005$)
Grappi & Romani (2015)	Study 1 Cronbach's Alpha = .96, Factor loading ranged from .96 to .97.	Study 1 Consumer anger ($b = -.19, p < .01$) and sympathy ($b = .51, p < .01$) predicted attitudes.
	Study 2 Cronbach's Alpha = .96, Factor loading ranged from .86 to .94.	Study 2 Consumer anger ($b = -.17, p < .01$) and sympathy ($b = .69, p < .01$) predicted attitudes.

Anger. Anger was measured with a four-item scale that has been used in past research (Dillard & Shen, 2005; Jin, 2010; Ma, 2015). Participants were asked to rate the statement “what happened in the news story made me feel _____.” The ratings were from 1 = *not angry/irritated/annoyed/aggravated at all* to 11 = *very angry/irritated/annoyed/aggravated*. The reliability and validity evidence of this scale from past research

is listed in Table 9.

Table 9

Reliability and Validity Evidence of the Anger Scale

Studies	Reliability	Construct Validity
Dillard & Shen (2005)	Flossing data Cronbach's Alpha = .92	Flossing data Participants in high threat condition experienced stronger anger than participants in low threat condition ($F = 11.34, p < .01$).
	Alcohol data Cronbach's Alpha = .94	Alcohol data Participants in high threat condition experienced stronger anger than participants in low threat condition ($F = 24.01, p < .001$).
Ma (2015)	Cronbach's Alpha = .94 Factor loadings were .88, .90, .88, and .88.	Attributed responsibility led to anger ($\gamma = .54, p < .001$); anger led to negative post-crisis reputation ($\beta = -.59, p < .001$).

Sympathy. Participants responded to a three-item scale of sympathy, among which two items have been used in past research (Grappi & Romani, 2015; Jin, 2010; Ma, 2015). Participants responded to the statement “what happened in the news story made me feel _____ for Apple/Whole Foods.” The ratings were from 1= *no sympathetic/compassionate at all* to 11 = *very sympathetic/compassionate*. This two-item scale has been shown to be reliable (Grappi & Romani, 2015; Ma, 2015). Another item was added based on the definition of sympathy (Solomon, 1998), in case any item needed to be dropped. The additional item used the same statement with the other two items, but the ratings were anchored by 1 = *not sorry at all* to 11 = *very sorry*. The reliability and validity evidence of the two-item scale is listed in Table 10.

Table 10

Reliability and Validity Evidence of the Sympathy Scale

Studies	Reliability	Construct Validity
Grappi & Romani (2015)	Study 1 Cronbach's Alpha = .73; Factor loadings were .86 and .88.	Study 1 Consumer sympathy ($b = .51, p < .01$) predicted attitudes.
	Study 2 Cronbach's Alpha = .71; Factor loadings were .90 and .91.	Study 2 Consumer anger ($b = -.17, p < .01$) and sympathy ($b = .69, p < .01$) predicted attitudes.
Ma (2015)	Cronbach's Alpha = .87; Factor loadings were .88 and .90.	Attributed responsibility to an organization led to sympathy toward victims ($\gamma = .44, p < .001$).

Disappointment. Consumers' disappointment was measured by three items adapted from Yi and Baumgartner (2004) and Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004). For the first two items, participants responded to the statement "I am ___ at Apple/Whole Foods for what happened in the news." The ratings were from 1 = *not disappointed/let down* at all to 11 = *very disappointed/let down*. For the third item, participants responded to the statement "To what extent did what happened in the news failed your expectations of Apple/Whole Foods," and they responded to this statement with a scale from 1 = not at all to 11 = very much. The reliability and validity evidence of disappointment scale is listed in Table 11.

Table 11

Reliability and Validity Evidence of the Disappointment Scale

Studies	Reliability	Construct Validity
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Yi & Baumgartner (2004)	Cronbach's Alpha = .84	Disappointment positively affected confrontive coping ($b = .24, p < .01$), mental disengagement ($b = .18, p < .05$), and behavioral disengagement ($b = .34, p < .01$).
Zeelenberg & Pieters (2004)	Cronbach's Alpha = .88	Disappointment increased behaviors of switching brand ($\beta = .33, p < .001$), complaining ($\beta = .36, p < .001$), and NWOM ($\beta = .29, p < .001$), but not inertia ($\beta = .13, p = .16$).

NWOM intention. NWOM intention was measured by a five-item scale adapted from Grappi and Romani (2015) and Coombs and Holladay (2007). A sample item of this scale was “I intend to mention unfavorable things about Apple/Whole Foods to my friends, relatives, and other people.” Participants responded to these five items on a scale from -5 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The reliability and validity evidence of the NWOM intention scale is listed in Table 12.

Table 12

Reliability and Validity Evidence of the NWOM Intention Scale

Studies	Reliability	Construct Validity
Grappi & Romani (2015)	Study 1 Cronbach alpha = .78; factor loadings ranged from .70 to .92.	Study 1 Anger ($b = .14, p < .01$) and sympathy ($b = -.29, p < .01$) affected NWOM communication intention.
	Study 2 Cronbach alpha = .89; Factor loadings ranged from .84 to .92.	Study 2 Anger ($b = .24, p < .01$) and sympathy ($b = -.37, p < .01$) affected NWOM communication intention.
Coombs & Holladay (2007)	Cronbach alpha = .75	Correlation between NWOM intention and crisis responsibility was $r = .45$ ($p < .001$); correlation between NWOM intention and anger was $r = .63$ ($p < .001$).

Purchase intention. Purchase intention was measured by a three-item scale adapted from the work of Currás-Pérez, Bigné-Alcañiz, and Alvarado-Herrera (2009). A sample item was “I will definitely continue to buy a product of Apple/Whole Foods.” Participants responded to the three items on a scale from -5 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The instrument was found to be reliable in past research (Currás-Pérez et al., 2009; Grappi & Romani, 2015). The reliability and validity evidence of the purchase intention scale is listed in Table 13.

Table 13

Reliability and Validity Evidence of the Purchase Intention Scale

Studies	Reliability	Construct Validity
Currás-Pérez, Bigné-Alcañiz, & Alvarado-Herrera (2009)	Cronbach’s alpha = .88, factor loadings were .88, .80, and .85.	Consumer-company identification increased purchase intention (total effects = .52, $p < .01$); brand attitudes increased purchase intention (total effects = .66, $p < .01$).
Grappi & Romani (2015)	Study 1 Cronbach alpha = .95; Factor loadings ranged from .94 to .97.	Study 1 Anger ($b = 1.14, p = .02$) and sympathy ($b = .67, p < .01$) affected purchase intention.
	Study 2 Cronbach alpha = .95; Factor loadings ranged from .86 to .92.	Study 2 Anger ($b = -.15, p < .05$) and sympathy ($b = .69, p < .001$) affected purchase intention.

Attribution of responsibility. Attribution of responsibility was put into the model as a control variable. Two items adapted from Lee (2005) were used to measure attributed responsibility. These two items were “How much responsibility Apple/Whole

Foods should bear” and “To what degree do you think Apple/Whole Foods should be blamed.” This scale was found to be reliable in past research (Kim, Kim, & Cameron, 2009; Lee, 2005; Park & Reber, 2011). The reliability and validity evidence of the attributed responsibility scale is listed in Table 14. Another similar item was added, in case any item needed to be dropped. The added item was “to what degree do you think Apple/Whole Foods should be responsible.” Participants responded to these three items on a scale from 1 = *not at all responsible/to be blamed/to be responsible* to 11 = *totally responsible/absolutely to be blamed/absolutely to be responsible*.

Table 14

Reliability and Validity Evidence of the Attribution of Responsibility Scale

Studies	Reliability	Construct Validity
Lee (2005)	Cronbach’s Alpha = .85; Factor loadings were higher than .50.	Internal causal attribution led to perceived responsibility ($\beta = .31, p < .05$); attributed responsibility decreased trust in the organization ($\beta = -.43, p < .05$) and led to negative impression toward the organization ($\beta = -.59, p < .05$).
Kim, Kim, & Cameron (2009)	Food poisoning crisis: Cronbach’s alpha = .89; laptop battery explosion: Cronbach’s alpha = .82.	For the food poisoning crisis, participants in the transgression condition attributed more responsibility to the organization, compared to accidental condition ($F(1, 160) = 5.03, p < .05$); the same trend was found for the laptop battery explosion ($F(1, 160) = 13.4, p < .001$).
Park & Reber (2011)	Cronbach’s Alpha = .86.	Internal causal attribution increased crisis responsibility ($F = 36.50, p < .001$). Crisis responsibility decreased organizational trustworthiness ($F = 19.97, p < .001$) and supportive behaviors ($F = 4.71, p = .03$).

Reliability of the Apple data. The internal consistency of each scale was

examined for evidence of reliability. The non-identifying relationship scale, including trust, satisfaction and item one and two of commitment, was highly reliable ($\alpha = .95$). The identifying relationship scale with all items on consumer-brand connection and commitment was also highly reliable ($\alpha = .97$). The three-item scale of attributed responsibility, which was the control variable, was also highly reliable ($\alpha = .93$). The scales of all the mediating and outcome constructs were either reliable or highly reliable. Please refer to Table 15 for the reliability of the scale of each mediating and outcome construct.

Reliability of the Whole Foods data. The internal consistency of each scale was examined for evidence of reliability. The non-identifying relationship scale, including trust, satisfaction and item one and two of commitment, was highly reliable ($\alpha = .95$). Although the EFA results of Pilot Study 2 showed that item one of commitment did not cross load on the non-identifying relationship, adding this item into the non-identifying relationship scale did not lower the reliability. Therefore, item one of commitment was added into the scale of the non-identifying relationship in order to make the analysis consistent between the two brands. The identifying relationship scale with all the items on consumer-brand connection and commitment was also found to be highly reliable ($\alpha = .96$). The three-item scale of attributed responsibility was also highly reliable ($\alpha = .93$). The scales of all the mediating and outcome constructs were either reliable or highly reliable. Please refer to Table 16 for the reliability of the scale of each mediating and outcome construct.

Data collection continued to have a sufficient sample for the Main Study, because the scales of all independent and dependent constructs were found to be reliable or highly

reliable. Because of the satisfactory reliability of each scale, a SEM path model was tested in the Main Study instead of the whole structural model (measurement model and theoretical model) in order to keep the required sample size manageable.

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to re-examine the discriminant validity of the non-identifying relationship and identifying relationship constructs. The results of CFA are reported in the next sub-section.

Table 15

Reliabilities of Scales of Mediating and Outcome Constructs in Pilot Study 3 and Main Study-Apple

	Pilot Study 3 first measurement	Pilot Study 3 second measurement	Main Study first measurement	Main Study second measurement
Attitude	.96	.98	.96	.98
Anger	.96	.98	.95	.97
Sympathy	.85	.91	.86	.89
Disappointment	.89	.94	.87	.92
NWOM intention	.94	.94	.94	.94
Purchase intention	.95	.97	.95	.95

Table 16

Reliabilities of Scales of Mediating and Outcome Constructs in Pilot Study 3 and Main Study-Whole Foods

	Pilot Study 3 first measurement	Pilot Study 3 second measurement	Main Study first measurement	Main Study second measurement
Attitude	.96	.98	.97	.98
Anger	.95	.97	.94	.96
Sympathy	.86	.92	.81	.90
Disappointment	.90	.90	.90	.90
NWOM intention	.92	.93	.92	.94
Purchase intention	.92	.95	.92	.93

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

The factor structure resulting from the EFA analysis of Pilot Study 2 was examined with CFA on the data collected in Pilot Study 3. The purpose of CFA is to see whether the relationships between observed items and latent constructs (i.e., non-identifying and identifying relationships) demonstrated in Pilot Study 2 were still feasible while being fitted into the data of Pilot Study 3. In other words, CFA allows for the (dis)confirmation of the proposed relationships between the observed items and latent constructs and therefore allows for more confidence of the scales of non-identifying and identifying relationships. Although item 1 of the commitment scale primarily loaded on the identifying relationship in the EFA analysis of the Whole Foods data in Pilot Study 2, a cross-loading of this item on the non-identifying relationship was added in the CFA analysis of the Whole Foods data in Pilot Study 3 in order to keep the factor structure consistent between the two brands. Therefore, the factor structure tested on both brands was as follows. All four items of trust, all three items of satisfaction, and item 1 and 2 of commitment loaded on non-identifying relationship. All three items of commitment and all seven items of the self-brand connection loaded on identifying relationship.

Four model fit indices suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999) were used to judge the fit of the tested CFA model. Because a *Chi-square test* was sensitive to sample size, normed chi-squared test (chi-square score divided by degrees of freedom) was used. The other three indices were *Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA)*, *Comparative Fix Index (CFI)*, and *Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR)*.

Maximum likelihood estimation with robust standard errors (MLR) was used as the estimation method. CFA is one type of structural equation modeling (SEM). One

assumption of SEM is multivariate normality of continuous outcome variables whose violation can be detected via inspecting univariate distributions (Kline, 2011). Inspection of univariate distribution of each indicator showed that the assumption of multivariate normality was not met. Therefore, instead of using *Maximum Likelihood (ML)* estimation, MLR was used, which was robust to violation of multivariate normality assumption. MLR was used for all the following SEM analysis. With MLR, Satorra-Bentler scaled (mean-adjusted) *Chi-square* test was used, “where the usual normal-theory chi-square statistic is divided by a scaling correction to better approximate chi-square under non-normality” (Muth é n & Muth é n, n.d., para. 1).

Apple. The CFA model on the Apple data met the criteria of two indices: normed $\chi^2 = 1.504$ ($(\chi^2(116) = 174.481$ ($p < .001$)), $SRMR = .055 < .06$, but $RMSEA = .081 > .06$ and $CFI = .938 < .96$. Then model modification indices were examined, and three modifications that made theoretical sense, one by one, were added to the CFA model. A path from the non-identifying relationship to item 2 of self-brand connection (i.e., I can identify with Apple) was added. This modification made theoretical sense because it is possible that the stronger non-identifying relationships consumers have with a brand, the more likely consumers identify with the brand. The error terms of Item 1 and 3 of commitment were correlated because it is very possible that some constructs besides non-identifying and identifying relationships could also cause commitment, such as brand prestige. In addition, item 3 of self-brand connection (i.e., I feel a personal connection to Apple) and commitment item 1 (i.e., I am very committed to my relationship with Apple) were correlated because it is very possible that some constructs besides non-identifying and identifying relationships may also cause personal connection and commitment, such

as brand prestige. After adding these three modifications, the model fit significantly improved and the model fit the data: normed $\chi^2 = 1.122$ ($\chi^2(113) = 126.796$ ($p < .001$)), $SRMR = .044 < .06$, $RMSEA = .059 < .06$, $CFI = .968 > .96$.

Whole Foods. The CFA model on the Whole Foods data also met the criteria of two indices: normed $\chi^2 = 2.099 < 3.00$ ($\chi^2(116) = 243.439$ ($p < .001$)), $SRMR = .059 < .06$, but RMSEA and CFI did not meet the fit criteria: $RMSEA = .104 > .06$, $CFI = .900 < .96$. Then model modification indices were examined, and three modifications that made theoretical or methodological sense, one by one, were added to the CFA model. The error terms of Item 1 and 3 of commitment were correlated because it is very possible that some constructs besides the non-identifying and the identifying relationships could also cause commitment, such as brand prestige. A path from the non-identifying relationship to item 2 of the self-brand connection was added because it is possible that the stronger non-identifying relationships consumers have with a brand, the more likely consumers identify with the brand. The error terms of all trust items were correlated because all the trust items used the same wording (i.e., I felt that Whole Foods was...) with only the anchored descriptive word changed. The same wording may cause some shared variance not explained by the CFA model. After adding these three modifications, the model fit significantly improved and the model fit the data: normed $\chi^2 = 1.341$ ($\chi^2(108) = 144.796$ ($p < .001$)), $SRMR = .039 < .06$, $CFI = .964 > .96$, although $RMSEA = .065 > .06$.

Ultimately, the same modifications were added to the models of both brands to keep the CFA model consistent between the two brands. The correlations of error terms of all trust items were added to the Apple CFA model. The final model fit indices of the

Apple CFA model were as follows: normed $\chi^2= 1.030$, ($\chi^2(107) = 110.196$ ($p = .001$)), $SRMR = .041 < .06$, $RMSEA = .052 < .06$, $CFI = .977 > .96$. The correlation between the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship was .722. Please see Table 17 for the factor loading of each item.

Table 17

Factor loadings of the Two-factor CFA model of Non-identifying and Identifying Relationships-Apple

	Non-identifying Relationship	Identifying Relationship
Trust 1	.82	
Trust 2	.67	
Trust 3	.80	
Trust 4	.81	
Satisfaction 1	.87	
Satisfaction 2	.89	
Satisfaction 3	.89	
Commitment 1	.35	.60
Commitment 2	.68	.26
Commitment 3		.82
Self-brand connection 1		.92
Self-brand connection 2	.46	.47
Self-brand connection 3		.88
Self-brand connection 4		.89
Self-brand connection 5		.90
Self-brand connection 6		.91
Self-brand connection 7		.86

The correlation of commitment item 1 and self-brand connection item 3 was added to the Whole Foods CFA model. The final model fit indices of the Whole Foods CFA model were as follows: $\chi^2= 1.349$, ($\chi^2(107) = 144.290$ ($p < .001$)), $SRMR = .039 < .06$, $RMSEA = .065 > .06$, $CFI = .963 > .96$. The non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship correlated at .83. Please see Table 18 for the factor loading of each item. To sum up, the two-factor CFA model of the non-identifying and the

identifying relationships fit the data from both brands: the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship are conceptually different constructs.

Table 18

Factor loadings of the Two-factor CFA model of Non-identifying and Identifying Relationships-Whole Foods

	Non-identifying Relationship	Identifying Relationship
Trust 1	.70	
Trust 2	.69	
Trust 3	.76	
Trust 4	.79	
Satisfaction 1	.86	
Satisfaction 2	.85	
Satisfaction 3	.90	
Commitment 1	.45	.44
Commitment 2	.88	-.03
Commitment 3		.78
Self-brand connection 1		.92
Self-brand connection 2	.35	.49
Self-brand connection 3		.86
Self-brand connection 4		.79
Self-brand connection 5		.87
Self-brand connection 6		.88
Self-brand connection 7		.83

Main Study

The Main Study was the extension of Pilot Study 3, and therefore the procedures and measurement instruments were the same with Pilot Study 3. This section discusses sample size justification. Participant information and data analysis results of Main Study are discussed in the Results section.

Sample size justification. Sample size was calculated both based on structural equation modeling (SEM) sample size requirements and factorial experimental design requirements. The final sample size decision was made based on an estimate that required

a bigger sample size.

SEM sample size estimation. Researchers have made different suggestions regarding how to calculate sample size needed to test a structural equation model. Bentler and Chou (1987) suggested that the ratio between the sample size and the number of free parameters should be at least 5:1. Boomsma (1982) recommended using at least 200 participants for SEMs. A Monte Carlo simulation can also be done in software *M-plus* for power analysis based on the strength of a specific path.

Factorial design sample size estimation. The sample size to achieve statistical power at .80 level of a 2×8 design with 2 covariates (the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship) was estimated by using software *G-power*. The sample size calculation showed that for each brand, 314 participants would be needed to detect a medium effect size at the level of .25 with a power at the level of .80, which is commonly considered as sufficient (Muthén & Muthén, 2002). Thus, 618 participants were needed for the Main Study based on the factorial design sample size requirement.

Based on the above estimate, 157 participants were needed for each crisis scenario of each brand. A Monte Carlo simulation was done to make sure that 157 participants were also sufficient for testing the proposed path analysis model. Multiple regression analysis (MRA) was done and the regression coefficients were used as the estimates for the population model in the Monte Carlo simulation. A composite score of each construct was calculated in order to conduct the MRA. The composite score of the non-identifying relationship was calculated by averaging the scores of the items whose factor loadings on the non-identifying relationship were no less than .50, which was often used as a cut-off value as a good indicator (Knafl, n.d.; Shen, 2009). The composite score

of the identifying relationship was calculated in the same manner. Because the scales of all the mediating and outcome constructs were reliable or highly reliable, the composite score of each construct (i.e., attitude, anger, sympathy, disappointment, NWOM intentions, and purchase intentions) was calculated by averaging the scores of all items of each scale.

For both brands, a Monte Carlo simulation showed that when there are 150 participants for each crisis scenario, the power of rejecting the misspecified model (a model with no interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations) was 1.00. Therefore, 314 participants for each brand were a sufficient number for both the SEM path model and the factorial design requirement.

Chapter 4 Results

In this section, the participant demographic information is discussed, followed by scale reliability discussion. Then, the model fit and results of hypothesis testing are discussed. Lastly, the results of the research questions are discussed.

Participants

Apple. Five hundred and sixty ($N = 560$) Apple consumers at least read about a crisis and completed the first part of the study. After excluding the participants who chose the wrong answer for at least one bogus question,¹¹ 473 participants were included in the data analysis ($N = 473$). About forty percent of the participants ($N = 187$, 39.5%) were males, and about 54% of the participants were females ($N = 255$, 53.9%). Thirty-one participants did not respond to the question of gender. Most Apple consumer participants were Euro-American ($N = 315$, 66.6%), followed by Asian-American ($N = 41$, 8.7%), African-American ($N = 25$, 5.3%), Hispanic-American ($N = 18$, 3.8%), Native-American or Pacific Islander ($N = 9$, 1.9%), and a combination of all the races and other race ($N = 34$, 7.2%). Thirty-one participants did not respond to the question of race. Two hundred and thirty-nine participants were assigned to the tax avoidance crisis ($N = 239$), and 234 participants were assigned to the stealing-technology crisis ($N = 234$).

Whole Foods. Five hundred and twenty-three ($N = 523$) Whole Foods consumers at least read about a crisis and completed the first part of the study. After excluding the

¹¹ Fifteen participants chose the wrong answer for bogus question 1; 18 participants chose the wrong answer for bogus question 2; and 77 participants chose the wrong answer for bogus question 3.

participants who chose the wrong answer for at least one bogus question,¹² 395 participants were included in the data analysis ($N = 395$). Thirty-five percent of the participants ($N = 138$, 34.9%) were males, and 59% of the participants were females ($N = 233$, 59%). Twenty-four participants did not respond to the question of gender. The majority of the participants were Euro-American ($N = 248$, 62.8%), followed by African-American ($N = 32$, 8.1%), Asian-American ($N = 27$, 6.8%), Hispanic-American ($N = 21$, 5.3%), Native-American ($N = 8$, 2.0%), and a combination of all the races and other race ($N = 35$, 8.9%). Twenty-four participants did not respond to the question of race. One hundred and ninety-seven participants were assigned to the anti-unionization crisis ($N = 197$), and 198 participants were assigned to the selling-unhealthy-food crisis ($N = 198$).

Measurement Reliability

Apple. Scales of all the independent variables were highly reliable. The non-identifying relationship scale was highly reliable ($\alpha = .96$); so, were the identifying relationship scale ($\alpha = .97$) and the attributed responsibility scale ($\alpha = .94$). The scales of all the mediating and outcome constructs were either reliable or highly reliable. Please refer to Table 15 for the reliability of the scale of each mediating and outcome construct. Because of the high reliability of most scales, a composite score of each construct was calculated to perform the SEM path analysis.

Whole Foods. Scales of all the independent variables were highly reliable. The non-identifying relationship scale was highly reliable ($\alpha = .94$); so, were the identifying relationship scale ($\alpha = .95$) and the attributed responsibility scale ($\alpha = .92$). The scales of

¹² Eighteen participants chose the wrong answer for bogus question 1; 26 participants chose the wrong answer for bogus question 2; and 121 participants chose the wrong answer for bogus question 3.

all the mediating and outcome constructs were either reliable or highly reliable. Please refer to Table 16 for the reliability of the scale of each mediating and outcome construct. Because of the high reliability of most scales, a composite score of each construct was calculated to perform the SEM path analysis.

Manipulation Check

Apple. For Apple, the results of the independent sample t-test showed that participants perceived that the stealing-technology crisis ($M = 6.87, SD = 3.03$) posed a much higher threat to Apple's innovative image as compared to the tax avoidance crisis ($M = 4.56, SD = 3.32$), $t(469) = -7.91, p < .001$, one-tailed. The effect size of Cohen's d between the two Apple crisis groups was 0.73. This result indicated that the manipulation of the Apple crisis situations was effective in the Main Study.

Whole Foods. For Whole Foods, the results of the independent sample t-test showed that participants perceived that the selling-unhealthy-food crisis ($M = 7.39, SD = 3.01$) affected Whole Foods' image as a healthy grocery store much more as compared to the anti-unionization crisis ($M = 4.43, SD = 3.20$), $t(391) = -9.49, p < .001$, one-tailed. The effect size of Cohen's d between the two Whole Foods crisis groups was 0.95. This result indicated that the manipulation of Whole Foods crisis situations was effective in the Main Study.

To ensure that the crisis situation manipulation sounded realistic, before exiting the survey all the participants rated the realism of the crisis situations with the same items used in Pilot Study 2. Participants who read the Apple's tax avoidance crisis perceived the news as being believable ($M = 7.81, SD = 2.86$) and realistic ($M = 7.65, SD = 2.88$). Participants who read the Apple's stealing-technology crisis also perceived the news as

being believable ($M = 7.28, SD = 2.90$) and realistic ($M = 7.32, SD = 2.95$). Participants who read the Whole Foods' anti-unionization crisis perceived the news as being believable ($M = 7.87, SD = 2.35$) and realistic ($M = 7.84, SD = 2.30$), and so did participants who read the Whole Foods' unhealthy foods crisis, as being believable ($M = 7.97, SD = 2.36$) and as being realistic ($M = 7.64, SD = 2.51$).

SEM Model Fit

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to falsify the proposed mediation model because Preacher and Hayes (2008) noted that SEM is more flexible with respect to model specification and estimation. In addition, a multiple-group SEM technique was used to examine the proposed moderation effect of crisis situations where multiple-group was the two crisis situations. A three step multiple-group SEM was performed in *Mplus* software. In the first step, the model was tested to see whether it was tenable for each crisis group. In the second step, the model was tested to see whether it was tenable for both crisis groups simultaneously. In the third step, all the path coefficients were constrained first, and then the different path coefficients between the groups suggested by the modification indices were released one at a time to obtain a better model fit.

Apple. Table 19 presented the correlation matrix in the context of the tax avoidance crisis. The proposed model did not fit the data of the tax avoidance crisis very well and failed to meet all of the model fit indices criteria suggested by Hu and Bentler (1999): normed $\chi^2 = 13.935$ ($(\chi^2(12) = 167.217 (p < .001))$), $SRMR = .103 > .09$, $CFI = .810 < .96$, and $RMSEA = .285 > .06$.

Table 19

Correlation Matrix of the Apple Tax Avoidance Crisis

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. attributed responsibility	8.77	2.70	1								
2. non-identifying relationship	8.51	1.95	-.15*	1							
3. identifying relationship	6.56	2.69	-.23**	.77**	1						
4. attitude	6.10	2.88	-.51**	.56**	.50**	1					
5. anger	7.06	2.94	.72**	-.18*	-.19**	-.65**	1				
6. sympathy	3.62	2.41	-.60**	.25**	.37**	.56**	-.51**	1			
7. disappointment	7.02	2.83	.71**	-.14*	-.12	-.62**	.89**	-.47**	1		
8. NWOM intentions	5.20	2.82	.52**	-.46**	-.34**	-.84**	.71**	-.41**	.67**	1	
9. purchase intentions	7.10	3.01	-.41**	.59**	.50**	.86**	-.58**	.48**	-.51**	-.82**	1

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

c. Listwise N=237

Modification indices were examined for the suggested modifications that made theoretical or methodological sense. Four modifications were added to the model one at a time: (1) the correlation between attitude and anger, (2) the correlation between attitude and sympathy, (3) the correlation between attitude and disappointment, (4) and the correlation between anger and disappointment. The modifications indicated that besides attributed responsibility, non-identifying relationship and identifying relationship, some other constructs were the common causes of attitudes and the three discrete emotions and some constructs were the common causes of anger and disappointment. Possible constructs included personality traits of the participants. With the addition of the four modifications, the proposed model fit the data satisfactorily: normed $\chi^2 = 2.082$ ($(\chi^2(8) = 16.659$ ($p = .003$)), $SRMR = .024 < .09$, $CFI = .987 > .96$, although $RMSEA$ was still above the criterion of .06: $RMSEA = .090 > .06$.

Table 20 presented the correlation matrix in the context of the stealing-technology crisis. The proposed model also did not fit data of the stealing-technology crisis very well and failed to meet all of the model fit indices: normed $\chi^2 = 21.288$ ($(\chi^2(12) = 255.452$ ($p < .001$)), $SRMR = .104 > .09$, $CFI = .762 < .96$, and $RMSEA = .326 > .06$. The same modifications in the tax avoidance crisis group were suggested by Mplus and therefore were added to the model. No other suggested modifications made theoretical or methodological sense, and therefore no other modifications were made. With these four modifications, the model fit the data satisfactorily: $SRMR = .020 < .09$, $CFI = .980 > .96$, although two criteria were still not met: normed $\chi^2 = 4.035$ ($(\chi^2(8) = 32.280$ ($p = .0001$)) which was above 3, and $RMSEA = .116 > .06$.

Table 20

Correlation Matrix of the Apple Stealing-Technology Crisis

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. attributed responsibility	7.84	2.68	1								
2. non-identifying relationship	8.58	2.04	-.30**	1							
3. identifying relationship	6.65	2.75	-.35**	.77**	1						
4. attitude	6.90	2.58	-.59**	.65**	.60**	1					
5. anger	5.74	2.83	.62**	-.25**	-.15*	-.64**	1				
6. sympathy	4.36	2.54	-.49**	.42**	.55**	.55**	-.26**	1			
7. disappointment	6.02	2.79	.65**	-.17*	-.11	-.60**	.88**	-.27**	1		
8. NWOM intentions	4.23	2.46	.47**	-.57**	-.41**	-.79**	.64**	-.31**	.56**	1	
9. purchase intentions	7.86	2.67	-.51**	.67**	.61**	.88**	-.57**	.48**	-.50**	-.82**	1

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

c. Listwise N=233

In step 2, the model was judged to be tenable for both groups simultaneously:
normed $\chi^2 = 2.575$ ($\chi^2(16) = 41.195$ ($p < .001$)), $SRMR = .021 < .09$, $CFI = .984 > .96$, although one criterion was still not met: $RMSEA = .097 > .06$.

When all the path coefficients were constrained to be equal across two groups, the model fit fairly well into the data: normed $\chi^2 = 1.995$ ($\chi^2(36) = 71.828$ ($p < .001$)), $SRMR = .052 < .09$, $CFI = .978 > .96$, although one criterion was still not met: $RMSEA = .077 > .06$. The model with no moderation effects of the crisis situations feasibly represented the true relationships among these constructs.

This result indicated that the crisis situations did not moderate the effects of the identifying relationships on attitudes, anger, sympathy, and disappointment for Apple consumers. In other words, the identifying relationships had similar effects on consumer attitudes and emotions across two crisis situations. In general, the model explained a good amount of the variance of the mediating variables and the outcome variables, especially the outcome variables, across two crisis situations. Please refer to Table 23 for the explained variance of the mediating and outcome variables in each crisis situation.

Whole Foods. Table 21 presented the correlation matrix in the context of the anti-unionization crisis. The proposed model did not fit the data of the anti-unionization crisis very well and failed to meet three of the four model fit indices: normed $\chi^2 = 13.482$ ($\chi^2(12) = 161.781$ ($p < .001$)), $CFI = .832 < .96$, and $RMSEA = .286 > .06$, although the SRMR indicator was satisfactory: $SRMR = .078 < .09$.

Table 21

Correlation Matrix of the Whole Foods Anti-Unionization Crisis

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. attributed responsibility	7.23	2.80	1								
2. non-identifying relationship	8.44	1.65	-.24**	1							
3. identifying relationship	6.53	2.32	-.19**	.70**	1						
4. attitude	6.59	2.63	-.69**	.43**	.26**	1					
5. anger	6.18	2.92	.86**	-.21**	-.09	-.77**	1				
6. sympathy	4.72	2.39	-.60**	.27**	.36**	.65**	-.55**	1			
7. disappointment	6.20	2.91	.82**	-.18*	-.03	-.72**	.91**	-.53**	1		
8. NWOM intentions	4.75	2.61	.61**	-.28**	-.04	-.81**	.75**	-.45**	.73**	1	
9. purchase intentions	7.18	2.44	-.56**	.46**	.26**	.87**	-.67**	.51**	-.61**	-.76**	1

Note. *. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

c. Listwise N=195

Modification indices were examined for the suggested modifications that made theoretical or methodological sense. Four suggested modifications were added to the model one at a time, and these four modifications were identical to the ones that were added to the model in the Apple data: (1) the correlation between attitude and anger, (2) the correlation between attitude and sympathy, (3) the correlation between attitude and disappointment, and (4) the correlation between anger and disappointment. With the addition of the four modifications, the model fit the data satisfactorily: normed $\chi^2 = 3.101$ ($\chi^2(8) = 24.811$ ($p = .0007$)), $SRMR = .026 < .09$, $CFI = .983 > .96$, although one criterion was still not met $RMSEA = .110 > .06$.

Table 22 presented the correlation matrix in the context of the selling-unhealthy-food crisis. The proposed model also did not fit the data of the selling-unhealthy-food crisis very well and failed to meet all of the model fit indices: normed $\chi^2 = 15.700$ ($\chi^2(12) = 188.395$ ($p < .001$)), $SRMR = .123 > .09$, $CFI = .681 < .96$, and $RMSEA = .320 > .06$. The same modifications in the anti-unionization crisis group were suggested and added, the model fit the data satisfactorily: normed $\chi^2 = 1.561$ ($\chi^2(8) = 12.492$ ($p = .025$)), $SRMR = .036 < .09$, $CFI = .987 > .96$, although $RMSEA$ still failed to meet the fit criterion $RMSEA = .078 > .06$.

In step 2, the model was judged to be tenable for both groups simultaneously: normed $\chi^2 = 2.174$ ($\chi^2(16) = 34.789$ ($p = .0002$)), $SRMR = .031 < .09$, $CFI = .985 > .96$, although one criterion was still not met: $RMSEA = .093 > .06$.

Table 22

Correlation Matrix of the Whole Foods Selling-unhealthy-food Crisis

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. attributed responsibility	8.51	2.45	1								
2. non-identifying relationship	8.31	1.56	-.12	1							
3. identifying relationship	6.27	2.44	-.19**	.65**	1						
4. attitude	6.07	2.65	-.49**	.46**	.35**	1					
5. anger	6.74	2.66	.65**	-.11	-.05	-.63**	1				
6. sympathy	4.60	2.36	-.55**	.33**	.42**	.67**	-.48**	1			
7. disappointment	7.42	2.65	.66**	-.04	.003	-.55**	.89**	-.43**	1		
8. NWOM intentions	5.42	2.49	.47**	-.29**	-.12	-.78**	.70**	-.51**	.61**	1	
9. purchase intentions	6.68	2.57	-.44**	.43**	.34**	.83**	-.56**	.57**	-.49**	-.74**	1

Note. **. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

c. Listwise N=197

When all the path coefficients were constrained to be equal across the two crisis situations, the model fit fairly well into the data: normed $\chi^2 = 1.525$ ($\chi^2(36) = 54.894$ ($p = .0018$)), $SRMR = .053 < .09$, $CFI = .984 > .96$, although RMSEA was slightly above .06: $RMSEA = .065 > .06$. The model with no moderation effects of the crisis situations feasibly represented the true relationships among these constructs.

This result indicated that crisis situations did not moderate the effects of the identifying relationships on attitudes, anger, sympathy, and disappointment for the Whole Foods consumers. In general, the model explained a good amount of the variance of the mediating variables and the outcome variables, especially the outcome variables, across the two crisis situations. Please refer to Table 23 for the explained variance of the mediating and outcome variables in each crisis situation.

Table 23

SEM Explained Variance (R^2) of the Mediating and Outcome Variables in Each Crisis

Situation

	Apple tax avoidance	Apple stealing technology	Whole Foods anti- unionization	Whole Foods selling unhealthy food
Attitudes	0.474	0.615	0.561	0.407
Anger	0.479	0.444	0.720	0.511
Sympathy	0.399	0.381	0.428	0.389
Disappointment	0.485	0.460	0.676	0.510
NWOM intentions	0.736	0.705	0.701	0.687
Purchase intentions	0.749	0.778	0.749	0.683

Hypothesis Testing

H1 proposed that there was a positive relation between the non-identifying relationship and attitudes, regardless of the crisis situations. For the Apple consumers,

this hypothesis was supported. The path coefficient¹³ from the non-identifying relationship to attitudes was $\beta = 0.58$ ($p < .001$), indicating that with one unit increase of the non-identifying relationship, positive attitudes increase 0.58 unit, holding attributed responsibility and identifying relationship constant. This effect of non-identifying relationship on attitudes holds cross both crisis situations. The hypothesis was also supported by the result from the Whole Foods consumers. The path coefficient from the non-identifying relationship to attitudes was $\beta = 0.62$ ($p < .001$). This indicates that with one unit increase of the non-identifying relationship, positive attitudes increase 0.62 unit, and this effect holds cross both crisis situations.

H2a proposed that there was a positive relation between the identifying relationship and attitudes, when the crisis does not undermine self-defining attributes shared between the consumers and the brand. This hypothesis was partially supported by the result derived from the Apple consumers: the path coefficient from the identifying relationship to attitudes was small but statistically significant at the significance level of .10: $\beta = 0.10$ ($p = .057$). This meant that with one unit increase of the identifying relationship, positive attitudes only increase 0.10 unit in the context of tax avoidance crisis. This hypothesis, however, was not supported by the result derived from the Whole Foods consumers. The path coefficient from the identifying relationship to attitudes was not significant: $\beta = -0.07$ ($p = .283$) in the context of anti-unionization crisis.

H2b proposed that there was a negative relation between the identifying relationship and attitudes, when the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the consumers and the brand. This hypothesis was not supported by the result of

¹³ All the path coefficients reported here were unstandardized path coefficients.

either the Apple consumers or the Whole Foods consumers. For the Apple consumers, the path coefficient from the identifying relationship to attitudes was $\beta = 0.10$ ($p = .057$) in the context of the stealing-technology crisis, and this coefficient was the same with that in the context of the tax avoidance crisis. In other words, the crisis situations did not moderate the effects of the identifying relationship on attitudes. Similarly, for the Whole Foods consumers, the path coefficient from the identifying relationship to attitudes was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.07$, $p = .283$) in the contexts of both anti-unionization and selling-unhealthy-food crisis situations. .

H3a proposed that positive attitudes decrease NWOM communication intentions. This first part of hypothesis three was supported by the results from consumers of both brands. The path coefficient from attitudes to NWOM communication intentions for Apple consumers was $\beta = -0.74$ ($p < .001$). This indicated that with one unit growth of positive attitudes, NWOM communication intentions decrease 0.74 unit, holding emotions constant. For Whole Foods, the path coefficient from attitudes to NWOM communication intentions was $\beta = -0.60$ ($p < .001$). This meant that with one unit increase of positive attitudes, NWOM communication intentions decreased 0.60 unit.

H3b proposed that there was a positive relation between positive attitudes and purchase intentions. The second part of H3 was also supported by the results from the consumers of both brands. The path coefficient from attitudes to purchase intention for Apple consumers was $\beta = 0.93$ ($p < .001$), indicating that with one unit increase of positive attitudes, purchase intentions increase 0.93 unit. The path coefficient from attitudes to purchase intentions for Whole Foods consumers was $\beta = 0.81$ ($p < .001$), indicating that with one unit increase of positive attitudes, purchase intentions increased

0.81 unit.

H4 proposed that there was a negative relation between the non-identifying relationship and anger, regardless of whether the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand. This hypothesis was supported by the results from both brands' data: for Apple, the path coefficient from the non-identifying relationship to anger was $\beta = -0.24$ ($p = .003$). This indicated that with one unit increase of the non-identifying relationship, anger goes down at 0.24 unit in both the tax avoidance and stealing-technology crisis situations while eliminating the effects of attributed responsibility and identifying relationships. For Whole Foods, the path coefficient from the non-identifying relationship to anger was $\beta = -0.22$ ($p = .003$). This indicated that with one unit increase of the non-identifying relationship, anger goes down at 0.22 unit in both the anti-unionization and selling-unhealthy-food crisis situations.

H5a proposed that there was a negative relation between the identifying relationship and anger, when the crisis does not undermine self-defining attributes shared between the consumers and the brand. This proposed relation was not supported by the results from the data of either brand. The path coefficient from the identifying relationship to anger for Apple consumers was $\beta = 0.15$ ($p = .019$) in the context of the tax avoidance crisis. With one unit increase of the identifying relationship, anger goes up at 0.15 unit, holding the effects of attributed responsibility and non-identifying relationships constant. For Whole Foods consumers, the path coefficient from the identifying relationship to anger was $\beta = 0.19$ ($p = .003$) in the context of the anti-unionization crisis. With one unit increase of the identifying relationship, anger goes up at 0.19 unit. Results from both brand scenarios showed that the stronger consumers

identify with a brand, the angrier they feel towards the brand, even when the crisis does not undermine the self-defining attributes shared between consumers and the brand.

H5b proposed that there was a positive relation between the identifying relationship and anger, when the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the consumers and the brand. This part of H5 was supported by the result from the Apple consumers, as the path coefficient from the identifying relationship to anger was $\beta = 0.15$ ($p = .019$) in the context of the stealing-technology crisis. This hypothesized positive relationship was also supported by the result from the Whole Foods consumers' responses, as the path coefficient from the identifying relationship to anger was $\beta = 0.19$ ($p = .003$), when the selling-unhealthy-food crisis was tested. In other words, a stronger identifying relationship leads to more anger, regardless of the crisis situations.

H6a proposed that anger increases NWOM communication intentions. The proposed positive relation was supported by the results from the data from both brands. The path coefficient from anger to NWOM communication intentions for Apple consumers was $\beta = 0.28$ ($p < .001$). With one unit increase of anger, NWOM communication intentions increase 0.28 unit, holding constant the effects of attitudes, sympathy, and disappointment. The path coefficient from anger to NWOM intentions for Whole Foods consumers was $\beta = 0.25$ ($p < .001$).

H6b proposed that the angrier consumers feel, the less purchase intentions they feel. H6b was only supported by the result from the Apple consumers: the path coefficient from anger to purchase intentions was $\beta = -0.20$ ($p = .001$). With one unit increase of anger, purchase intentions decreased 0.20 unit, eliminating the effects of attitudes, sympathy, and disappointment. However, for the Whole Foods consumers, the

path coefficient from anger to purchase intentions was not statistically significant $\beta = -0.06$ ($p = .296$), indicating that anger has no effects on purchase intentions for Whole Foods consumers.

H7 proposed that there was a positive relation between the non-identifying relationship and sympathy, regardless of the crisis situations. This hypothesis was not supported by data from either brand. The path coefficient from the non-identifying relationship to sympathy for Apple consumers was not statistically significant $\beta = -0.04$ ($p = .525$). For the Whole Foods consumers, the path coefficient from the non-identifying relationship to sympathy was also not statistically significant $\beta = 0.02$ ($p = .791$). The results from both brands indicated that non-identifying relationship has no effects on sympathy across different crisis situations.

H8a proposed that there was a positive relation between the identifying relationship and sympathy, when the crisis does not undermine self-defining attributes shared between the consumers and the brand. This hypothesized positive relation was supported by the results from both brands. The path coefficient from the identifying relationship to sympathy for the Apple consumers was $\beta = 0.31$ ($p < .001$). With one unit increase of the identifying relationship, sympathy increases 0.31 unit in the context of tax avoidance crisis, holding constant the effects of attributed responsibility and non-identifying relationships. For the Whole Foods consumers, with one unit increase of the identifying relationship, sympathy increases 0.27 unit ($\beta = 0.27$, $p < .001$) when the anti-unionization crisis was tested.

H8b proposed that there was a negative relation between the identifying relationship and sympathy, when the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared

between the consumers and the brand. This proposed negative relation was not supported, as the path coefficient from the identifying relationship to sympathy was still positive and statistically significant for both brands (Apple: $\beta = 0.31$, $p < .001$ in the context of stealing-technology crisis; Whole Foods: $\beta = 0.27$, $p < .001$ in the context of selling-unhealthy-food crisis). Therefore, consumers who have a strong identifying relationship still feel more sympathetic towards the brand, even when the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand.

H9a proposed that sympathy decreases NWOM communication intentions. H9a was not supported by the result from either brand. The path coefficient from sympathy to NWOM communication intentions for the Apple consumers was positive: $\beta = 0.18$ ($p < .001$). With one unit increase of sympathy, NWOM communication intentions increase 0.18 unit, eliminating the effects of attitudes, anger, and disappointment. The result derived from the Whole Foods consumers showed a similar pattern: $\beta = 0.13$ ($p = .006$), indicating that with one unit increase of sympathy, NWOM communication intentions increase 0.13 unit.

H9b suggested that stronger sympathy leads to more purchase intentions. H9b was also not supported. The path coefficient from sympathy to purchase intentions for the Apple consumers was not statistically significant: $\beta = -0.03$ ($p = .430$). For the Whole Foods consumers, the path coefficient from sympathy to purchase intentions was also not statistically significant: $\beta = -0.05$ ($p = .173$). The results from both brand consumers indicated that sympathy has no effects on purchase intentions.

H10 proposed that there was a negative relation between the non-identifying relationship and disappointment, regardless of whether the crisis undermines self-

defining attributes shared between the consumers and the brand. This hypothesis was supported by the result derived from the Apple consumers: the path coefficient from the non-identifying relationship to disappointment was $\beta = -0.18$ ($p = .036$). With one unit increase of non-identifying relationship, disappointment goes down at 0.18 unit in both tax avoidance and stealing-technology crisis situations, eliminating the effects of attributed responsibility and identifying relationship. The result from the Whole Foods consumers also supported this hypothesis: the path coefficient from the non-identifying relationship to disappointment was $\beta = -0.18$ ($p = .029$), indicating that with one unit increase of the non-identifying relationship, disappointment goes down at 0.18 unit in both anti-unionization and selling-unhealthy-food crisis situations.

H1 1a proposed that there was a negative relation between the identifying relationship and disappointment, when the crisis does not undermine self-defining attributes shared between the consumer and the brand. This proposed relationship was not supported by the data from either brand consumers. The path coefficient from the identifying relationship to disappointment for the Apple consumers was $\beta = 0.18$ ($p = .005$) in the context of the tax avoidance crisis. With one unit increase of the identifying relationship, disappointment goes up at 0.18 unit, holding constant the effects of attributed responsibility and non-identifying relationship. For Whole Foods consumers, the path coefficient from the identifying relationship to disappointment was $\beta = 0.24$ ($p = .001$) in the context of the anti-unionization crisis.

H1 1b proposed that there was a positive relation between the identifying relationship and disappointment, when the crisis undermines self-defining attributes shared between the consumers and the brand. This hypothesis was supported by the data

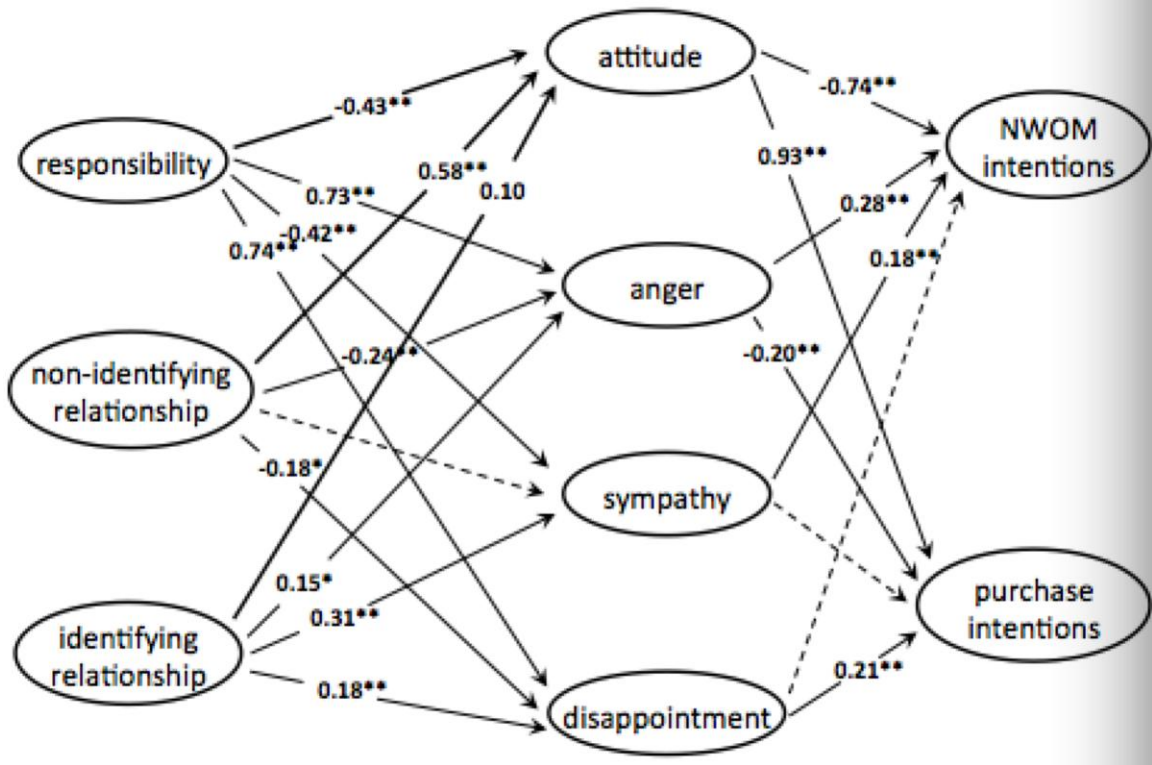
from both brands. For the Apple group, the path coefficient from the identifying relationship to disappointment in the context of stealing-technology crisis was the same with that in the context of tax avoidance crisis: $\beta = 0.18, p = .005$. For the Whole Foods group, the path coefficient from the identifying relationship to disappointment in the context of selling-unhealthy-food crisis was the same with that in the context of anti-unionization crisis: $\beta = 0.24, p = .001$. In other words, crisis situations did not moderate the effects of the identifying relationships on disappointment.

H12a proposed that disappointment increases NWOM communication intentions. H12a was not supported by the data from either brand. The path coefficient from disappointment to NWOM communication intentions for the Apple consumers was not statistically significant $\beta = -0.05 (p = .366)$, indicating that disappointment has no effect on NWOM communication intentions. For the Whole Foods consumers, disappointment also had no effect on NWOM communication intentions, as the path coefficient was not statistically significant: $\beta = 0.08, p = .207$.

H12b proposed that more disappointment leads to less purchase intentions. H12b was not supported either. The path coefficient from disappointment to purchase intentions derived from the Apple consumers was $\beta = 0.21 (p < .001)$. With one unit increase of disappointment, purchase intentions increase 0.21 unit, holding constant the effects of attitudes, anger, and sympathy. For Whole Foods consumers, the path coefficient from disappointment to purchase intentions was not statistically significant: $\beta = 0.03, p = 0.565$, indicating that disappointment had no effects on purchase intentions for Whole Foods consumers.

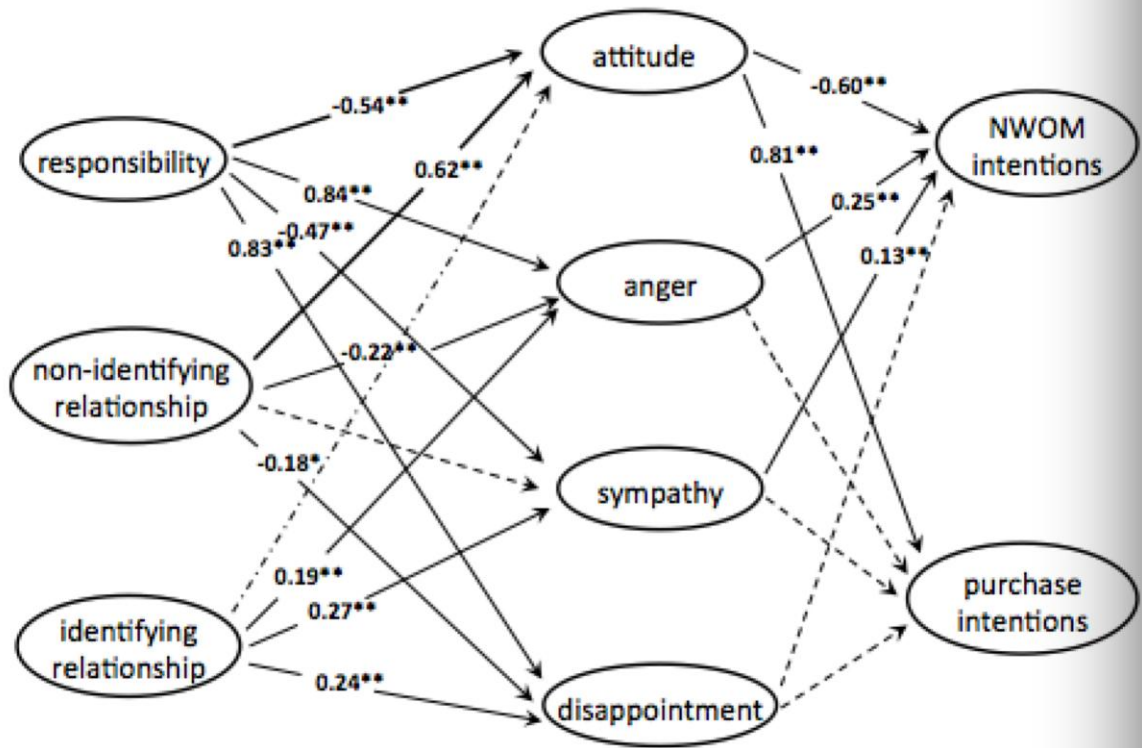
To sum up, while controlling for the effects of attributed responsibility and

identifying relationships, the stronger non-identifying relationships were, the more positive attitudes and less anger and disappointment consumers feel. The effects of non-identifying relationships do not depend on the crisis situations. However, non-identifying relationships do not influence how sympathetic consumers feel toward a brand. While controlling for the effects of attributed responsibility and non-identifying relationships, the stronger identifying relationships, the more anger, sympathy and disappointment consumers feel toward a brand. Identifying relationships have minimal effects on positive attitudes. These effects of identifying relationships hold across crisis situations undermining or not undermining self-defining attributes shared between consumers and brands. In other words, crisis situations do not moderate the effects of these effects of identifying relationships. Positive attitudes decrease NWOM communication intentions. Discrete emotions affect NWOM intentions differently: although anger and sympathy increase NWOM intentions, disappointment has no effects on NWOM intentions. Positive attitudes increase purchase intentions. Discrete emotions have limited influence on purchase intentions: how anger and disappointment influence purchase intentions may depend on the nature of the brands, and sympathy has no significant effect on purchase intentions. The results of the hypotheses were summarized in Figure 5 and 6.



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 5. Path coefficients of tested model-Apple. Solid arrow indicated that the relationship was statistically significant. Dotted arrow indicated that the relationship was not statistically significant at the level of .05. The p-value of the relationship between identifying relationship and attitude was $p = .057$. The exogenous variables were correlated by default in the analysis by *Mplus* software. For the correlations between the exogenous variables in the tax avoidance crisis, please refer to Table 19. For the correlations between the exogenous variables in the stealing-technology crisis, please refer to Table 20.



* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

Figure 6. Path coefficients of tested model-Whole Foods. Solid arrow indicated that the relationship was statistically significant. Dotted arrow indicated that the relationship was not statistically significant at the level of .05. The exogenous variables were correlated by default in the analysis by *Mplus* software. For the correlations between the exogenous variables in the anti-unionization crisis, please refer to Table 21. For the correlations between the exogenous variables in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis, please refer to Table 22.

Does Identifying Relationships Help Predict Consumer Behavioral Intentions?

Due to the high correlation between the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship, it is meaningful to investigate whether the identifying relationship helps predict consumer behavioral intentions, when the non-identifying relationship is taken into consideration. In other words, does the identifying relationship

contribute uniquely to the prediction of NWOM intention and purchase intention? To answer this question, a multiple regression analysis (MRA) was performed where the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship were independent variables and the NWOM intention and purchase intention were dependent variables. Attributed responsibility was put into the model as a control variable. Because there were two crisis situations for each brand, the crisis situation was also put into the model as a control variable. In this case, the MRA analysis would show for both two crisis situations, on average whether the identifying relationship helped predict consumer behavioral intentions.

Does the identifying relationship help predict NWOM intention? The identifying relationship helps predict consumer NWOM intention for both brands. For Apple consumers, the regression coefficient of the identifying relationship to NWOM intention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.18, p = .001$), controlling for the effects of the non-identifying relationship, the attributed responsibility, and the crisis situation. As the identifying relationship increased by one unit, consumer NWOM intention increased 0.18 unit. The identifying relationship offers unique love-becomes-hate effect even when the non-identifying relationship was put into the model. The regression coefficient of the non-identifying relationship to NWOM intention was negative ($\beta = -0.74, p < .001$), indicating a buffering effect. In addition, the more responsibility consumers attributed to the brand, the more NWOM intention they had ($\beta = 0.42, p < .001$). Moreover, on average consumers who were exposed to the tax-avoidance crisis had more NWOM intention than those exposed to the stealing-technology crisis ($\beta = -0.53, p = .005$). The model explained 44.5% variance of NWOM intention of Apple

consumers ($R^2 = .445$).

For the Whole Foods consumers, the regression coefficient of the identifying relationship to NWOM intention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.28, p < .001$), controlling for the effects of the non-identifying relationship, the attributed responsibility, and the crisis situation. As the identifying relationship increased by one unit, consumer NWOM intention increased 0.28 unit. The identifying relationship offers unique love-becomes-hate effect even when the non-identifying relationship was put into the model. The regression coefficient of the non-identifying relationship to NWOM intention was negative ($\beta = -0.57, p < .001$), indicating a buffering effect. In addition, the more responsibility consumers attributed to Whole Foods, the more NWOM intention they had ($\beta = 0.51, p < .001$). Crisis situations had no effect on NWOM intention ($\beta = 0.01, p = .975$). The model explained 37.8% variance of NWOM intention of Whole Foods consumers ($R^2 = .378$).

Does the identifying relationship help predict purchase intention? The identifying relationship did not help predict consumer purchase intention for either brand. For Apple consumers, the regression coefficient of the identifying relationship to purchase intention was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.08, p = .131$), controlling for the effects of the non-identifying relationship, the attributed responsibility, and the crisis situation. On average, the identifying relationship had no effect on purchase intention, controlling for the influences of all the other independent variables. The regression coefficient of the non-identifying relationship to purchase intention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.71, p < .001$), indicating a buffering effect. In addition, the more responsibility consumers attributed to Apple, the less purchase intention they had (β

= -0.34, $p < .001$). Counter-intuitively, on average consumers who were exposed to the stealing-technology crisis had more purchase intention than those exposed to the tax-avoidance crisis ($\beta = 0.38, p = .047$). The model explained 50.5% variance of purchase intention of Apple consumers ($R^2 = .505$).

For the Whole Foods consumers, the regression coefficient of the identifying relationship to purchase intention was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.04, p = .468$), controlling for the effects of the non-identifying relationship, the attributed responsibility, and the crisis situation. On average, the identifying relationship had no effect on purchase intention, controlling for the influences of all the other independent variables. The regression coefficient of the non-identifying relationship to purchase intention was positive and statistically significant ($\beta = 0.61, p < .001$), indicating a buffering effect. In addition, the more responsibility consumers attributed to Whole Foods, the less purchase intention they had ($\beta = -0.41, p < .001$). Crisis situations had no effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.08, p = .703$). The model explained 37.9% variance of purchase intention ($R^2 = .379$).

Research Questions

RQ1. Research question 1 examined the main effects of crisis situations. In other words, in general whether and how the crisis situations influence the effectiveness of brand crisis response strategies at mitigating consumer negative reactions. The effectiveness of brand crisis response strategies was indicated by the change score. For example, the change score of attitudes was calculated by subtracting attitude scores prior to the brand response strategies from attitude scores after receiving the brand strategies. The change scores of anger, sympathy, disappointment, NWOM communication

intention, and purchase intentions were calculated in the same manner. An independent sample t-test was used to answer this research question, where the categorical variable was two levels of crisis situations, and the dependent variables were the change scores.

Apple. The results showed that for the Apple groups, there was no difference of attitude change score, ($M_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = 0.42$, $SD_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = 1.50$; $M_{\text{stealing-technology}} = 0.44$, $SD_{\text{stealing-technology}} = 1.28$; $t(453) = -0.18$, $p = .858$, two-tailed), no difference of anger change score ($M_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = -0.63$, $SD_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = 1.71$; $M_{\text{stealing-technology}} = -0.78$, $SD_{\text{stealing-technology}} = 1.91$; $t(454) = 0.84$, $p = .401$, two-tailed), no difference of sympathy change score ($M_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = 0.45$, $SD_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = 1.64$; $M_{\text{stealing-technology}} = 0.30$, $SD_{\text{stealing-technology}} = 1.56$; $t(454) = 0.97$, $p = .331$, two-tailed), no differences of disappointment change score ($M_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = -0.71$, $SD_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = 1.89$; $M_{\text{stealing-technology}} = -0.86$, $SD_{\text{stealing-technology}} = 2.02$; $t(454) = 0.81$, $p = .417$, two-tailed), no differences of NWOM intention change score ($M_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = -0.33$, $SD_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = 1.28$; $M_{\text{stealing-technology}} = -0.33$, $SD_{\text{stealing-technology}} = 1.20$; $t(454) = 0.008$, $p = .994$, two-tailed), and no differences of purchase intention change score ($M_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = 0.35$, $SD_{\text{tax-avoidance}} = 1.52$; $M_{\text{stealing-technology}} = 0.19$, $SD_{\text{stealing-technology}} = 1.17$; $t(426) = 1.19$, $p = .236$, two-tailed) between the tax avoidance crisis and stealing-technology crisis. In other words, brand response strategies were no more effective at mitigating the negative reactions of Apple consumers in the tax avoidance crisis when compared to the stealing-technology crisis.

Whole Foods. The results showed that for the Whole Foods consumers, brand response strategies were more effective at recovering positive attitudes in the anti-unionization crisis ($M = 0.54$, $SD = 1.55$) than in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis ($M = 0.22$, $SD = 1.42$) ($t(379) = 2.10$, $p = .037$, two-tailed). In addition, brand response

strategies were also more effective at mitigating anger in the anti-unionization crisis ($M = -0.83, SD = 2.14$) than in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis ($M = -0.46, SD = 1.69$) ($t(363) = -1.91, p = .057$, two-tailed) at the significance level of .10 level. Similarly, brand response strategies were more effective at increasing sympathy in the anti-unionization crisis ($M = 0.57, SD = 1.89$) than in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis ($M = 0.21, SD = 1.78$) ($t(379) = 1.88, p = .061$, two-tailed) at the significance level of .10 level. Brand response strategies were also more effective at recovering purchase intention in the anti-unionization crisis ($M = 0.35, SD = 1.38$) than in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis ($M = 0.09, SD = 1.42$) ($t(378) = 1.87, p = .062$, two-tailed) at the significance level of .10 level.

However, response strategies was no more effective at mitigating disappointment in the anti-unionization crisis ($M = -1.01, SD = 2.21$) as compared to in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis ($M = -0.68, SD = 1.88$) ($t(372) = -1.54, p = .124$, two-tailed). In addition, in terms of decreasing NWOM intentions, the response strategies in the context of anti-unionization crisis ($M = -0.54, SD = 1.39$) were no more effective than in the context of selling-unhealthy-food crisis ($M = -0.31, SD = 1.41$) ($t(378) = -1.65, p = .100$, two-tailed).

RQ2. Research question 2 asked which response strategy is most effective at mitigating the consumer negative reactions across the two crisis situations. First, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed to examine whether this effect of the brand strategy grouping variable was statistically significant. If ANOVA was statistically significant, then the means of dependent variables in each brand strategy group were examined to see the trend, and then the Tukey-Kramer pair-wise multiple comparison procedure was used to examine whether one group was statistically different from

another group.

Apple. The ANOVA results showed that the effect of response strategies was significant for attitude change ($F(7, 447) = 3.46, p = .001, \omega^2 = .04$), but only 4% variance of the attitude change score was associated with the response strategies. The apology-compensation-reminder strategy had the highest mean of attitude change score ($M = 0.89, SD = 1.66$), indicating that the attitude change the most in this group as compared to other brand strategy groups. The Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison procedure showed that the apology-compensation-reminder strategy was more effective in increasing positive attitudes, as compared to the no-comment ($M = -0.18, SD = 1.29; p = .006$), the apology ($M = 0.13, SD = 1.06; p = .041$), and the reminder ($M = 0.14, SD = 1.27; p = .062$) at the significance level of .10, but was not statistically different from the other strategies.

The ANOVA results also showed that the effect of response strategies was significant for anger change ($F(7, 448) = 4.13, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05$), but only 5% variance of the anger change score was associated with the response strategies. The apology-compensation-reminder strategy has the highest mean of the anger change score, indicating that the apology-compensation-reminder combination decreased anger the most. The Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison procedure showed that the apology-compensation-reminder strategy ($M = -1.50, SD = 2.20$) was statistically more effective at decreasing anger, as compared to the no-comment ($M = -0.02, SD = 1.14; p = .003$), the apology ($M = -0.27, SD = 1.58; p = .003$), the reminder ($M = -0.47, SD = 1.39; p = .039$), the apology-reminder ($M = -0.46, SD = 1.41; p = .034$), but was not statistically different from the compensation, the apology-compensation or the compensation-reminder.

The ANOVA results also showed the effect of response strategies was significant for sympathy change ($F(7, 448) = 2.56, p = .014, \omega^2 = .02$), but only 2% variance of the sympathy change score was associated with the response strategies. The apology-compensation-reminder strategy ($M = 0.86, SD = 1.68$) has the highest mean of sympathy change score, indicating that sympathy changed the most in this group as compared to other brand strategy groups. The Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison procedure showed that the apology-compensation-reminder combination was statistically more effective at increasing sympathy as compared to the reminder strategy ($M = -0.07, SD = 1.34; p = .036$), but was no more effective than any other strategies.

The effect of response strategies was also significant for the disappointment change ($F(7, 448) = 3.63, p = .001, \omega^2 = .04$), but only 4% variance of the disappointment change score was associated with the response strategies. The apology-compensation strategy ($M = -1.48, SD = 1.98$) has the highest change score of disappointment, indicating that the apology-compensation strategy decreased disappointment the most. However, the Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison procedure showed that the advantage of the apology-compensation strategy was only statistically significant than the no-comment strategy ($M = 0.13, SD = 1.83; p = .005$), but was not when compared to any other strategies.

The effect of response strategies was statistically significant for NWOM intention change ($F(7, 448) = 4.13, p < .001, \omega^2 = .05$), but only 5% variance of the NWOM intention change score was associated with the response strategies. The compensation strategy ($M = -0.64, SD = 1.56$) had the highest mean of the NWOM intention change score, indicating that the NWOM intention change the most in this group as compared to

other brand strategy groups. However, the Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison procedure showed that the compensation strategy was only more effective than the no-comment strategy ($M = 0.46$, $SD = 0.99$; $p = .001$), but not when compared to any other strategies.

The ANOVA results also showed that the effect of response strategies was significant for purchase intention change ($F(7, 448) = 2.04$, $p = .049$, $\omega^2 = .02$), but only 2% variance of the purchase intention change score was associated with the response strategies. The apology-compensation-reminder strategy ($M = 0.60$, $SD = 1.27$) had the highest change score of purchase intention, indicating that purchase intention increased the most when Apple offered an apology, compensation, and reminder. However, the Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison procedure showed that the advantage of the apology-compensation-reminder strategy at increasing purchase intention was not statistically significant compared to any other strategies.

Whole Foods. The ANOVA results showed that the effect of response strategies was significant for attitude change ($F(7, 373) = 4.197$, $p < .001$, $\omega^2 = .06$), but only 6% variance of the attitude change score was associated with the response strategies. The apology-compensation-reminder strategy had the most attitude change. The Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison procedure showed that the apology-compensation-reminder strategy ($M = 0.89$, $SD = 1.97$) was statistically more effective in increasing positive attitudes as compared to the no-comment strategy ($M = -0.42$, $SD = 1.24$; $p < .001$), but were not statistically different from any other strategies at the significance level of .05 in terms of increasing positive attitudes.

The ANOVA results also showed that the effect of response strategies was significant for anger change ($F(7, 373) = 4.50$, $p < .001$, $\omega^2 = .06$), but only 6% variance

of the anger change score was associated with the response strategies. The apology-compensation-reminder strategy ($M = -1.63$, $SD = 2.63$) had the highest mean of anger change score. The Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison procedure showed that the apology-compensation-reminder strategy was statistically more effective at decreasing anger, when compared to the no-comment strategy ($M = 0.14$, $SD = 1.16$; $p < .001$), reminder ($M = -0.01$, $SD = 1.48$; $p = .002$). In addition, the apology-compensation-reminder strategy was statistically more effective as compared to the apology ($M = -0.44$, $SD = 1.45$; $p = .066$) at the significance level of .10. However, the apology-compensation-reminder strategy was not statistically different from the compensation, the apology-compensation, the apology-reminder, and the compensation-reminder.

The ANOVA results also showed that the effect of response strategies was significant for sympathy change ($F(7, 373) = 3.00$, $p = .004$, $\omega^2 = .04$), but only 4% variance of the sympathy change score was associated with the response strategies. The apology-compensation-reminder strategy ($M = 0.88$, $SD = 2.78$) had the highest mean of sympathy change score. The Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison procedure showed that the apology-compensation-reminder strategy was statistically more effective at increasing sympathy compared to the no-comment strategy ($M = -0.49$, $SD = 1.19$; $p = .007$), but was no more effective than any other strategies.

The ANOVA results also showed that the effect of response strategies was significant for disappointment change ($F(7, 373) = 3.12$, $p = .003$, $\omega^2 = .04$), but only 4% variance of the disappointment change score was associated with the response strategies. The apology-compensation-reminder strategy ($M = -1.67$, $SD = 2.57$) had the highest mean change score of disappointment. However, the Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison

procedure showed that the apology-compensation-reminder strategy was only statistically more effective than the no-comment strategy ($M = -0.01$, $SD = 1.32$; $p = .002$) and the reminder strategy ($M = -0.39$, $SD = 1.68$; $p = .068$) at the significance level of .10, but was not statistically more effective than any other strategies.

The effect of response strategies was also significant for NWOM intentions change ($F(7, 372) = 2.86$, $p = .006$, $\omega^2 = .03$), but only 3% variance of the NWOM intentions change score was associated with the response strategies. The apology-compensation strategy ($M = -0.75$, $SD = 1.18$) had the highest change score of NWOM intentions. However, the Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison procedure showed that the apology-compensation strategy was only statistically more effective than the no-comment strategy ($M = 0.20$, $SD = 1.26$; $p = .010$), but was not statistically more effective compared to any other strategies.

The effect of response strategies was also statistically significant for purchase intention change ($F(7, 372) = 4.98$, $p < .001$, $\omega^2 = .07$), but only 7% variance of the purchase intention change score was associated with the response strategies. The apology-compensation-reminder strategy ($M = 0.75$, $SD = 1.80$) had the highest change score of purchase intentions. However, the Tukey-Kramer multiple comparison procedure showed that the apology-compensation-reminder strategy was only statistically more effective than the no-comment strategy ($M = -0.52$, $SD = 0.99$; $p < .001$) and the reminder strategy ($M = -0.08$, $SD = 1.36$; $p = .088$) at the significance level of .10, but was not statistically more effective compared to any other strategies.

RQ3 and RQ4. Research question 3 asked about whether and how the consumer identifying relationship influences the effectiveness of the response strategies in general.

Research question 4 asked about whether the effect of the identifying relationship was dependent on the crisis situations. In order to answer these two research questions, multiple regression analysis (MRA) was performed in *SPSS* software, where change scores of dependent variables were regressed on the identifying relationship, the crisis situations, and the interaction term of identifying relationship and crisis situations.

Apple. When the attitudes change score was the dependent variable (DV), the effects of identifying relationship was not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.11, p = .143$), indicating that the identifying relationship did not influence the effectiveness of brand strategies at changing attitudes, controlling for the effects of crisis situations and the interaction between identifying relationship and crisis situations. The interaction between identifying relationship and the crisis situations was not significant ($\beta = -.04, p = .358$), indicating that the effects of identifying relationship were not influenced by crisis situations. The regression model only explained 1% of the attitude change ($R^2 = .010$).

When the anger change score was the DV, the effects of identifying relationship was not statistically significant ($\beta = -0.14, p = .149$), therefore the identifying relationship did not influence the effectiveness of brand strategies at mitigating anger, controlling for the effects of crisis situations and the interaction between identifying relationship and crisis situations. The interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations was also not significant ($\beta = .05, p = .435$), indicating that the effect of identifying relationship was not dependent on crisis situations. The regression model only explained 1.4% of the anger change ($R^2 = .014$).

The identifying relationship did not influence the effectiveness of response strategies at recovering consumer sympathy. The regression coefficient of identifying

relationship, when sympathy change score was the DV, was not significant ($\beta = 0.06, p = .489$). The interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations was also not significant ($\beta = 0, p = 1.00$), indicating that the effects of identifying relationship were not influenced by crisis situations. The regression model only explained 1.3% of the sympathy change ($R^2 = .013$).

The identifying relationship also did not influence the effectiveness of response strategies at reducing consumer disappointment. The regression coefficient of the identifying relationship, when disappointment change score was the DV, was not significant ($\beta = -0.16, p = .162$). The interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations was also not significant ($\beta = .06, p = .418$), indicating that the effects of the identifying relationship were not influenced by crisis situations. The regression model only explained 1.3% of the disappointment change ($R^2 = .013$).

The identifying relationship also did not influence the effectiveness of response strategies at reducing consumer NWOM intentions. The regression coefficient of the identifying relationship, when NWOM intention change score was the DV, was not significant ($\beta = -0.01, p = .892$). The interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations was also not significant ($\beta = -.04, p = .341$), indicating that crisis situations did not moderate the effects of the identifying relationships on NWOM intentions change. The regression model only explained 1.5% of the NWOM intentions change ($R^2 = .015$).

Similarly, the identifying relationship also did not influence the effectiveness of response strategies at recovering consumer purchase intention. The regression coefficient of the identifying relationship, when purchase intention change score was the DV, was

not significant ($\beta = 0.01, p = .872$). The interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations was also not significant ($\beta = -0.01, p = .844$), indicating that crisis situations did not moderate the effects of the identifying relationships on purchase intentions change. The regression model only explained 0.3% of the purchase intention change ($R^2 = .003$).

Whole Foods. When the attitude change score was the DV, the effect of the identifying relationship was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.32, p = .002$). With one unit increase of the identifying relationship, positive attitude change increases 0.32 units, controlling for the effects of crisis situations and the interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations. The interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations was also significant ($\beta = -0.15, p = .020$), indicating that the effect of the identifying relationship was moderated by the crisis situations. The buffering effect of the identifying relationship was stronger in the anti-unionization crisis than in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis. The regression model explained 4.8% of the attitude change ($R^2 = .048$).

When the anger change score was the DV, the effect of the identifying relationship was statistically significant ($\beta = -0.24, p = .073$) at the significance level of .10. With one unit increase of the identifying relationship, anger decreases more 0.24 unit, controlling for the effects of crisis situations and the interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations. The interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations was not significant ($\beta = 0.11, p = .177$), indicating that the effect of the identifying relationship was not influenced by crisis situations. The regression model explained 2.1% of the anger change ($R^2 = .021$).

When the sympathy change score was the DV, the effect of the identifying relationship was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.38, p = .002$). With one unit increase of the identifying relationship, sympathy increases 0.38 unit more, holding constant the effects of crisis situations and the interaction between the identifying relationship and crisis situations. The interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations was also significant ($\beta = -0.17, p = .032$), indicating that the effect of identifying relationship on sympathy change was moderated by crisis situations. The buffering effects of the identifying relationship was stronger in the anti-unionization crisis than in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis. The regression model explained 4.9% of the sympathy change ($R^2 = .049$).

The identifying relationship did not significantly influence the effectiveness of response strategies at reducing consumer disappointment. The regression coefficient of the identifying relationship, when the disappointment change score was the DV, was not significant ($\beta = -0.21, p = .132$). The interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations was also not significant ($\beta = .072, p = .413$), indicating that the crisis situations did not moderate the effect of the identifying relationship on disappointment change. The regression model explained 2.2% of the disappointment change ($R^2 = .022$).

The identifying relationship marginally influences the effectiveness of response strategies at reducing consumer NWOM intentions. The regression coefficient of the identifying relationship, when NWOM intention change score was the DV, was significant at the significance level of .10 ($\beta = -0.17, p = .077$). With one unit increase of the identifying relationship, the NWOM intention decreases 0.17 unit more, controlling for the effects of crisis situations and the interaction between the identifying relationship

and crisis situations. The interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations was not significant ($\beta = 0.059, p = .326$), and therefore the effect of identifying relationship was not moderated by crisis situations. The regression model explained 2.9% of the NWOM intentions change ($R^2 = .029$).

When the purchase intention change score was the DV, the effect of the identifying relationship was statistically significant ($\beta = 0.17, p = .074$) at the significance level of .10. With one unit increase of the identifying relationship, the purchase intention increases 0.17 unit more, controlling for the effects of crisis situations and the interaction between the identifying relationship and crisis situations. The interaction between the identifying relationship and the crisis situations was not significant ($\beta = -0.08, p = .172$), indicating that the effects of identifying relationship were not moderated by crisis situations. The regression model explained 2.0% of the purchase intentions change ($R^2 = .020$).

To sum up, crisis situations had no significant influences on the effectiveness of brand crisis response strategies for Apple consumers. However, for Whole Foods consumers, brand response strategies were more effective at increasing positive attitudes, sympathy, and purchase intention and decreasing anger in the anti-unionization crisis than in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis. In general, the apology-compensation-reminder strategy was more effective than the no-comment strategy. The apology-compensation-reminder strategy was equally effective to other strategies as long as the brand compensated the victims. For Apple consumers, the identifying relationship did not make the brand response strategies more effective. For Whole Foods consumers, the identifying relationship made the brand response strategies more effective at increasing positive

attitudes, sympathy, and purchase intention, as well as mitigating anger and NWOM intention. For Whole Foods consumers, the brand response strategies were more effective at increasing positive attitudes and sympathy in the anti-unionization crisis than in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis.

Chapter 5 Discussion

This study had three goals. First, it aimed to redefine the concept of OPRs and advance the research on the effects of OPRs on organizational crisis communication. Second, it aimed to add to the sparse emotional research in crisis communication by examining how the identifying relationships influence anger, sympathy, and disappointment and how these three discrete emotions influence consumer behavioral intentions. Third, consumers are a vital group of stakeholders to brands, and this study aimed to better understand consumer reactions to crises and brand response strategies by using a more precise operationalization of the concept of consumer.

To fulfill these three goals, a two-part online quasi-experiment was conducted. In Part I, the effects of the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship on consumer attitudes and emotions, depending on the crisis situations, were examined. Then, the effects of consumer attitudes and emotions on consumer behavioral intentions were examined. In other words, the proposed model stated that the effects of the non-identifying and the identifying relationships on consumer behavioral intentions are fully mediated by consumer attitudes and emotions. In Part II, the effects of the identifying relationships and crisis situations on the effectiveness of brand response strategies at mitigating consumer negative reactions were examined. Using a more precise operationalization of the concept of consumer compared to previous research, only people who have purchased and used the branded products were recruited as participants. In this section, the researcher discusses how this study advances crisis communication research in relation to these three aspects.

Relationship research has been the identity of public relations research (Coombs

& Holladay, 2015). The primary purpose of this study was to add to the concept of OPRs by drawing from the consumer-brand relationship marketing literature and to advance the understanding of how non-identifying and identifying relationships influence organizational crisis communication. This study proposed that non-identifying relationships offer the buffering effect on consumer attitudes and emotions regardless of the crisis situations. More importantly, the study proposed that the crisis situations moderate the effects of identifying relationships on consumer attitudes and emotions. When a crisis undermines the self-defining attributes shared between consumers and the brand, identifying relationships offer the love-becomes-hate effects. When a crisis does not undermine the self-defining attributes, identifying relationships offer the buffering effects.

Reconceptualization of OPRs

Based on this study's results, the identifying relationship is different from the non-identifying relationship. The results of both exploratory factor analysis (EFA) in Pilot Study 2 and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) in Pilot Study 3 showed that the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship are distinct constructs. Although the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship are correlated, these two constructs still show acceptable discriminant validity because the correlation was under .85 (Kenny, 2016).

The identifying relationship enhances the OPR conceptualization in public relations and crisis communication. OPRs have been conceptualized in public relations and crisis communication as a four-dimensional construct comprising trust, satisfaction, commitment, and control mutuality. This conceptualization corresponds to the non-

identifying relationships. None of these four dimensions accounts for consumer-brand identification based on self-defining attributes shared between consumers and the brand. This finding that non-identifying and identifying relationships are different constructs supports the proposition of Coombs and Holladay (2015) that there can be parasocial (non-identifying) and close (identifying) OPRs.

Both the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship contribute to commitment. Consumers who strongly identify with brands are more committed to their relationships with brands. Because the brand represents “who I am” for these consumers (Johnson et al., 2011), they may be inclined to keep their brand relationships and maintain the part of their self-concept related to the brand.

It should be noted that the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship are highly correlated for both Apple and Whole Foods according to Cohen’s (1988) interpretation of correlation magnitude. This correlation is even higher than the inter-scale correlations between some items. For Apple consumers, the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship correlated at .72. For Whole Foods consumers, these two types of relationships correlated at .83.

Despite their high correlations, the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship are better considered as different concepts for two reasons. First of all, I ran a one-factor CFA model where the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship were considered as one latent construct, and compared model fit of the one-factor model with the two-factor model. Because one model was not nested in another model, the Akaike information criterion (AIC) was used as the criterion to compare the model fit. Smaller AIC indicates better model fit. For both brands, the two-

factor model fit the data better than the one-factor model. For Apple, the one-factor-model AIC was 11373.674, and the two-factor-model AIC was 10901.793. For Whole Foods, the one-factor-model AIC was 9839.660, and the two-factor-model AIC was 9603.751. Methodologically, these two types of relationships were better considered as two constructs instead of one construct. In addition, because the SEM path analysis showed that the non-identifying relationship primarily offers the buffering effect, and the identifying relationship primarily offers the love-becomes-hate effect, considering them as different constructs can crystallize when the buffering effect or the love-becomes-hate effect happens. This crystallization is an important theoretical advancement regarding the influences of OPRs in organizational crisis communication.

It is possible that whether the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship are distinct depends on what kinds of organizations we examine. For nonprofit organizations, the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship may be hard to distinguish. A nonprofit organization is one that serves the “broad public interest, not just the interests of its members” (Independent Sector, para. 2, n.d.). The primary reason why supporters relate to a nonprofit organization may be that the organizational mission reflects the self-identity and values of these publics. For example, animal lovers may support nonprofit organizations such as the *People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals* (PETA). As a result, how much supporters trust and are satisfied with the organization and commit to the relationship with the organization perhaps depends on to what extent the organization and supporters share self-defining attributes or values, such as protecting animals. In other words, the identifying relationship may be inseparable from the non-identifying relationship in the context of nonprofit

organizations. This possibility may also apply to an organization whose brand identity is premised on a social cause, if consumers connect to the brand primarily because of its devotion to the social cause. An example of such brands would be *TOMS*, which is known for helping the needy.

Another possible theory is that the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship are different stages of consumer-brand relationships, instead of two different types of consumer-brand relationships. Coombs and Holladay (2015) argued that OPRs could be either parasocial or close. In other words, the non-identifying relationship is parasocial, but the identifying relationship is close. Therefore, if the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship were different stages of consumer-brand relationships, the non-identifying relationship would precede the identifying relationship. Although for a majority of the participants of both brands, their non-identifying relationships were as strong as or stronger than their identifying relationships, there were some participants whose identifying relationships were stronger than their non-identifying relationships. Specifically, there were 28 out of 473 Apple consumers and 36 out of 400 Whole Foods consumers whose identifying relationships were stronger than their non-identifying relationships. The fact that the identifying relationship can be stronger than the non-identifying relationship casts doubt on the stage model as a plausible explanation of the relation between the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship.

In conclusion, the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship are distinct types of consumer-brand relationship, although they are statistically correlated. The non-identifying relationship takes place when the branded products fulfill consumers'

functional needs (Johnson et al., 2011), while the identifying relationship takes place when the branded products fulfill consumers' psychological needs by expressing their self-identities. For brands that fulfill both consumer functional and psychological needs, such as Apple and Whole Foods, the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship are distinct. However, a supporter may relate to a nonprofit organization or a brand known for its dedication to a social cause primarily because the identity of this organization resonates with self-identity of the supporter. In this case, it is possible that these two types of consumer-brand relationships are hard to separate.

The EFA and CFA results also questioned whether the non-identifying relationship concept is indeed multi-dimensional. Trust, satisfaction, and commitment are conceptualized as different dimensions of non-identifying relationships both in the marketing literature (Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000; Grégoire & Fisher, 2008; Grégoire et al., 2009; Thomson, 2006) and in the public relations literature (Hon & Grunig, 1999; Huang, 1997; Hung, 2007; Park & Reber, 2011). If trust, satisfaction, and commitment are distinct dimensions of non-identifying relationships, the scales of these three dimensions should load on three factors, all of which then can be linked to a higher order construct (i.e., the non-identifying relationship). However, the EFA and CFA results showed that scales of trust, satisfaction, and commitment loaded on one latent construct, indicating poor discriminant validity of trust, satisfaction, and commitment. This result may be either because trust, satisfaction, and commitment are indeed inseparable constructs or because the scales of trust, satisfaction, and commitment do not sufficiently reflect the differences between these constructs.

The differentiation of the non-identifying relationship and the identifying

relationship is essential to understand the effects of OPRs in organizational crisis communication. The influences of these two types of OPRs on crisis communication do not depend on the crisis situations. However, these two types of OPRs influence consumer attitudes, emotions, and behaviors differently when consumers first know about a crisis. The non-identifying relationships offer the buffering effects, while the identifying relationships primarily offer the love-becomes-hate effects. In addition, the identifying relationship also influences the effectiveness of brand response strategies at mitigating consumer negative reactions.

In the following sections, the possible reasons for the statistically insignificant moderation effect of crisis situations are discussed. Then the effects of the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship on attitudes and emotions when consumers first hear about a crisis is detailed, followed by the discussion on how attitudes and emotions influence consumer behavioral intentions. Last, the results of research questions are discussed in detail.

Moderation of Crisis Situations on the Effect of the Identifying Relationship

The effects of the identifying relationship on consumer attitudes and emotions do not change depending on the crisis situations. This statistically insignificant moderation of the crisis situations perhaps was due to the types of brands that were examined in this study. Consumers use brands like Apple and Whole Foods because the branded products meet consumer functional needs, such as telecommunicating with others and grocery needs, as well as psychological needs by expressing consumer self-identity. Such brands are different from nonprofit brands or brands that are known for their devotion to social causes. The relationship between supporters and nonprofit brands and brands that are

known for their devotion to social causes may be mainly based on the shared self-defining attributes. In this context, crisis situations may still moderate the effect of the identifying relationship, and the love-becomes-hate effect may be stronger when a crisis undermines the self-defining attributes shared between the supporters and the organization. For example, PETA was accused of killing most of the animals dropped off at its Virginia headquarters (Quan, 2013). PETA supporters may have responded more negatively to PETA when they heard about this accusation, as compared to if they had heard of a crisis that has less to do with the protection of animals. A hypothetical example of such a crisis not relevant to the shared self-defining attribute would be PETA poorly managing its donations.

The love-becomes-hate effect for nonprofit organizations may also be nonlinear, depending on the strength of the identifying relationship. For those publics that have weak relationships with a nonprofit organization, such as those that only make small monetary donations to the organization once, there may be no or only a weak effect of the identifying relationship on attitudes, emotions and behaviors. For those publics that have strong identifying relationships with the organization, such as those who regularly make donations and volunteer to help the organization, possibly there is a strong love-becomes-hate effect of the relationship. For example, the negative reaction to news of PETA killing animals might be milder among those who have given \$5 once to the organization than among those who have given \$30 monthly and who have volunteered with PETA locally.

Another possible reason why the moderation of the crisis situations was not statistically significant may be that the manipulation of the crisis situations was not

strong enough. The manipulation check of the crisis situations, both the *t*-test result and Cohen's *d*, showed that Apple consumer participants thought that the stealing-technology crisis posed a much higher threat to Apple's innovative image. Similarly, Whole Foods consumer participants thought that the selling-unhealthy-food crisis posed a much higher threat to Whole Foods' image as a healthy grocery store. However, the average perceived threat to Apple's innovative image of Apple's stealing-technology crisis group was only close to 7 and the average perceived threat to Whole Foods' healthy grocery store image of Whole Foods' selling-unhealthy-food crisis group was only around 7.5. The fact that these means were only a little higher than the midpoint of 6 indicated that the manipulation of the crisis situations could be stronger than it was.

Buffering Effects or Love-becomes-hate Effects

The buffering effects of non-identifying relationships. Four hypotheses (H1, H4, H7, and H10) were proposed to examine the effects of the non-identifying relationships in crisis communication. The results from both Apple and Whole Foods consumers supported the buffering effects of the non-identifying relationships: strong non-identifying relationships lead to more positive attitudes, less anger, and less disappointment. These effects of the non-identifying relationships were demonstrated in both the crisis that undermined the self-defining attributes shared between consumers and the brand and the one that did not undermine the self-defining attributes. A brand's self-defining attributes shared with its consumers usually is the brand essence (Greyser, 2009). Therefore, brands can rely on strong non-identifying relationships to carry them through difficult crisis times, even when their brand essence is damaged in the crisis.

Non-identifying relationships had no significant effects on sympathy in a

preventable crisis. A non-identifying relationship takes place when branded products fulfill consumer functional needs (Johnson et al., 2011). Consequently, the non-identifying relationship mitigates negative emotions, such as anger and disappointment, so that consumers can continue to meet their functional needs using the branded products. Otherwise, consumers would struggle if they choose to continue using the branded products while they are angry and disappointed at the brands. However, consumers do not need to feel sympathetic in order to continue using the brands. As a result, the non-identifying relationship does not influence sympathy. Another possible reason why the non-identifying relationship does not increase sympathy is also related to the foundation of this relationship. Because the non-identifying relationship is premised on consumer functional needs, this type of relationship should be more rational compared to the identifying relationship that connects to one's self-identity or values. When consumers know that the brands are responsible for the crisis, their reasoning may tell them that they should not feel sympathetic toward the brands, because the brands deserve it. This finding that the non-identifying relationship has no effect on sympathy indicated that although consumers who have strong non-identifying relationships with organizations are more supportive, it is not because they feel sympathetic toward the organizations, but because of other factors such as more positive attitudes, less anger, and less disappointment.

This finding also disagreed with the conclusion of Grappi and Romani (2015), who found that brand reputation increased consumer sympathy toward a brand in a preventable crisis. This disagreement may be because the operationalization of the concept of consumer in Grappi and Romani (2015) was not precise. Their participants

were random shoppers at shopping areas, who may or may not be consumers of the brand they investigated. The participants who were not the consumers of the brand did not have a relationship with the brand, and the crisis may be less relevant to them compared to the consumers. This lack of consumer-brand relationship with non-consumer participants may have an impact on their finding. Another possible explanation for this disagreement is that participants completed the questionnaire in the presence of the researchers in Grappi and Romani's (2015) study. Their participants may have exaggerated how much sympathy they felt for the brand in order to look good in front of the researchers. While in this study, participants completed the questionnaire without the presence of the researchers, and therefore they may have responded with their true feeling.

The buffering effects of identifying relationships. Four hypotheses (H2, H5, H8, and H11) were proposed to examine the effects of the identifying relationships in crisis communication. In general, consumers that strongly identify with a brand may not have more positive attitudes toward the brand as compared to consumers that have little identification with the brand. The identifying relationship had small effects on attitudes for Apple consumers, but had no effects for Whole Foods consumers.

This difference between the two brands may be because consumers identify with them based on different attributes. Apple consumers identify with the brand because of being innovative, which can be considered as a personality characteristic. The identifying relationship offered limited buffering effects so that consumers can keep this important personality characteristic intact. Whole Foods consumers identify with the brand because of embracing of a healthy lifestyle. Perhaps lifestyle choice is less central to consumers' identity than are personality characteristics. The difference between the two brands in

terms of the effect of the identifying relationship on attitudes may also be explained by who the victims were in the crises. The victims of the crises involving Apple were either another big brand or the government, but the victims of the crises involving Whole Foods were either other consumers or Whole Foods' employees. The participants are more connected to other consumers and employees than to another big brand or the government. As a result, Whole Foods' consumer participants may be more empathetic with the victims of Whole Foods' crises as compared to Apple's consumer participants with the victims of Apple's crises. This empathy with the victims may moderate the effect of the identifying relationship on attitudes, and therefore the identifying relationship had weak effect on attitudes of Apple consumers but had no effect on attitudes of Whole Foods consumers. Yet, another possible explanation is the power differences between the brand and its victims. The huge power difference between Whole Foods and its victims may make participants think that Whole Foods bullied its victims. There was no such huge power difference between Apple and its victims. The perceived power difference between the brand and its victims may also moderate the effect of the identifying relationship on attitudes.

The identifying relationships had a much stronger influence on emotions. The identifying relationships offered a buffering effect by increasing consumer sympathy, and this buffering effect on sympathy did not depend on whether the foundation of the identifying relationship, the self-defining attributes, was undermined in the crisis. According to Westmaas and Silver (2006), perceived similarity relates to sympathy. Consumers may perceive that the brand identity and consumer identity are similar to some extent because of the shared self-defining attributes, which is the foundation of the

identifying relationship. As a result, the identifying relationship increases sympathy.

However, the identifying relationships offered the love-becomes-hate effect on the other two discrete emotions: anger and disappointment.

The love-becomes-hate effects of identifying relationships. Strong relationships do not always protect brands and mitigate consumer negative emotional reactions. Consumers who strongly identify with a brand feel more anger, and this love-becomes-hate effect applies to crises where self-defining attributes shared between consumers and the brand are and are not undermined.

People feel angry when their personal well-being is harmed by another party who controls the harm (Lazarus, 1991b; Nguyen & McColl-Kennedy, 2003). Consumers who have strong identifying relationships consider the brand connection as part of their self-concept and use this connection to express their self-identity to others (Hollenbeck & Kaikati, 2012). When the brand does something wrong, it may humiliate the consumers in front of others. In this way, the consumers' psychological well-being is harmed and therefore they feel angry at the brand. Another possible explanation is that the identifying relationship is a close relationship (Coombs & Holladay, 2015). Consumers who have strong identifying relationships with a brand feel closer to the brand compared to consumers who have weak identifying relationships. As a result, consumers who have strong identifying relationships may feel betrayed when the brand is involved in a preventable crisis, and this sense of betrayal may also lead to anger.

A strong identifying relationship also increases disappointment, regardless whether self-defining attributes are undermined in a crisis. People feel disappointed when others' behaviors fail relational expectations and the behavioral outcomes are out of their

control (Frijda et al., 1989; Zeelenberg et al., 2000). Consumers who have strong identifying relationships may have higher relational expectations for the brands. As a result, the discrepancy between consumer expectations and brand misbehaviors is larger, therefore consumers who have strong identifying relationships feel more disappointed when the brand does something unethical. Equally possible, consumers who have strong identifying relationships with a brand believe that the essence or the nature of the brand reflect consumers' identities. When they think that a crisis revealed the true nature of the brand which was something unexpected by the consumers, these consumers feel more disappointed. In addition, consumers who have strong identifying relationships may feel abandoned by the brand. Stronger identifying relationship leads to stronger sense of abandonment, which then may lead to stronger disappointment (Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002).

This love-becomes-hate effect of the identifying relationship questioned the buffering effect proposed in SCCT, which has received much support in crisis communication research (Brown & White, 2011; Claeys & Cauberghe, 2014; Lyon & Cameron, 2004; Park & Reber, 2011; Turk et al., 2012). By re-conceptualizing OPRs into non-identifying and identifying relationships, this study showed that whether strong OPRs protect or work against organizations depends on the type of OPRs. Although the non-identifying relationship offers a buffering effect, the identifying relationship tends to intensify the negative emotional reactions of consumers. The love-becomes-hate effect of the identifying relationship also casts doubt on the marketing view that identification and positive expectations "are generally positive influences on reactions to a company" (Einwiller et al., 2006, p. 191).

The crisis situations do not moderate the effects of the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship on attitudes, anger, sympathy, and disappointment when the brands can fulfil both the functional needs and the psychological needs of the consumers. Greyser (2009) argued that crises include those that threaten a brand's essence and those that do not. It seems that at least for a brand such as Apple and Whole Foods that is involved in a preventable crisis, whether the crisis threatens a brand's essence does not make a difference in terms of OPRs' influences on consumer reactions to the crisis. There is no need to combine SCCT crisis categories with Greyser's (2009) categories, because this combination was not validated in this research and it did not advance our understanding of how OPRs influence crisis communication.

Love-becomes-hate(?) effect. I doubt that the love-becomes-hate effect is a proper term to describe the effect of the identifying relationship, although the identifying relationship increases anger and disappointment and indirectly increases NWOM intention via increasing sympathy. Grégoire and Fisher (2006, 2008) used the term love-becomes-hate effect to refer to the phenomenon that sometimes consumers who have strong relationships with brands hold stronger intention to retaliate against the brands in service failure settings than consumers who have weak relationships with the brands. The same scholars noted that it perhaps takes more than one negative experience to transform consumers who have strong relationships with a brand "into committed 'enemies' trying to punish the firm" (Grégoire & Fisher, 2006, p. 43). In other words, such effect of the identifying relationship most likely is not so strong to transform *love* into *hate* in a single crisis, and the term "love-becomes-hate" may be a misnomer or at least an exaggeration. Therefore, I suggest to put a question mark after the term: the love-becomes-hate(?)

effect.

The practical importance of the identifying relationship. The identifying relationship influenced anger, sympathy, and disappointment, but a question that has stronger practical meaning for brands is whether the identifying relationship influences consumer behaviors, when the non-identifying relationship is taken into consideration. The results of the MRA where both the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship were used to predict consumer behavioral intentions showed that the identifying relationship influenced the NWOM intentions of both Apple and Whole Foods consumers, while the non-identifying relationship was taken into consideration. However, the identifying relationship did not influence purchase intentions of consumers of either brand. The finding that the identifying relationship influenced NWOM intentions but not purchase intentions agrees with the old saying “easier said than done.” Although consumers would voice negative things about the brands, they hesitate to change their purchase habit, even when the brands that they identify with are involved in preventable crises. After all, finding an alternative brand that can equally fulfill the psychological needs takes effort and time.

Organizations need to change the well-established notion that strong OPRs always lead to consumer behaviors that benefit organizations. More importantly, organizations should care about the identifying relationship, as this relationship increases consumer NWOM intention in a crisis. When consumers say negative things about the brand to other people, such information may influence other people’s attitudes, emotions and behaviors relevant to the brand. For example, potential consumers of a brand may refuse to buy products of the brand in the future if they hear negative things about the brand

from their friends.

The effects of attitudes and emotions on behavioral intentions. Consumer attitudes have a strong negative relationship with the NWOM intentions and a strong positive relationship with the purchase intentions. These findings supported the previous findings of Lyon and Cameron (2004) and McDonald et al. (2010). Because there was a positive relationship between the non-identifying relationships and positive attitudes, the non-identifying relationships offered indirect buffering effects on NWOM intentions and purchase intentions via the mediation of positive attitudes. Identifying relationships, on the other hand, had very limited effects on consumer attitudes, and therefore the identifying relationships did not offer indirect buffering effects on consumer behavioral intentions via the mediation of positive attitudes.

Consumer anger increased NWOM intentions for both brands, and these findings supported the previous findings of Coombs and Holladay (2007) and Grappi and Romani (2015). However, anger only decreased purchase intentions of the Apple consumers, not the Whole Foods consumers. This could be because compared to buying electronic products once in a while, buying groceries is a daily routine. Therefore, consumers of Whole Foods hesitated to change their grocery-shopping habits, even if they felt angry at the brand's actions. In addition, consumers buy products from Whole Foods to fulfill their diverse everyday needs, such as eating, body care, and taking care of pets. Consumers may have gotten used to the products. They may not be able to find these products in other grocery stores. Consequently, Whole Foods consumers intend to stay with Whole Foods so that it does not affect their diverse everyday needs, even if they feel angry at the brand. Whereas for Apple consumers, even though electronic products are a

necessity for everyday life, they represent just one need and have less impact on the daily life. Therefore, angry consumers can switch to an alternative brand if they feel angry at Apple.

Because the non-identifying relationship tempered anger, the non-identifying relationship offered indirect buffering effect on NWOM intentions and purchase intentions via the mediation of anger. On the contrary, the identifying relationship increased anger, and therefore the identifying relationship had the indirect love-becomes-hate(?) effect on consumer behavioral intentions via the mediation of anger. In other words, consumers that strongly identify with a brand are more likely to engage in NWOM and are less likely to purchase the branded products in the future.

Consumer sympathy increased NWOM intentions. When consumers feel sorry for a brand, the negative connotation of sympathy is that they may question the ability of the brand to handle the crisis. Consequently, consumers who feel sympathetic toward a brand may voice their doubt about the brand ability in their communication with other people. An alternative explanation for this finding has to do with the measures of NWOM intention. Three items out of the five-item NWOM intention scale asked participants about how likely they would recommend their friends, relatives, and other people to purchase Apple/Whole Foods' products. If participants felt sorry for the brand and question the brand ability to handle the crisis, it is less likely that they are going to encourage their friends, relatives, and other people to purchase its products.

This finding was contradictory to Grappi and Romani's (2015) finding that the more sympathetic a consumer felt toward a brand, the less intentions s/he had to engage in NWOM communication. Again, this contradiction may be due to the different

operationalization of the concept of consumer in their study and in this study. The non-consumer participants in their study may have cared less about the brand ability to handle the crisis situations, as compared to consumer participants. As for the indirect effects of the OPRs on consumer behavioral intentions via the mediation of sympathy, because the identifying relationship increased sympathy, the identifying relationship offers indirect love-becomes-hate(?) effects on NWOM intentions via the mediation of sympathy.

Consumer sympathy had no significant effect on purchase intentions. Although people who feel sympathetic toward others are more likely to help and support others (Weiner, 2004), the findings in this study showed that consumers do not support a brand that is involved in a preventable crisis by buying its products, even when they feel sympathetic toward the brand. Although consumers feel sorry for the brand, they may also feel that the brand deserves the consequences caused by its own misdeed. Consequently, sympathy does not lead to support like purchase behavior. In addition, if consumers question the brand's ability to handle the crisis, this doubt may extend and make the consumers question the brand's ability to make good products. Consequently, consumers may hesitate to continue purchasing the branded products in the future, despite that they feel sympathetic toward the brand. Yet another possible explanation of why sympathy has no effect on purchase intention is the power difference between the brand and the consumers. Some consumers may think that their individual support is trivial and would not help the brand out. In other words, even if they purchase the branded products to show their support, it will not go a long way to alleviate the pain of the brand. Consequently, their sympathy toward the brand did not impact their purchase intention.

Consumer disappointment had no significant effect on NWOM intentions. According to Van Dijk and Zeelenberg (2002), when people get disappointed in someone, they tend to escape from the situation and avoid the disappointing people. Consumers who feel disappointed in the brand may choose to ignore the brand and not mention it in their conversations with other people. In addition, disappointment is closely related to sense of abandonment. Consumers may avoid bringing up the brand in their communication with other people, so that they do not remind themselves of being abandoned by the brand who violated the relational norms. In the service failure settings, Zeelenberg and Pieters (2004) found that disappointment led to NWOM intentions, but they focused on outcome-related disappointment on service failures. The subject of disappointment may make a difference here.

Disappointment had no effects on purchase intentions of the Whole Foods consumers, and this can also be explained by the avoidance tendency of person-related disappointment (Van Dijk & Zeelenberg, 2002). Counter-intuitively, disappointment increased purchase intentions for Apple consumers. Apple consumers may think that because Apple failed their expectations, the brand will work harder to live up to consumer expectations in the future. This positive thinking may increase Apple consumer intention to purchase Apple products. Another possible explanation for the difference between these two brands was who the victims in the crises were. Apple consumer participants may feel disappointed at Apple for how the brand treated its business competitor or the government. However, the participants like Apple more than its competitor and the government. Therefore, they may feel *schadenfreude* at Apple's competitor and the government. Consequently, Apple consumers are more willing to give

Apple a second chance. However, Whole Foods consumer participants were connected to the victims who were other consumers and employees of Whole Foods. These consumers felt disappointed at how Whole Foods treated these victims. Therefore, their disappointment had no effect on purchase intention.

Generally speaking, disappointment had limited effects on consumer behavioral intentions. Although the non-identifying relationships temper disappointment, this buffering effect on disappointment did not translate into consumer actual behavioral support to the brand. Similarly, although the identifying relationships increased disappointment, this love-become-hate(?) effect did not influence consumer behaviors.

Moderation effect of crisis situations on the effectiveness of brand strategies.

Crisis conditions did not influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies at mitigating the negative reactions of Apple consumers. However, for Whole Foods consumers, brand response strategies in the context of the anti-unionization crisis were more effective at increasing positive attitudes, sympathy, and purchase intentions and mitigating anger than in the context of selling-unhealthy-food crisis. The different results between the two brands could be because the Whole Foods' selling-unhealthy-food crisis, as compared to the anti-unionization crisis, was more relevant to consumer day-to-day life. Therefore, the Whole Foods consumers were less forgiving to the brand in the context of selling-unhealthy-food crisis. As a result, Whole Foods' response strategies in general were more effective in the anti-unionization crisis (one that did not undermine the embracing of a healthy lifestyle) than in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis (one that undermined the embracing of a healthy lifestyle). Whereas for Apple consumers, neither the stealing-technology crisis nor the tax avoidance crisis were closely connected to their

everyday life. As a result Apple consumers were equally forgiving in both crisis situations. This made Apple's response strategies equally effective across both crisis situations. An alternative explanation could be that the Whole Foods consumer participants connected more to the victims in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis, who were other consumers, compared to the victims in the anti-unionization crisis, who were Whole Foods employees. Consequently, they were less forgiving to the brand when the selling-unhealthy-food crisis was examined. On the contrary, Apple consumers were equally disconnected to the victims in both crises, who were Apple's competitor and the government.

Which strategy was most effective? Research question two asked which response strategy or combination of response strategies is most effective at mitigating consumer negative reactions across the two crisis situations. In general, brand response strategies only weakly associated with how much the consumer reactions have changed. In most cases, apology-compensation-reminder strategy was more effective than the no-comment strategy at mitigating all the negative reactions, and no-comment is the least effective strategy.

There was only one exception. The reminder strategy was equally ineffective with the no-comment strategy in increasing sympathy of the Apple consumers. When the brand was fully responsible for the crisis, reminding its consumers of its past good deeds perhaps is counter-productive in terms of increasing consumer sympathy. Consumers may think the brand avoids its responsibility and consequently consumers are psychologically reactant to the reminder strategy. Moreover, the reminder strategy did not mention anything about the crisis at all. This strategy alone may sound like the brand

avoids discussing the crisis situation. This may also cause the psychological reactance of the consumers, because they “may view it as an attempt to distract from the crisis” (Coombs, 2014, p. 148).

In general, the apology-compensation-reminder strategy was no more effective than compensation, apology-compensation or compensation-reminder strategies at mitigating any negative reactions. It seems that the strategy that really matters in mitigating negative reactions is compensation. As long as brands compensate for the harm they have caused, it does not matter very much whether the brands apologize. In addition, compensation was the most effective strategy at tempering the NWOM intentions of the Apple consumers.

Influences of the identifying relationships on brand response effectiveness.

Research question three examined whether and how consumer identifying relationships with a brand influenced the effectiveness of the response strategies in general. Research question four asked about whether the effects of the identifying relationship depended on the crisis situations. Because these two research questions were closely related and also because multiple regression analysis (MRA) was performed to answer both research questions, the results of both research questions are discussed together.

Identifying relationships did not make brand strategies more effective at mitigating any negative reactions from Apple consumers, regardless of the crisis situations. In other words, when receiving the same strategy, Apple consumers with strong identifying relationships did not perceive Apple more positively than did consumers with weak identifying relationships. Consumers with strong identifying relationships also did not feel less anger and less disappointment nor more sympathy than

did consumers with weak identifying relationships.

However, the positive attitudes of the Whole Foods consumers who had strong identifying relationships were stronger, as compared to consumers who had weak identifying relationships, after they receive brand responses. Consumers with strong identifying relationships also felt more sympathy. In addition, the influences of the identifying relationship on the effectiveness of brand response strategies at increasing positive attitudes and sympathy were more obvious in the anti-unionization crisis than in the selling-unhealthy-food crisis. After all, if the foundation of the identifying relationship is undermined, the influences of the identifying relationship on the brand response effectiveness could be mitigated.

Whole Foods consumers who had strong identifying relationships also feel less anger, less NWOM intentions, and more purchase intentions, as compared to consumers who had weak identifying relationship, after they received brand crisis responses. The influences of the identifying relationships on the effectiveness of brand responses at reducing anger and NWOM intentions and increasing purchase intentions do not depend on the crisis situations.

Again, the difference between Apple and Whole Foods could be explained by the possibility that Whole Foods consumers may want to keep their grocery shopping routine and not change their everyday lives much. If they want to maintain their embracing of a healthy lifestyle, forgiving Whole Foods seem to be the reasonable option. Consequently, the identifying relationship makes the Whole Foods' strategies more effective. Comparatively, electronic products is less central to everyday life. Therefore, the identifying relationship has no significant effect on the effectiveness of Apple's

strategies.

A new strategy that strengthens the identifying relationship needs to be integrated into crisis communication theory. Because the identifying relationship possibly makes the SCCT-suggested brand response strategies more effective, a brand should remind its consumers of the identifying relationship in its crisis responses in order to make other strategies more effective. In other words, this new strategy should be used as a bolstering strategy to supplement the primary strategies such as apology and compensation and make the primary strategies more effective. A brand can tell its consumers that it has learned its lesson in the crisis, and it promises that it will hold fast to the shared self-defining attributes after the crisis. With such a promise, the brand can ask its consumers to continue supporting the brand through a difficult time.

This new strategy used to strengthen the identifying relationship could be considered as a sub-strategy of SCCT-suggested reminder strategy. When using the reminder strategy, an organization reminds its publics of its past good deeds, which can be different from the identifying relationship. In other words, an organization should remind its consumers of both the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship. This new sub-strategy enriches our understanding and operationalization of the reminder strategy, and I suggest to call this new sub-strategy *identification-intensifier*.

Chapter 6 Conclusion

In this section, the theoretical and methodological contributions of this study in relation to its three goals are discussed. Then, its practical meaning to public relations and crisis communication practitioners are detailed. The limitations and future research are discussed in the end.

Theoretical and Methodological Implications

The identifying relationship should be added to the conceptualization of OPRs in public relations. For brands that can fulfill both consumer functional needs and psychological needs, the non-identifying relationship and the identifying relationship are different constructs despite their high correlation. It is possible that for nonprofit organizations and brands that are known for their devotion to social causes, these two types of relationships are inseparable.

This study has shown that crisis communication researchers cannot assume that strong OPRs produce positive outcomes for organizations experiencing a crisis. The dominant view of crisis communication research is that positive OPRs always protect the organizations. This reconceptualization of OPRs into non-identifying relationship and identifying relationship explains when the buffering effect happens and when the love-becomes-hate(?) effect happens. The effects of strong OPRs depend on which type of OPRs are formed and are dominant between consumers and brands. Generally speaking, the non-identifying relationships offer the buffering effect, while the identifying relationships offer the love-becomes-hate(?) effect.

This dissertation adds to emotional research by showing that besides attributed responsibility, different types of consumer-brand relationships also affect emotions.

Strong non-identifying relationships reduce negative emotions including anger and disappointment. However, the identifying relationships lead to strong anger and disappointment.

Some types of positive emotions can have negative influences on consumer behavioral intentions. Sympathy increases consumer intentions to engage in negative word-of-mouth. Crisis communication researchers cannot make the assumption that positive emotions always lead to positive outcomes for organizations, as SCCT suggested (Coombs, 2014). Some positive emotions can have unintended negative consequences for organizations. For example, when consumers feel sympathetic toward a brand, they may also question the efficacy of the brand to handle the crisis. In addition, some negative emotions, such as disappointment, may have limited effects on consumer behavioral intentions. As a result, even if consumers feel disappointed at an organization, the organization does not need to worry too much that this disappointment leads to consumer behaviors that have negative consequences to the organization.

Consumers are vital to organizations. With a precise operationalization of the concept of consumer, this dissertation has findings that contradict previous findings, such as the effect of sympathy on NWOM intentions. The methodological contribution of this study is that it shows that the operationalization of the concept makes a difference on the findings.

Practical Implications

Organizations should build strong non-identifying relationships with their consumers prior to a crisis, as such relationships will protect organizations by mitigating consumer negative reactions. Because the non-identifying relationship is built more on

consumer functional needs, companies should focus on the quality of their products and how their products can better fulfill the functional needs of their consumers.

Organizations, however, should be cautious about building strong identifying relationships with consumers. Although identifying relationships can increase consumer loyalty and support to organizations normally, such relationships backfire against organizations when a preventable crisis takes place. When messaging to consumers, companies should not stress that their products can fulfill consumer psychological needs by helping consumers express their identity. In other words, companies should be cautious when they send out messages with meaning such as “if you are this kind of person, you should use our products.”

When a preventable crisis happens, organizations should not attempt to make their consumers sympathetic toward them. Although sympathy can increase supportive and helping behaviors in interpersonal communication, in a business setting it may indicate that consumers question the ability of organizations to control the situation and eliminate the damage of the crisis. If consumers voice such doubt in their daily communication with others, this word-of-mouth may affect how others perceive the brand and whether they will purchase the branded products in the future. In addition, organizations do not need to worry too much even if their consumers feel disappointed in them, as disappointment has limited effects on behavioral intentions.

An organization should also strengthen the identifying relationship in their crisis responses, because such a relationship will make response strategies more effective at mitigating consumer negative reactions. For example, Whole Foods can remind its consumers of its past efforts of embracing a healthy lifestyle and caring about consumers’

health. At the same time, it can promise that it will make every effort to ensure that this self-defining attribute will not be undermined in the future.

Limitations

This dissertation had several theoretical or methodological limitations. First of all, it only focused on the preventable crisis. It is possible that in victim and accidental crises, the examined relationships may work differently. For example, when an organization is the victim of a crisis, its consumers may think that the crisis has nothing to do with the organization's behaviors. In this case, sympathy may still lead to consumer support for the organization in a difficult time.

Methodologically, the tested SEM model was a path model to keep the sample size manageable, and therefore the measurement error of the scales was neglected. The measurement error may attenuate the examined relationships. Ideally, the whole SEM model where the measurement model is imposed on the theoretical model should be tested. However, such an approach requires an impractical sample size because there would be many more parameters to be estimated for the whole model compared to the path model. In addition, the final SEM path model for both brands failed to meet the cutoff value of RMSEA (Root Mean Square Error of Approximation), although the criteria based on all the other model fit indices were met. Compared to other indices, RMSEA, as a parsimonious fit index, takes into account the simplicity of the model. RMSEA improves as more parameters with useful contributions are added to the model. The SEM path model included a couple of paths that were not statistically significant, and this may explain why the model did not meet the RMSEA cutoff values. On the other hand, Kenny, Kaniskan, and McCoach (2015) found that RMSEA often falsely indicates

the misspecification of a model with small degrees of freedom, even when the model is properly specified. This also could be the reason why the SEM path model in this research failed to meet the RMSEA cutoff value.

Moreover, the outcome constructs in this study were behavioral intentions, including NWOM intention and purchase intention, instead of actual behaviors. Behavioral intentions may not perfectly predict the actual behaviors. Ideally, the actual NWOM communication and purchase behavior are more convincing representation of consumer responses.

Although participants were told to suppose that the crisis they read was from *New York Times*, they might not have processed the stimuli as a real newspaper article. It is possible that some participants missed the term “New York Times” in the instructions right above the stimuli, although the term was bold, italicized, and underlined. In addition, the stimuli did not appear like a newspaper article. A banner of New York Times would help, but the banner was not included out of consideration of violating copy right. The possibility that some participants did not process the stimuli as a real newspaper article is an internal validity threat.

Future Research

In the future, crisis communication scholars can test the effects of the non-identifying and the identifying relationships in victim and accidental crises. For example, crisis communication researchers can examine whether and how the identifying relationships influence the effectiveness of brand response strategies that apply to victim and accidental crises, such as denial and excuse. In addition, researchers can examine whether for other types of organizations, such as nonprofit organizations, the non-

identifying relationships and the identifying relationships are also two different theoretical constructs. If the primary reason why publics support an organization is that the mission of the organization resonates with the values of a public, the non-identifying relationships and the identifying relationships could be inseparable. Furthermore, researchers can investigate whether crisis situations moderate the OPRs' influences when nonprofit organizations are examined. Moreover, researchers should use EFA and CFA to test different scales of trust, satisfaction, and commitment and investigate to learn whether there are scales that can sufficiently reflect the differences between these three constructs. If not, new scales of trust, satisfaction, and commitment should be created. If EFA and CFA show that the new scales are still indistinct methodologically, then it is evidence that these constructs lack discriminant validity. The consumer participants of Apple and Whole Foods were not representative of the racial-ethnic diversity of the U.S population. The majority of the participants in this study were Euro-Americans. Future research might examine the hypothesized relationships with other brands whose consumers are more representative of the U.S. population.

Appendix A

Brand Response Strategy Conditions

no apology		apology	
no compensation	compensation	no compensation	compensation
no reminder			
reminder			

Appendix B

Corebrand's List of American's 10 Most Respected Brands

1. Coca-Cola
2. PepsiCo
3. Hershey
4. Bayer
5. Johnson & Johnson
6. Harley-Davidson
7. IBM
8. Apple
9. Kellogg
10. General Electric

Appendix C

Please read the following information on this page carefully. Your understanding of this information is crucial for you to answer the questions correctly.

A consumer identify with a brand that is able to communicate something about the individual using the brand, i.e., the image of the brand symbolizes what kind of person uses it. When a consumer identifies with brand X, s/he feels a personal connection to brand X.

As a consumer, you may identify with brand X because it reflects who you consider yourself to be, represents how you think about yourself, or represents things that you value. For example, some consumers of Toms (the apparel company, most known for their shoes) identify with the brand because they share its values of giving to the needy, and these consumers see themselves as people who give to the needy.

In other cases, consumers identify with brand X because it (could) help(s) them become the type of people they want to be. For example, Harley Davidson is a brand that represents freedom and a break from the constraining social norms of behavior and dress. Some consumers of Harley Davidson, who dream of rebelling against such social norms and seek freedom, may feel the brand helps them achieve this personal goal.

Still in other cases, consumers identify with brand X because it helps them make a statement and reflects the way that they want to present themselves to others. Therefore, the consumers use brand X to communicate who they are to other people. For example, people consider those who drive a Toyota Prius to be environmentally friendly.

Apple

1. Have you ever purchased and used an Apple product/
_____Yes _____No

2. How much does Apple reflect who are you, or who you want to be, or how you want to present yourself to others?
(not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 (extremely)

3. (If answer to question 2 is no less than 6) What is the quality or qualities of Apple that reflect who you consider yourself to be, who you want to be, or how you want to present yourself to others? Please be as specific and detailed as you can.

4. (If answer to question 2 is below 6) Apples does not reflect who you consider yourself to be, who you want to be, or how you want to present yourself to others, please discuss why.

Please name three brands that you strongly identify with.

Brand one _____

1. How much does (Brand one) reflect who are you, or who you want to be, or how you want to present yourself to others?
(not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 (extremely)

2. What is the quality or qualities of (Brand one) that reflect who you consider yourself to be, who you want to be, or how you want to present yourself to others? Please be as specific and detailed as you can.

Please name three brands that you weakly identify with. In other words, you have purchased and used the product of the brand either in the past or currently. However, the brand does not reflect who you consider yourself to be, who you want to be, **or** how you want to present yourself to others.

Brand four _____

1. How much does (Brand four) reflect who are you, or who you want to be, or how you want to present yourself to others?
(not at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 (extremely)

2. (Brand four) does not reflect who you consider yourself to be, who you want to be, or how you want to present yourself to others, please discuss why.

Appendix D

(A situation that threatens self-defining attributes shared between consumers and brands)

Suppose you read the following news from the *New York Times*.

Apple Making \$101.1 billion by Stealing Technology and Design

Apple is known for innovation and aesthetic design. However, the technology giant may not be as innovative and trendsetting as it appears.

A court ruled Apple had infringed on Google Nexus's multiple patents without permission. This infringement brought Apple \$101.1 billion in profit worldwide.

A jury reached the conclusion that Apple violated the patented technologies and product designs created by Google Nexus. These patents covered a wide range of technologies, including speed encoding and decoding, security, and battery-life extension. They were used on various Apple products, such as the iPhone, the Mac, and the iPad.

This infringement also included some widely used features, such as the split-screen.

In addition, Apple also copied Google Nexus on antenna design, so that their products look more sleek and modern.

"Apple is trying to get a free ride off of our intellectual property and modern design," a Google Nexus spokesperson said. "Google lost about \$20 billion revenue due to this infringement."

Apple has also been suspected of stealing technology and design patents from some small technology companies, such as Phi Technology Inc. These small businesses are in danger of going out of business due to this alleged infringement.

Response Conditions

No responses

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

"We are unable to comment on this matter for legal reasons."

Apology

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

"We apologize for our infringement on Google Nexus's technology and design patents. Most importantly, we apologize to our customers. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again."

Compensation

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We will fully compensate Google Nexus for its loss due to this infringement of its technology and design patents.”

Reminder

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“Apple has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

Apology + Compensation

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We apologize for our infringement on Google Nexus’s technology and design patents. Most importantly, we apologize to our customers. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again.

We will fully compensate Google Nexus for its loss due to this infringement of its technology and design patents.”

Apology + Reminder

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We apologize for our infringement on Google Nexus’s technology and design patents.. Most importantly, we apologize to our customers. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again.

Apple has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

Compensation + Reminder

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We will fully compensate Google Nexus for its loss due to this infringement of its technology and design patents.

Apple has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

Apology + Compensation + Reminder

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We apologize for our infringement on Google Nexus’s technology and design patents.. Most importantly, we apologize to our customers. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again.

We will fully compensate Google Nexus for its loss due to this infringement of its technology and design patents.

Apple has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our

society.”

(A situation that does not threaten self-defining attributes shared between consumers and brands)

Suppose you read the following news from the *New York Times*.

Tax Evasion: Apple Holding \$101.1 billion In Offshore Accounts

Apple is harboring about \$181.1 billion in profits overseas to avoid paying taxes stateside, a report from the U.S. Senate showed. The accumulated profits, if repatriated from places such as Ireland, would amount to an estimated \$20 billion in U.S. tax revenue.

“Instead of taking a traditional path of opening accounts in offshore zones, Apple created a chain of subsidiaries to avoid U.S. tax payments,” the Senate report reads.

These Apple subsidiaries, officially registered in offshore zones like Ireland, had no staff apart from top executives. Each of these subsidiaries, being an offshore entity, was free from taxes in the U.S. as well as not being obliged to file U.S. tax returns.

Response Conditions

No responses

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We are unable to comment on this matter for legal reasons.”

Apology

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We apologize for our tax avoidance. Most importantly, we apologize to our customers. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again.”

Compensation

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We will pay in full the amount of taxes that we have avoided.”

Reminder

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“Apple has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

Apology + Compensation

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We apologize for our tax avoidance. Most importantly, we apologize to our customers. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again. We will pay in full the amount of taxes that we have avoided.”

Apology + Reminder

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We apologize for our tax avoidance. Most importantly, we apologize to our customers. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again. Apple has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

Compensation + Reminder

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We will pay in full the amount of taxes that we have avoided. Apple has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

Apology + Compensation + Reminder

Apple responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We apologize for our tax avoidance. Most importantly, we apologize to our customers. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again. We will pay in full the amount of taxes that we have avoided. Apple has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

To what extent did the matter described in the news affect Apple’s image as an innovative brand?

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very much

(A situation that threatens self-defining attributes shared between consumers and brands)

Suppose you read the following news from the *New York Times*.

Whole Foods in Trouble for Selling Unhealthy Food

Some food sold in last two weeks in Whole Foods stores is non-organic and no more natural than the food sold in regular grocery stores, according to a report from the U.S.

Department of Agriculture.

Whole Foods recently contracted with some new suppliers. The vegetables from these new suppliers are grown with standard fertilizers and pesticides. Whole Foods' is purchasing from its new supplier farms, where pigs are crowded into dank, cramped quarters and left with festering, untreated wounds. It's a far cry from Whole Foods' original promotional video that showed happy pigs roaming a small farm.

Whole Foods recently contracted with new suppliers, who grow produce and raise farm animals using standard, non-organic methods, fertilizers and pesticides, according to the report. Additionally, government investigators found that some farm animals, such as pigs, were kept in cramped quarters, which runs contrary to Whole Foods stated practices or values.

"Whole Foods failed to follow its entire audit process for healthy-food standards when contracting with these new suppliers," the report reads. "These standards ensures healthy, organic, higher quality product."

Response Conditions

No responses

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
"We are unable to comment on this matter for legal reasons."

Apology

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
"We apologize to our customers for selling non-organic and non-natural food in our stores. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again."

Compensation

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
"We will refund customers for the full price of any products that are non-organic and non-natural that they purchased in the last two weeks. Please consult our website for a list of products that qualify."

Reminder

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
"Whole Foods has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers' lives, and our contributions to our society."

Apology + Compensation

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
"We apologize to our customers for selling non-organic and non-natural food in our stores. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again.
"We will refund customers for the full price of any products that are non-organic and non-natural that they purchased in the last two weeks. Please consult our website for a list

of products that qualify.”

Apology + Reminder

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We apologize to our customers for selling non-organic and non-natural food in our stores. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again.

Whole Foods has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

Compensation + Reminder

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We will refund customers for the full price of any products that are non-organic and non-natural that they purchased in the last two weeks. Please consult our website for a list of products that qualify.

Whole Foods has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

Apology + Compensation + Reminder

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We apologize to our customers for selling non-organic and non-natural food in our stores. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again.

“We will refund customers for the full price of any products that are non-organic and non-natural that they purchased in the last two weeks. Please consult our website for a list of products that qualify.

Whole Foods has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

(A situation that does not threaten self-defining attributes shared between consumers and brands)

Suppose you read the following news from the *New York Times*.

Whole Foods Firing Workers for Unionization

Two workers at a Whole Foods Market in San Francisco’s South of Market (SoMa) neighborhood who led a union-organizing effort have been fired for trivial offenses.

Whole Foods employees “are told, among other things, that unions are greedy third party institutions that interfere in the relationship between employer and employee, that workers risk losing their benefits if they choose to organize, and that laws protecting workers have eliminated the

need for unions,” said one Whole Foods employee.

These two employees at SoMa, who were fired, had been warned that they risked losing their jobs if they chose to organize; but the tactic failed and they continued to organize. .

Response Conditions:

No responses

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
“We are unable to comment on this matter for legal reasons.”

Apology

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
“We apologize for firing these two employees for non-serious mistakes. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again.”

Compensation

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
We will pay these two employees for their missed wages and offer them back their jobs.

Reminder

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
“Whole Foods has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

Apology + Compensation

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
“We apologize for firing these two employees for non-serious mistakes. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again.
We will pay these two employees for their missed wages and offer them back their jobs.”

Apology + Reminder

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
“We apologize for firing these two employees for non-serious mistakes. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again.
Whole Foods has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

Compensation + Reminder

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:
“We will pay these two employees for their missed wages and offer them back their jobs.
Whole Foods has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our

society.”

Apology + Compensation + Reminder

Whole Foods responds to the news you just read with the following statement:

“We apologize for firing these two employees for non-serious mistakes. We are reviewing our policy to avoid similar events happening again.

We will pay these two employees for their missed wages and offer them back their jobs.

Whole Foods has been a leader in our industry. We are proud of our accomplishments, the changes that our products bring to our customers’ lives, and our contributions to our society.”

To what extent did the matter described in the news affect Whole Foods’ image as a healthy grocery store?

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very much

Appendix E

Measurements

Non-identifying Relationships: Grégoire & Fisher's (2006) Scale

trust

I felt that Apple/Whole Foods was...

1. very undependable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very dependable
2. very incompetent 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very competent
3. of low integrity 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 of high integrity
4. very unresponsive to consumers 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very responsive to consumers

Satisfaction

1. I was satisfied with my relationship with Apple/Whole Foods.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

2. My relationship with Apple/Whole Foods was quite good.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

3. I was happy with the effort Apple/Whole Foods was making towards customers like me.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Commitment

1. I was very committed to my relationship with Apple/Whole Foods.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

2. The relationship with Apple/Whole Foods was something I intended to maintain for a long time.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

3. I put the efforts into maintaining this relationship for a long time.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Alternative non-identifying Relationship Scale: Fletcher et al.'s (2000) Scale

Satisfaction

1. How satisfied are you with your relationship with Apple/Whole Foods?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Very Much

2. How content are you with your relationship with Apple/Whole Foods?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Very Much

3. How happy are you with your relationship with Apple/Whole Foods?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Very Much

Trust

1. How much can you count on Apple/Whole Foods?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Very Much

2. How much do you trust Apple/Whole Foods?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Very Much

3. How dependable is Apple/Whole Foods?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Very Much

Commitment

1. How dedicated are you to your relationship with Apple/Whole Foods?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Very Much

2. How committed are you to your relationship with Apple/Whole Foods?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Very Much

3. How devoted are you to your relationship with Apple/Whole Foods?

Not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Very Much

Self-relevant Relationships: Escalas and Bettman's (2003) Self-brand Connection

Scale

1. Apple/Whole Foods reflects who I am.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

2. I can identify with Apple/Whole Foods.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

3. I feel a personal connection to Apple/Whole Foods.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

4. I use Apple/Whole Foods to communicate who I am to other people.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

5. I think Apple/Whole Foods helps me become the type of person I want to be.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

6. I consider Apple/Whole Foods to reflect who I consider myself to be.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

7. I consider Apple/Whole Foods to reflect the way that I want to present myself to others.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

8. Apple/Whole Foods suits me well.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Alternative Identifying Relationship Scale: Einwiller et al.'s (2006) Scale

1. I am associated with Apple/Whole Foods.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

2. I have a sense of connection with Apple/Whole Foods.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

3. I consider myself as belonging to the group of people who are in favor of Apple/Whole Foods.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

4. Consumers of Apple/Whole Foods are similar to me.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

5. Employees of Apple/Whole Foods are similar to me.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

6. Apple/Whole Foods shares my values.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

7. Being a consumer of Apple/Whole Foods is part of my sense of who I am.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

8. Purchasing Apple/Whole Foods would help me express my identity.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Attributed Responsibility

1. How much responsibility Apple/Whole Foods should bear:

not at all responsible 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 totally responsible

2. To what degree do you think Apple/Whole Foods should be blamed:

not at all to be blamed 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 absolutely to be blamed

3. To what degree do you think Apple/Whole Foods should be responsible?

not at all to be responsible 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 absolutely to be responsible

Brand Attitude Valance Scale

Please indicate how you view Apple/Whole Foods.

1. Dislike 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Like
2. Negative 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Positive
3. Bad 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Good
4. Unfavorable 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 Favorable

Anger

1. What happened in the news story made me feel _____ at (Apple/Whole Foods).
not angry at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very angry
2. What happened in the news story made me feel _____ at (Apple/Whole Foods).
not irritated at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very irritated
3. What happened in the news story made me feel _____ at (Apple/Whole Foods).
not annoyed at all (1) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very annoyed
4. What happened in the news story made me feel _____ at (Apple/Whole Foods).
not aggravated at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very aggravated

Sympathy

1. What happened in the news story made me feel _____ for Apple/Whole Foods.
not sympathetic at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very sympathetic
2. What happened in the news story made me feel _____ for Apple/Whole Foods.
not compassionate at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very compassionate
3. What happened in the news story made me feel _____ for Apple/Whole Foods.
not sorry at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very sorry

Disappointment

1. I am _____ at Apple/Whole Foods for what happened in the news.

Not disappointed at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very disappointed

2. I am _____ by Apple/Whole Foods for what happened in the news.

Not let down at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very let down

3. To what extent did what happened in the news failed your expectations of Apple/Whole Foods?

not at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very much

Intention of Negative Word-of-Mouth Communication

1. I intend to say negative things about Apple/Whole Foods to friends, relatives, and other people.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

2. I intend not to recommend purchase of Apple/Whole Foods's products to friends, relatives, and other people.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

3. I intend to mention unfavorable things about Apple/Whole Foods to my friends, relatives, and other people.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

4. I would encourage friends or relatives NOT to buy products from Apple/Whole Foods.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

5. I would recommend Apple/Whole Foods's products to someone who asked my advice (reverse coded)

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Purchase Intention

1. The next time I will choose Apple/Whole Foods, when I need to buy a product.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

2. It is very likely that in the future I will continue to buy a product of Apple/Whole Foods.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

3. I will definitely continue to buy a product of Apple/Whole Foods.

Strongly disagree -5 -4 -3 -2 -1 0 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly agree

Realism

The matter described in the news sounds _____.

not believable at all 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very believable

not realistic at all) 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 very realistic

Demographic Information

1. I am a _____ male _____ female (Please note that this survey is anonymous and confidential. This means that data cannot be traced back to individual participants and only aggregated data will be used by the researchers for analysis.)

2. Are you of Hispanic, Latino, or Spanish origin? (Please note that this survey is anonymous and confidential. This means that data cannot be traced back to individual participants and only aggregated data will be used by the researchers for analysis.)

_____ Yes _____ No

3. What is your race? (**Check all that apply**) (Please note that this survey is anonymous and confidential. This means that data cannot be traced back to individual participants and only aggregated data will be used by the researchers for analysis.)

A. Euro-American

B. African-American

C. Hispanic-American

D. Asian-American

E. Native American

F. Pacific Islander American

G. A combination of the above

H. Some other race, please specify your race here _____

3. How much is your annual income? (Please note that this survey is anonymous and confidential. This means that data cannot be traced back to individual participants and only aggregated data will be used by the researchers for analysis.) _____

4. How old are you? (Please note that this survey is anonymous and confidential. This means that data cannot be traced back to individual participants and only aggregated data will be used by the researchers for analysis.) _____

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