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Communicating through social media to regain stakeholders trust during crises
- A case study about H&M.

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Title
Communicating through social media to regain stakeholders trust during crisis – A case study about H&M.

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Abstract
Crisis management is the process by which an organisation deals with a disruptive and unexpected event that threatens to harm the organisation or its stakeholders. Fast fashion retailers have been highly affected by crisis spread through social media, which could be seen as a result of the increasing usage of social media.

This thesis is concerned with crisis management and crisis communication examining Coombs Situational Crisis Communication Theory. Trust repair in regards to social media is further investigated and incorporated with Coombs SCCT model. The purpose of the study is to gain an insight into how trust repair works when dealing with crises, in the context of social media. A qualitative study was utilised with an abductive approach to research the purpose. The context of this paper is a case study involving H&M, the second biggest fast fashion retail company, that managed to miss the mark by publishing an ad that provoked many people all over social media. Social media platforms, namely Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, were observed and a social media feed was collected and later analysed to shed light on the trust repair process. A focus group was also formed to gain complementary data to strengthen the findings.

The findings add insight to the field of crisis management, as well as the concepts trust repair and social media, which have not been researched together in relation to crisis management and crisis communication before. Findings showed that H&M used different approaches in dealing with the crisis, some corresponding with the SCCT model to regain trust from their stakeholders.

Keywords
Crisis management, Crisis Communication, Social media, Trust, Stakeholders, Customers.
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Nothing can be done without hope and confidence, it always seems impossible until it is done. Optimism is the faith that leads to achievement and if you can dream it, you can do it.

Kristianstad, 25th May 2018.

Florence Mensah                                                             Thaha Osman
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1. Introduction

In this chapter the background of crisis management and different types of crises within the fast fashion retail is described. Thereafter, a problematization will explain why this thesis is an interesting topic to explore. The chapter later continues with the research question, purpose and demarcations of this dissertation, ending with a disposition of the following chapters being presented.

1.1 Background

Crisis management is the process by which an organisation deals with a disruptive and unexpected event that threatens to harm the organisation. A crisis is defined by Falkheimer, Heide and Larsson (2009) as an event that translate into danger and threatens the structure of an organisation. To fully grasp what crisis management entails for organisations, one must identify what a crisis is from a business perspective. There are some characteristics that define a crisis in term of qualifying as a crisis in the business world. The three elements that are common to a crisis are: 1. a threat to the organisation, 2. the element of surprise, and 3. a short decision time (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 1998).

A crisis can be caused by external forces that are beyond organisations influence but could also be self-inflicted. External forces could vary from natural disasters to false information spread with the intent to cause damage to a specific company or business. Self-inflicted crisis caused by internal forces are any circumstances brought about due to actions taken by a company or decisions made by its management that could and should have been avoided (Falkheimer et al., 2009).

One industry where there have been several self-inflicted crises lately is the fast fashion industry. For example, in August 2013 H&M was criticized for being culturally inappropriate. Upon releasing an assortment of faux-feather headdresses in Canada, H&M received several complaints that the product was offensive to Canada’s First Nations aboriginal people and the product was later pulled away from the shelves across Canada.
The faux-feather headdresses was an offense because it is worn by chiefs in some communities as a symbol of respect and honour and should therefore not be for sales (The Canadian Press, 2013).

Yet another fast fashion retail company, Forever 21, was also involved in some controversy regarding some t-shirts posted on the company website in September 2013. Cultural appropriation was not considered when Forever 21 released the t-shirt collection for the sake of business and trend. The t-shirt collection included shirts that had culturally sensitive slurs that angered and caused many African-Americans to protest using social media, mainly Twitter and Facebook. Forever 21 had tweeted “straight outta Compton” with a photo of a white model wearing three different T-shirts, “City of Compton”, hip-hop/rap artists “Ice Cube” and “N.W.A: The world’s most dangerous group” etched on the front. Forever 21 ended up removing the t-shirts from the collection (Ortiz, 2013).

In August 2014, Zara needed to apologise for a design made for children, that looked like the uniform Jews were forced to wear during the holocaust. The shirt had stripes and the word "sheriff" was also dimly viewable on the star, and the combination of stripes and a yellow star angered many on social media (Cresci, 2014).

In early 2018, January 7th, news channels around the world covered the big scandal that H&M faced regarding an ad featuring a black child donning a sweatshirt with the words “coolest monkey in the jungle” etched on the front. This ad evoked public accusations of racism all over social media (West, 2018). This was after the accusation brought up against H&M regarding their production and labour conditions, where child labour was an issue causing consumers to boycott H&M (Doward, 2012).

The similarity between the cases above is that they are categorized as fast fashion retail companies, showcasing that self-inflicted crises has been a common theme for several businesses. These are global fast fashion retailers that managed to miss the mark and
put out tone-deaf ads or designs. Apparently, this problem has still not been resolved. These three fast fashion retailers have advertising policies, values and CSR that they operate by when marketing. Yet, despite this, they end up with crises associated with their marketing or design, which is linked to either cultural sensitivity or racism, which ignites an uproar on social media. Today, people are more overt in expressing themselves when a scandal occurs, which leads to a scandal spreading at the speed of light with the help of social media. When crises capture people’s attention, it leads to negative publicity for the company, which can be hard to bounce back from. The disadvantage of bad publicity is loss of stakeholders trust, where regaining trust can be difficult and time-consuming. Mistrust expressed by word of mouth as well as through social media can take years to repair. This has been the case ever since social media became a global communication tool, spreading information regarding any type of crisis all over the world (Anurag & Duhan, 2016).

Taking the crises into consideration following from the above, we argue that a poorly planned crisis management can escalate to a negative outcome to a certain point where it challenges the foundation of the fast fashion retailers. We argue that crisis management has not been looked at in terms of how crisis management is being communicated within social media, and how that in turn influences the trust relationship between the parties affected.

1.2 Problematization
When an organisation is exposed to a crisis or scandal, this can have disastrous effects on the company and its stakeholders. A crisis occurs when a triggering event plays out, which is so significant that it threatens an organisation’s structure, operations or the survival of the organisation (Falkuner, 2001). When an organisation finds itself dealing with a self-inflicted crisis, communication is a crucial element to providing the necessary measures to insure a catastrophic result is avoided (Falkheimer et al., 2009). Such results could entail weakening or even destroying a long time developed trust relationship between an organisation and its consumers (Dietz & Gillespie, 2012).
According to Davies & Olmedo-Cifuentes (2016) and Gillespie, Dietz, & Lockey (2014), trust between an organisation and its stakeholders is based on the three dimensions of ability, goodwill and integrity. For stakeholders to rely on an organisation and to create trust, it is necessary that the overall assessment of these three dimensions are positive, otherwise the organisation loses trust from its stakeholders. Dietz & Gillespie (2012) move on to say that trust is something that is important for organisation to continue their existent. Davies and Olmedo-Cifuentes (2016) point out that when companies commit a serious negligence, there is a high risk that their credibility will be adversely affected, which means that trust in the company may also decrease in line with the negative publicity that follows.

Dietz & Gillespie (2012) emphasise that it is a complicated task for an organisation to build trust from stakeholders they have lost during a crisis. It can take a long time and require a lot of resources. How long and how much depends on how extreme the crisis is, and how the organisation is handling the situation. In this sense, Falkheimer et al. (2009) mention that there is a strong need for communication and information during crises. The use of communication could reduce the loss of trust or even negate it as keeping stakeholders informed creates an image that the organisations’ intentions are to resolve the crisis.

It is important to be well prepared to deal with any crisis that occurs by creating a well worked out crisis management strategy. Crisis communication and crisis management are two inseparable concepts that complement each other (Dynes, 1970), as communication is often considered to be what creates the social structure that defines an organisation (Weick, 1995). It is therefore crucial to ensure a communication channel is chosen to reach out to the affected parties to gain a deeper understanding of what has led to the crisis and how it could be rectified. The traits and perks of social media makes it superior to any other channel of communication when managing a crisis, due to social media being the platform the crisis arises and being discussed. The two-way communication line that the social media
offers (Falkheimer et al., 2009), between an organisation and its stakeholders is the most determining factor, as it is of most importance when dealing with a crisis.

Social media or the “new media” is essential when trying to communicate in the modern day, especially in an international setting as the internet and digitalisation has made it one of the fastest means of communication (Falkheimer et al., 2009). Research has shown that the usage of the internet has increased significantly since the turn of the century (Bucher, 2002). Among other things, the standardisation of personalised computers has contributed to making the information flow more comprehensive and reachable for people all over the world, creating opportunities for corporations to harness significant benefits. Neuman (1991) mentions some of the benefits of the so-called new media, which include; diminishing geographical distance, increasing the communication quantity and communication speed. This has made it inevitable to ignore the new media in the business world, forcing corporations to adapt and somewhat integrate the new media in at least their communication strategies (Falkheimer et al., 2009).

Although there are many positive aspects to utilise with the help of social media, one must emphasise that there is a flip-side to that coin. Like traditional media, the new media is not one-sided as it can also contribute to negative usage and result (Rice, 1984). Example of such instance could be using culturally sensitive material when carrying out tasks that are not properly examined or reviewed. Looking back at the mentioned benefits of the new media, it becomes clear that they turn into disadvantages for the party involved, which in turn creates a crisis to be dealt with.

Crisis management and crisis communication have been researched for various reasons (Coombs, 2007). According to Tierney, Lindell and Perry (2001) such research has focused on four problems, how consumers perceive crises, how consumers use information regarding crises, role of traditional media outlets and the sources used when covering a crisis. This indicates a lack of research when it comes to self-inflicted crisis. Mitroff and
Coombs (1994; 2015) have created and later developed a theory surrounding crisis management. Coombs (2015) is the creator of the so called Situational Crisis Communication Theory which divides the approach to a crisis into different stages.

Lately, some research has been conducted studying social media effectiveness when it comes to managing a crisis (Ki & Nekmat, 2014). According to Ki and Nekmat (2014), research indicates a significant relationship between the usage of social media as a two-way communication and the audience overall tone. However, there has not been any research dealing with trust repair in relation to crises using new media, which is the aim of this paper. This is important as social media is becoming increasingly utilised by firms and individuals, making social media a strong influencing force that could have an impact on the crisis as well as the trust repair process firms use. There has also not been any grounded research or theory surrounding self-inflicted crises, in terms of how they change the dynamic of a crisis strategy and response, making current theory such as the one developed by Coombs not totally adaptive.

1.3 Research question

How do fast fashion retail companies handle self-inflicted crisis spread via social media to regain stakeholders trust?

1.4 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to gain an insight into how trust repair works in relation to crises spread via social media. The focus of the study lies in examining which approach a fast fashion retail company has used.
1.5 Demarcations

The demarcation of this thesis is that only the Swedish fast-fashion retail H&M is being examined, as to how they handle self-inflicted crisis and how they communicate this through social media to regain the stakeholders trust. Furthermore, the case is based on the recent H&M crisis from 2018. H&M experienced a serious reputation crisis after the image of a small black boy modelling a sweatshirt emblazoned with "Coolest Monkey in the Jungle" hit all over social media. Due to the time limit of this study, a generalisation of all fast fashion retail companies cannot be made.

1.6 Disposition

This thesis consists of six chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the background for the thesis to frame the relevance of the research question and purpose of the study followed by the problematization. Chapter 2 is about the research methodology used in this study of crisis management and crisis communication. Chapter 3 is the literature review which describes the theories that have been used in the study. Chapter 4 introduces the empirical method which explains how we have conducted our study to collect the empirical data. Chapter 5 is where the case is presented. Chapter 6 contains the empirical findings and analysis. The final chapter in this dissertation, Chapter 7, concludes with a summary of the thesis, followed by our conclusion, theoretical contribution, practical implications and lastly, limitations and future research.
2. Research Methodology

The method chapter presents the methodology used in this study. This chapter describes and motivates the overall methodological decision taken, what research approach is considered and the theories utilised. It contains research philosophy, research approach and choice of theory.

2.1 Research philosophy

Bryman and Bell (2015) present three main research philosophies used in business research today, which are positivism, interpretivism and realism. They continue to describe that these are methods by which humans try to view the world and procure assumptions. The three research philosophies have different advantages and should be applied depending on the thesis, making sure they complement each other. In this paper, the aim is to gain an understanding of how fast fashion retail companies use social media to handle a self-inflicted crisis, in relations to repair trust between them and the various stakeholders. Interpretivism is subjective and demands the understanding of actions people make and that they have no connection to laws of science, implying that human action is complicated. Thus, interpretivism seems the best research philosophy to implement in this study, as it would be the ideal approach to understanding how people behave and interact.

As we will be analysing a fast fashion retail company, H&M, and the crisis they have endured, features to create trust using social media must be identified in their management and communication strategies during this crisis. The empirical data would be collected by reviewing communication on different social media communication channels such as Facebook, Twitter and Instagram.

2.2 Research approach

When conducting a research, there are three different approaches to choose from, which are the following: inductive, deductive and abductive approach (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The first research approach is the deductive approach that develops and test theories or
hypothesis from already existing theories and literature. The second approach, inductive approach, the researchers build theory based on collected data (Bryman & Bell, 2015). When viewing the purpose of this paper, which is to get an insight into how trust repair works in relation to crisis spread via social media, it becomes clear that the research we have chosen will have an abductive approach. This approach is neither a pure inductive or deductive approach, but a mixture called the abductive approach (Alvehus, 2013). This allows for the reviewing of existing theory surrounding crisis management and ideas regarding social media’s role in handling crisis. In an abductive approach, the research process switches between the empirical data, and the theoretical framework (Alvehus, 2013). However, more importantly an abductive approach supports the further development of our thesis to take trust repair using the social media into consideration, potentially embarking on new findings.

2.3 Choice of theory

A theory is usually created and developed by various concepts, they create a deeper understanding of a subject that has been improved and adapted overtime. Most notably within current crisis management literature, is Timothy Coombs work on Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT), which was introduced in the year 1995. As the theory has been further developed it is important to collect and review the continued research into SCCT and crisis response, in respects to the work of other authors such as Ian Mitroff (Coombs, 2007). The theory surrounding crisis management describes different stages of a crisis and how to approach a crisis, but conceptualise reputation building rather than trust repair. However, as the purpose of this thesis is to also gain an insight into how trust repair works through social media, trust and social media become critical foundations for this paper. Trust can have various definitions and can often be connected to a firm’s products, services or communication (Dietz & Gillespie, 2012).
3. Literature review

This chapter contains a literature review covers crisis management and crisis communication. This is followed by a detailed presentation and description of the Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) and its elements which is the crisis responsibility, crisis response strategy, emotions and behavioural outcomes as the elements. The chapter then ends with trust repair and the impact of social media when communicating during a crisis.

3.1 Crisis management

The literature on crisis management and crisis communication is very dynamic, as it is written and based on different crises (Coombs, 2007). Crisis management has been widely researched and defined by many different authors (Brønn & Wiig, 2005). It entails strategic planning to help prevent and react to a crisis, in which the conditions require a cautious approach as emotions will be building up and creating a plan during that time is unthinkable (Fearn-Banks, 2001).

The main objective of Crisis management strategy is to ensure the making of timely decisions based on facts and clear planning while operating under heavy pressure (Pearson, 2002). This implies that by having a decent understanding of Crisis management strategy, the negative outcomes of a crisis can be lessened. Having a well-worked out crisis management plan in place, also reduces the likelihood of a crisis. There is a consistent theme within the various crisis management literature that a crisis has a very distinct life cycle that can be identified. Understanding the life cycle is very significant as it can be used to predict certain outcomes in the cycle and help prevent undesired fallout (Gonzales-Herrero & Pratt, 1995). According to Sturges (1994), the life cycle of a crisis needs to be approached by managers with respects to threats introduced by various crisis scenarios, in each of the different stages of a crisis.
Moreover, one of the most recognisable theory of the life cycle of a crisis and its stages is the five-staged model, developed by the organisational theorist Mitroff (1994). The five stages are as followed; signal detection, probing and prevention, damage containment, recovery and learning (Mitroff, 1994). The first stage is about warning signals and how they can be traced before a crisis develop (Davies & Olmedo-Cifuentes, 2016). If warning signals are intercepted by management they can be totally avoided, and a proactive approach would be taken which is the best-case scenario in crisis management strategy. The second stage is probing and preventing, which entails creating contingencies to deal with eliminating crisis before they develop and to correctly manage those that do (Mitroff, 1994). Moving on to the third stage which is recovery, (Mitroff, 1994) argues that its principle purpose is to recover normal business operations as soon as possible after suffering from a crisis. This is due to not showing any signs of weaknesses or that a crisis ever occurred, avoiding the loss of crucial customers and partners. The fifth and last stage is learning, hinting to the process of contemplating on what was done exceptionally and what an organisation should do differently in the future (Mitroff, 1994).

Another staged approach is mentioned by Coombs (2007) where he talks about dividing communication management strategy into three main stages, constructed of more subcategories that are relevant for each stage. Coombs (2007) states that these three stages are general enough to integrate with other crisis management theories such as the one developed by Mitroff (1994). We argue that this approach by Coombs is more accommodating to other models as it is a systematically developed theory that has more detailed and comprehensive categories. Thus, this would allow the use of any other model including the above mentioned five-stage model by Mitroff (1994) without any complication, even complementing it and expanding further on some of the proposed stages.

The three main stages are pre-crisis, crisis event and post-crisis. The Pre-crises stage is when precautions are taken before a crisis is encountered and has three subcategories;
signal detection, prevention and crisis preparation. Although this is a good strategy to implement, (Coombs, 2007) states that managers must be ready in case of the crisis still occurs. The second stage is crisis event and is usually sparked by a triggering event or situation that marks the start of a crisis and lasts until the crisis is considered dealt with. This stage has two subcategories which are recognising the crisis and crisis containment. A two-way communication platform is essential as at this stage, (Coombs, 2007) argues that it is of utter importance to create a line of communication with the stakeholders. The third and last stage is the post-crisis stage, which concern the actions and adjustments that need to take place after the crisis is over. Three subcategories under this stage are evaluation of the communication management strategy, learning from what has occurred and keeping an open communication with stakeholders. This phase looks for ways to better prepare for the next crisis and fulfils commitments made during the crisis phase including follow-up information (Coombs, 2007).

Stakeholders should be the focus of any organisation especially during a crisis occur. Cornelissen (2006) states that stakeholders is any group or individual which can affect or is affected by an organisations actions or objectives. Failing to communicate and meet the needs of stakeholders can cause problem for an organisation, escalating the crisis at hand (Falkheimer et al., 2009). According to Seeger, Sellnow, and Ulmer (2001), what defines a successful organisation is their willingness to communicate openly with their stakeholders during a crisis.

3.2 Crisis communication

Crisis communication is about the communication carried out by an organisation and its stakeholders in relation to a crisis (Falkheimer et al., 2009). Dynes (1970) states that crisis management and crisis communication are two inseparable terms, as managing a crisis entails using communication to receive and share information. (Coombs, 2005) reinforces Dynes statement by adding that communication is *the lifeblood* of any crisis management strategy and plays a determining role in all the stages. Thus, one can reach the conclusion
that crisis communication strategies are what organisations use to verbally and non-verbally address the crisis. It is important to note that organisations are required to use different crisis communication strategies depending on the crisis and the stakeholders target (Fussell, Collins, & Lynn, 2010).

Crisis response research is divided into two different categories; form and content, form is how the response should be and content being what is said (Coombs, 2006). Crisis communication strategies stand for the actual response organisations try to utilise during a crisis. This could be verbal and nonverbal aspects depending on the situation or crisis that has occurred. It could be argued that it is important to have a strong sense of knowledge regarding what crisis response is, to somewhat grasp how to formulate an adequate response. Coombs (2006) moves on to say that the form of a crisis is the most researched topic in crisis management, and that it most often result with lists of what actions are deemed acceptable or not. Quick, consistent and open are the main recommendations for the form of a crisis response (Coombs, 2006). Meanwhile, Coombs (2006) states that content research within crisis response has been something done quite recent in the field. Communication should be done right to minimize, but also repair damage dealt by the crisis, both operational and reputational wise. Sturges (1994) divides the content research into three categories; instructing information focusing on telling stakeholders how to react, adjusting information to help people understand and feel better and internalising information which is about information that will help people formulate an image related to the organisation's reputation.

3.3 Situational crisis communication theory

Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT) is a theory for selecting a crisis response strategy. It was first introduced by Coombs in 1995 as an approach towards crisis communication but has since then been tested in practice, refined and developed to be relevant as of today (Coombs, 2015). The SCCT is constructed of eight elements; the crisis situation (crisis), crisis responsibility, crisis history, reputation history, crisis response
strategy, emotions, institutional reputation and behavioural outcomes (see figure 1), (Coombs, 2007). This means to achieve effective communication, characteristics of a crisis situation must be taken into account. SCCT is at its core a way to understand, explain and to provide prescriptive action for crisis communication. By developing an understanding about the crisis situation, management should be able to implement the necessary response (Coombs & Holladay, 2004).

**Figure 1:** *Crisis Situation Model of SCCT.*
Source: Adapted from Coombs, (2007).

The model has been widely used when conducting research in the field of crisis management. Fussell, Collins and Lynn (2010) applied the theory looking at non-profit organisations’ actions and strategies when faced with a crisis. The authors analysed the strategies utilised by the American Red Cross when managing crises between 1997 and 2007. They managed to analyse over 1,500 news articles and reached the conclusion that the Red Cross used the appropriate theoretical response offered by the SCCT, to match the level of organisational responsibility (Fussell, Collins, & Lynn, 2010). We will discuss all the different dimensions of the SCCT model following underneath.
3.3.1 Crisis and reputation history

Coombs (2015) claims that there are two intensifying factors for crises when they occur, those are crisis history and reputation history. He goes on to suggest that crises are added layers to a larger and continuous relationship between a firm and its stakeholders. When it comes to crises history, it is important to establish whether a crisis can be related to another similar crisis in the past, and to look for any signs that indicate a relationship between the old and new crisis. Coombs (2007) argues that if a crisis cannot be linked with a previous one, the mere existence of a crisis history attributes greater crisis responsibility and is subject to reputational damage. If this is the case, then there is clearly a problem within an organisation that needs to be fixed (Coombs, 2007). Reputation history refers to the prior relationship and experience between a firm and its stakeholders, and an unfavourable prior reputation or relationship can provide increased reputational threat (Coombs, 2007). Thus, if an organisation previously treated their stakeholders in a negative way, it would also add greater crisis responsibility and suffer reputational damage, much like a prior crisis history would.

Crisis history and reputation history are intensifying factors that affect the reputational threat introduced by a crisis (Coombs, 2007). A study by Coombs and Holladay (2001) found that a negative crisis history or reputational history affects the organisations’ crisis responsibilities, thus affecting the institutional reputation.

3.3.3 Institutional reputation

The collective assessment of an organisation’s past actions result in an overall reputation. This reputation is based on the stakeholders’ experience with the actions that have been taken by a firm and later used to determine how stakeholders chose to identify with that firm. The crisis history and reputational history affects the overall reputation of a firm, thus incorporated by Coombs in the SCCT over the years he developed it. Coombs (2007) states that both reputation and reputation history are results of past interactions between a firm and the stakeholders. Coombs (2007) continues to argue that managers must anticipate how
past and current crisis or reputation history affects how the stakeholders perceive a crisis. This implies that stakeholders use both the crisis history and reputation history to evaluate an ongoing crisis. Thus, it is important to maintain and develop a healthy institutional reputation to help combat a crisis.

3.3.4 Crisis response strategy
Moving on, figure 1 indicates that an element of the SCCT is crisis response strategies. They are used to repair bad reputation absorbed by a certain crisis and to reduce negative affect. By using unselfish and considerate strategies that put victims interest above all, it will result in creating the perception of an organisation taking significant responsibility for the crisis (Coombs & Holladay, 2004). There are three different types of response options; deny response, diminish response and deal response. Deny response is when the following strategies are implemented to deal with a crisis; attacking the victim or accuser, full denial of misconduct, and lastly scapegoat were blame is put on others (Coombs, 2006). Diminish response options include using strategies that would reduce the burden put on the organisation at fault. Examples of strategies that could be implemented when choosing this option are creating excuses and providing justification. Meanwhile, the deal response option entails using strategies such as displaying concern and regret for the affected party and taking full responsibility by issuing an apology (Coombs, 2006).

After the organisation has evaluated the responsibility they face of the crisis, it is time to inform how they will go about remedying the possible mistakes which caused the crisis (Coombs, 2007; Xu & Li, 2013). When an organisation ends up in a crisis, it is important to find an appropriate way for them to repair the trust that the crisis has damaged (Coombs, 2015). Communication and information during a crisis is important, and therefore the most common and easiest factors to deal with trust (Stephens, Malone & Bailey, 2005). Organisations communicating with their stakeholders in a crisis have been identified as one of the most important strategies for restoring stakeholders’ trust and repair the organisation’s reputation (Coombs, 2007). In this situation, it is important that the
organisation has a plan for how they should communicate, in order not worsen the situation (Coombs, 2015). This strategic plan of action will help to maintain trust from the environment (Dietz & Gillespie, 2012). Gillespie, Dietz, & Lockey (2014) further argue that an organisation must respond to a “trust failure” in the form of clear, repeated and consistent signals on how they relate to regaining trust. This happens through behaviours that demonstrate the three dimensions of ability, goodwill and integrity. Credibility is also another element that is important in strategy choice, as stakeholders are more likely to believe and to forgive a company with high credibility (Stephens, Malone, & Bailey, 2005).

However, it is not easy to design a communication strategy during crises to work for all organisations (Coombs 2007;2015). Stephens, Malone, and Bailey (2005) argue that it is possible to read from previous research which strategies have been effective and which have been ineffective for organisations. The kind of strategy organisations choose to use will affect both stakeholders perception of the crisis and what image the organisation receives from it.

### 3.3.5 Crisis responsibility

To develop an understanding about the crisis situation, one must review the element of SCCT which is crisis responsibility (figure 1). This inspects who is responsible for a crisis, categorising them into different types of crisis clusters; victim-, accidental-, and preventable cluster. Organisations tend to be victims of the crisis too if categorised as a victim cluster, usually caused by factors such as natural disasters and rumours. Meanwhile organisations that suffer an accidental cluster do not have crisis intentions in mind when operating, caused by technical errors and accidents. Lastly the preventable cluster, which indicates that a company intentionally put people at risk by violating laws and taking actions deemed improper (Coombs, 2006).

In the organisation’s communication to stakeholders it is important that a statement is included of who is responsible for the crisis (Dietz & Gillespie, 2012; Gillespie, Dietz &
Lockey, 2014). Evaluating the responsibility of the organisation for what has happened, believes both Coombs (2015) and Dietz and Gillespie (2012) is an important step in the trust process. The more stakeholders who assign the organisation responsibility for the crisis, the more harm it takes on the organisation (Coombs, 2015). Furthermore, Xu & Li, (2013) argues that evaluation of responsibility may mean that the organisation points out that the crisis was an accident, that the organisation lacked enough information, acted with good intentions or were provoked to do something.

3.3.6 Emotions

During a crisis, emotions play a role as consumers tend to dictate their actions depending on how they feel. To regain trust and avoid anger and disbelief emotions, organisations should use communication to their advantage (Falkheimer et al., 2009). A way this can be achieved is by reminding consumers about the positive emotions and actions the organisation has managed to spread before the crisis (Coombs, 2007). This in turn showcases that the crisis at hand does not represent what the organisation stands for. Coombs (2007) continues to argue that these positive emotions and actions could be anything from previous projects that proved to generate positive attitudes in the public eye. This is done as a strategic manoeuvre to minimise the consumers regard of what the crisis has done and the negative consequences it has caved. Coombs (2015) further argues that organisations focus when implementing such manoeuvre must also be to spread positive information involving the crisis, as that would help diminish anger and disbelief. However, trying to shift the attention of a crisis and its negative outcome can in some cases contribute to even more negative emotions. Attempts to hide the extent of a crisis can be problematic as organisations would appear as dishonest or untrustworthy (Xu & Li, 2013). For example, by bringing forth and putting emphasis on negative events or crisis that have occurred in the past in order to present the current crisis an organisation is undergoing as less negative than it is (Falkheimer et al., 2009). What organisations can do to deal with the emotions of consumers and other parties concerned, is to inform that the crisis has led to some positive outcomes in the end (Xu & Li, 2013). Organisations can do this by advocating the increased
awareness they have accumulated regarding the crisis and its content and informing that measures have been taken to ensure nothing similar occurs again.

A different approach presented by Coombs (2015) is to advocate sympathy with the parties affected by providing consulting and information regarding the crisis, as crisis creates the need for information (Cornelissen, 2006). It is important to show that an organisation is acting during a crisis to ensure that the relationship between its stakeholders does not become permanently affected, and instead help rebuild the relationship. It is crucial that an organisation provides adjusting information and help people cope with the crisis, both psychologically and physically (Coombs, 2007; Sturges, 1994).

3.3.7 Behavioural Outcomes

The more negative emotions that stakeholders accumulate, the more it affects the reputation and trust relationship between them and the firm that is associated with the crisis. If emotions are not addressed and satisfied by an organisation, consumers behavioural intentions towards that organisation becomes less supportive and could even turn into hostile (Coombs, 2007). The consequences that are unfavourable behavioural outcomes for an organisation could be for example; consumers refusing the purchase of products and services relating to the organisation, resulting in a boycott. Another example of bad behavioural outcome is a negative word of mouth that is also another scenario an organisation must avoid, as it is easier today to amplify with the help of social media. It is therefore important to address the emotions of the stakeholders as it would benefit the organisation in the long run (Falkheimer et al., 2009).

We argue that organisations could seek to achieve favourable behavioural outcomes by following the SCCT so that stakeholders can recognise the effort put in to communicate and redeem the crisis. By pursuing the correct crisis response strategy to repair the relationship, organisations can in turn reduce negative emotion and behavioural outcomes (Coombs, 2007).
3.4 Trust repair

According to Davies and Olmedo-Cifuentes (2016) the concept of trust is a complicated term with a variety of definitions. It has, among other things, been characterized as a psychological condition that involves accepting vulnerability based on positive expectations of an organisation or someone else’s intentions or behaviour. Trust is judged based on three dimensions. The first is the ability of the individual or the group, which may be their technical skills, for example. Organisations can demonstrate technical skills through their activities or their products and services (Dietz & Gillespie, 2012). The second dimension is the organisations goodwill, which is about their motives and interests. This is shown by the organisations through their positive interest towards their stakeholders. The final dimension is integrity and stands for honesty and fair treatment. In order for the environment to rely on organisations and to create trust, the overall assessment of these three dimensions should be positive (Davies & Olmedo-Cifuentes 2016; Dietz & Gillespie, 2012; Gillespie, Dietz & Lockey, 2014).

Dietz and Gillespie (2012) believe that trust is of great importance for organisations’ continued existence. Repairing an organisation’s trustworthiness can take a long time and requires considerable effort and investment. When a crisis arises, organisations trust is tested and strong needs from organisations’ stakeholders in terms of communication and information arise (Falkheimer et al., 2009). Ulmer (2001) explains that it can be a difficult time for organisations to be in a crisis. However, Taylor and Perry (2005) point out, that the biggest difficulty for organisations is not the actual crisis itself, but in how organisations choose to respond to it and communicate with their stakeholders. According to Dietz and Gillespie (2012) the recovery of stakeholders’ trust during a crisis can be complicated, but it is quite possible with the right strategy. With this, it becomes an important task for organisations in crisis to find an effective way to communicate with their stakeholders so that they do not loose trust in the organisation.
That organisations gain trust from their environment means that people will buy their products and services, invest in their stock, or perhaps seek a job at the company to become a co-worker (Davies & Olmedo-Cifuentes 2016; Dietz & Gillespie, 2012; Gillespie, Dietz & Lockey, 2014). Major efforts and investments from the organisations can be required to gain trust from their stakeholders. It is important for the organisation to take its ethical values and assumptions seriously. If the organisation would misuse this in some way, for example in form of a scandal or crisis, the trust from the stakeholders could be lost in a moment (Dietz & Gillespie, 2012). Davies and Olmedo-Cifuentes (2016) argue that organisations can also loose trust from stakeholders if they do not meet the demands of stakeholders. In addition, shared values, shared interests and proven empathy play a major part in determining whether a company can be trusted, and that individuals’ expectations can in many cases be deceived in a crisis, resulting in reduced trust in the organisation and the need to repair the trust.

Coombs (2007) explains that a crisis can harm stakeholders both physically, emotionally and economically. Taylor and Perry (2005) further argue that crises are a difficult time for organisations, but also highlight another way of looking at a crisis. The crisis that organisations are going through can be seen as a phase in their life cycle. The big problem is not that organisations are in a crisis, but more about how organisations choose to respond to the crisis.

### 3.5 Stakeholders and their importance in a crisis

A stakeholder is defined as an individual or group that can influence or be influenced by an organisation’s goal fulfilment and behaviour (Coombs, 2007). Furthermore, Harrison, Freeman and Abreu (2015) have defined stakeholders as an individual, group or organisation involved in a company’s value-creating process, and which have an interest in organisations’ processes and results. In addition, an interested person is dependent on the company to achieve its organisational goals. A company’s stakeholders are covered by employees, management, shareholders, investors, customers and suppliers (Gillespie,
Dietz, & Lockey, 2014), but also environmental groups, media and society largely included in the term stakeholder (Harrison, Freeman, & Abreu, 2015). Something that Ulmer (2001) emphasises is that organisations need to identify all their stakeholders. If a group of organisation’s stakeholders are violated, there is a risk that this group of stakeholders will adversely affect the organisation in the future.

Adeosun and Ganiyu (2013) point out that companies today most often see relationships with their stakeholders as an intangible asset, and therefore attach great importance to maintaining good and long-term relationships with them through strategic communication. In the event of a crisis, it is particularly important for organisations to have strong relationships with their stakeholders (Harrison, Freeman, & Abreu, 2015; Ulmer, 2001). For example when looking at stakeholders, customers can contribute to a positive word-of-mouth as well as loyalty that can contribute to alleviate the crisis. Stephens, Malone and Bailey (2005) state it is important that organisations ensure stakeholders support during a crisis. This can be done, for example, by replacing people in management and constantly communicating with stakeholders to influence their perceptions. According to Stephens, Malone, and Bailey (2005) another key objective of message strategy during a crisis is “damage control” to prevent drastic negative changes in relationships with environmental components, considers that communication increases the possibility of shared understanding and increased predictability, and in turn increases trust.

Davies and Olmedo-Cifuentes (2016) argue that stakeholder punishment of the organisation is affected by whether they are affected by the organisation’s failure or not. Something Ulmer (2001) emphasised was that organisations need to identify all their stakeholders. If the stakeholders are violated, there is a risk that they will adversely affect the organisation in the future, by withdrawing their support or help, which can prolong the effect of the crisis. This could mean, for example, that customers cease to use the company’s products or services, or suppliers might cancel their collaboration with the
company. It could also mean that employees may refuse to work for the company or investors might even withdraw their capital.

3.6 Social media
To build trust with stakeholders through communication, organisations need to choose which communication paths they will use. When organisations are in a crisis, they can use press releases or social media to manage relationships with their stakeholders and to inform them about the current situation or handle other people’s perceptions of the organisation (Stephens, Malone, & Bailey, 2005). The communication channel social media will be described to how organisations can communicate to regain trust among stakeholders. With social media, we mean communication routes such as Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

In short, social media is a collection of applications that are internet based allowing users to generate and share information freely (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). This has made it possible for high quantity of information to travel faster (Falkheimer et al., 2009), thus making it possible for crisis to spread and be affected by more individuals. This has turned the communicative landscape of firms and consumers into a more democratised climate (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011). Organisations, especially those with brands to maintain and protect, must thus act to ensure a healthy communication line between them and their stakeholders and monitor the information exchanged on the social media platforms (Kietzmann et al., 2011).

As social media offers a two-way communication line between organisations and its stakeholders, Falkheimer et al. (2009) argue that it is crucial to create and maintain good relations using such platforms. In doing this, organisations gain favourable conditions for dealing with all circumstances relating to a crisis (Falkheimer et al., 2009). Schultza, Utza and Göritz (2011) pointed out that with the help of social media, organisations can build relationships with their stakeholders faster than through traditional media, as they can be informed quickly and directly and are therefore particularly useful to use during crises.
Schultza et al. (2011) emphasizes that the effects of organisations’ communication strategy can be considered weaker if they use social media instead of traditional media. On the other hand, organisations can combine different communication channels to get information and highlight that the more channels organisations use to communicate with their stakeholders, the more powerful the conversation and the organisation’s ability is to influence (Schultza, et al. 2011).

3.7 Summary and analytical framework

Research has been conducted into crisis communication with one specific theory (SCCT) which is the most used overall when it comes to general crisis (Fussell, Collins, & Lynn, 2010). We have not encountered research that has explored social medias role in today’s crisis communication with relation to trust repair. However, as mentioned above, the SCCT looks at reputation rather than trust repair and does not account for the influence of social media. A self-inflicted crisis would introduce elements that are not included in Coombs theory, such as emotions during the crisis. Therefore, we propose a new framework that considers some attributes of the SCCT model with two new additions of our own. The framework will consist of four categories that Coombs (2015) has developed, as we deem them most relevant to achieve the purpose of this thesis. The four specific dimensions of the SCCT model that will be analysed and put into the new framework are the following; crisis responsibility, crisis response strategy, emotions during the crisis and behavioural outcomes. Furthermore, trust repair and social media are the two additions we propose to introduce to this new framework. As the SCCT is more concerned with reputation, we believe that trust repair would benefit the model, as this would help an organisation manage the behavioural outcomes and try to reverse the negative outcomes over time. Social media would have two roles to play in our framework. The first role would be to view the stakeholders’ trust during the initial crisis response strategy is implemented, as it would be a beneficial addition to Coombs model. The second role would be to view the trust repair process the company develops in terms of crisis management within the frames of social media.
4. Empirical method

In this chapter the Empirical method is presented. This chapter presents the methodology used to shape the study, as this thesis aims to explore how to communicate to gain consumers trust when facing an internal crisis on social media. This chapter will not only present the chosen research methods of this thesis but also how the data was gathered and further analysed.

4.1 Research design & strategy

The methodology is the information that is collected in an investigation and later analysed (Alvehus, 2013). The research design of this paper is a case study, and when conducting a case study, it is important to remember that a case study is tied to a single specific organisation, person, location or event (Bryman & Bell, 2015). H&M’s crisis of January 2018 is the basis of the case study. This study was conducted on an organisation that had been involved in a specific crisis event that affected the trust of the organisation’s stakeholders. The purpose of this study is to gain an insight into how trust repair works in relation to crises spread via social media. Therefore, an appropriate method to use is a case study design, which according to Bryman and Bell (2015) is a popular research design within business administration. A case study can also use secondary research to clarify an event, in terms of what worked and did not work in the studied situation that caused the crisis, and therefore a suitable method for this study.

Bryman and Bell (2015) further refer to case studies as being generally qualitative research oriented, where research is focused on words rather than numbers and generally aims at describing the qualities and characteristics of an individual phenomenon. A qualitative method is advantageous when the study aims at strengthening or developing existing theory, as it can create the conditions for the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the case being studied (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Based on this, we considered that a qualitative method was best suited for this paper.
4.2 Choice of case study

Our choice of the specific fast fashion retail company for this study, is based on several different criteria. First, we wanted to review a fast-fashion retail company that had been exposed to a self-inflicted crisis. We also considered that it would be interesting to review a crisis that has not been studied in a larger extent and therefore chose a crisis situation that had recently occurred. Also, an important factor was to identify an event that had the common elements of a crisis, meaning an event that threatened an organisation, had an element of surprise and a short time to be dealt with (Seeger, Sellnow, & Ulmer, 1998). Another criterion that we considered when choosing a case was the availability of information. As the case presentation involves a recent crisis from the 7th January 2018, there is a lot of information about the crisis on press releases and posts on social media.

4.3 Data collection

There are two different types of empirical data, primary- and secondary data. Primary data is a collection method utilised in research when there is a lack of data, meanwhile secondary data is old data gathered from old research (Alvehus, 2013). The following paper uses a qualitative method to collect data. The qualitative approach of this paper consists of primary data collected utilising the concept netnography to observe and later analyse social media feed, as well as a focus group. A focus group was added to complement the social media feed acquired, as a multimethod approach can benefit and strengthen the findings of this paper. Conducting a focus group to collect data contributed to getting an insight of what consumers think, feel and have experienced, as this information could not be obtained through other data collection methods, when examining trust.

4.3.1 Netnography

In this paper, a netnographic method has been implemented to collect data. Netnography is a new qualitative research method that adapts ethnographic research techniques to observe and study communication carried out with the help of the internet (Kozinets, 2002). Kozinets (2002) mentions that ethnography can be based on participation and/or
observation. This thesis is concerned with how trust repair works in the context of social media. Netnography, in the form of observing social media feed, is deemed as an appropriate method to use when investigating how communication and trust repair developed on social media. Kozinets (2002) further mentions that there are two different data when conducting such research. The former is archive data which is collected from sources the researchers have not participated in, and the latter field notes which is when the researchers participate in forming the data. We choose to gather archive data for our observations, avoiding any form of involvement or influence over the data.

Observation of the social media feed was made on three different social media platforms: Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. The reasoning behind why we chose these platforms was because they were the most active, as they managed to attract the most public attention in comparison to other platforms.

4.3.1.1 Posts and comments selection
Selection of H&M’s four posts were highly necessary to conduct this study as without them, we would not be able to achieve the purpose of the thesis. Posts and comments that were chosen and observed relating the crisis and H&M’s posts needed to be posted by socially involved individuals, hence the reason for netnographic observation. Our observations contained many posts by celebrities for two reasons, the first being that they were socially active, the second being that they attracted the most reactions. Despite this, our criterion to observe a comment or a post was that it had to be posted on one of the three selected social media platforms. A total of 13 posts and 12 comments were selected. Posts and comments on social media that were chosen for the study included celebrities’, regular consumers and H&M responses. Additionally, a post on H&M’s website was also chosen and analysed as it contained relevant data to our study.
4.3.2 Focus group

Focus Group is a method used to study peoples’ perceptions, knowledge, attitudes and values through group interviews. The method implies that a group under a moderator’s management discusses a given topic (Wibeck, 2000). A focus group is defined as a semi-structured group interview where a supervisor guides the discussion. It builds on interaction between the participants without interference or manipulation from the moderator, with the intent to accumulate information regarding a topic (McLafferty, 2004). Using a focus group also provides an insight to the development of opinions, thoughts and feelings of participants about the subject that is discussed (Alvehus, 2013). A single focus group interview was conducted in this study, to gain understanding surrounding individuals subjective reasoning about the crisis and trust. The amount of focus groups that should be conducted varies dependent on the size of the study, time scheduling and data needed (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Bryman and Bell (2015) argue that focus groups are time consuming to prepare and transcribe, students will not be able to carry out several focus group interviews as larger research projects normally do. In our case, using one focus group was therefore more suitable as this paper is a less extensive research, as well as data collection through social media was already conducted. Performing a focus group gave us complementary data and the opportunity to collect data surrounding subjects deemed related to trust repair based on the communication presented and developed by H&M. As using netnography to analyse posts and comment on social media did not give us direct interaction and the opportunity to ask relevant questions, a focus group seemed viable to conduct in order to answer the research question.

4.3.2.1 Participation selection

The selection of the participants was conducted by approaching students at Kristianstad University, mainly students from the business administration programs. Communication was done in person and through the social media platform Facebook. Three formal criteria were used to check if individuals were eligible to be part of the focus group as it was deemed necessary. They had to be aware of the H&M crisis of January 2018, be a H&M
consumer and use at least one of the three social media platforms used by H&M to communicate throughout the crisis. As the focus group would consist of young individuals, all being students, a connection would be created to a younger demographic. According to Falkheimer et al. (2009), social media tend to be used by younger people in comparison to the traditional media. Therefore, a reason behind using a younger demographic was to improve the compatibility between the data collected from the social media feed and the data collected from the focus group.

After searching for willing and eligible candidates to partake in the focus group, a single group composed of eight individuals was formed. As the focus group should be interactive and force the people to open up, it is advisable to have six to eight participants. If the number of participants is higher, it becomes difficult to moderate the session. Most participants were familiar with each other before prior to the focus group, which drove the conversation forward by eliminating some barriers when conducting dialog (McLafferty, 2004).

4.3.2.2 Focus group guide
The focus group had a semi-structured interview format, (see Appendix 2). It was constructed with eight main question and eight sub-questions for a more detailed discussion. Some of the eight main questions were general and open, but some consisted of more direct and specific questions (see Appendix 2). The focus group was held on the 14th of May and lasted for approximately one hour and ten minutes. Before the discussion started, refreshments and biscuits were offered, and the ground rules were introduced (see Appendix 2). Thereafter, everyone presented themselves, what social media platforms they use and on which of the following platform they had encountered anything related to H&M’s crisis. Then the focus group started to discuss more specific information regarding H&M’s crisis communication and trust repair efforts. To achieve this, the same posts, comments and pictures analysed in the netnography section where taken and used during the focus group. The use of these posts and pictures would serve as factors to spark
conversation and to decrease the level of passivity caused by the view of the discussion as a data source (Bryman & Bell, 2015). All the images and posts used and displayed during the focus group can be found in Appendix 1. The questions asked could be divided into three different categories. The first category, questions 1-4 addressed the advertisement H&M ran with the pictures of the advertisement, and the responses it received from celebrities, consumers and other stakeholders. The second category, question 5, consisted of sub-questions relating to H&M’s responses using Facebook, Instagram, Twitter and their website. The last category, questions 7-8, evolved around the boy used in the advertisement, more specifically his mother’s response on social media regarding the so-called crisis.

4.4 Data analysis

Data collected from the different social media platforms and the focus group were analysed. However, data collected from social media was conducted first, with the focus group later introduced to gain more empirical data to provide a better understanding of the data already collected. After performing the data collection, the next step was to analyse the data we had accumulated. Observed posts and comments were sorted in the following categories: H&M’s responses, celebrities’ responses to the crisis and consumers’ responses to the crisis. Dividing celebrities and consumers posts and comments was essential as it would become easier to keep track of all the data. Data was later categorised depending on the message and language it contained, so that it could be used under one of the appropriate elements discussed in Chapter 3. The objective while analysing the data has been to find and interpreted the context for each of the posts and comments, which Kozinets (2002) mentions is somewhat difficult. It is required to have an understanding of how communication works on the three selected social media platforms. This has not been a problem as we the researchers, have experience using all three different platforms.

Data analysed through social media feed has been mostly supported by the participants’ statements during the focus group. The purpose of the focus group was to support and provide deeper understanding of the posts and comments posted by stakeholders. The
answers and discussions provided during the focus group were analysed and interpreted with the results of the observations in mind. As the data collected from the focus group supported most of the data collected by the observations on social media, we resorted to theory to explain our findings.

4.5 Credibility and transferability

Research is always checked for validity and integrity. There are four criteria that need to be meet to reach validity, which are; credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Bryman & Bell, 2015). Bryman and Bell (2015) explain that, credibility is used to measure if the researcher’s performance is acceptable to others, in our case the analysis and interpretation of the social media feed and focus group. We tried to establish credibility through presenting the posts and comments in full detail when analysed in Chapter 6. In regards to the focus group, a copy of the interview guide was sent to our supervisor for approval to increase the validity of the questions to be discussed during the focus group. There is also a participation sheet (see Appendix 3) with information regarding the participants, although names have not been included to respect the privacy of the participants, and therefore remaining anonymous. Moving on to transferability, which is the ability to transfer our findings to other studies. As our research is based on data we have chosen and limited the study to, it raises the question to how transferable it is to other organisations (Bryman & Bell, 2015). In our case, it is important to showcase the findings and conclusions of our study in precise description, without deviating from the case presentation. Dependability involves being transparent and consistent with the storage of thesis drafts, interview recordings, transcriptions, Social media feed data and any other data in case of inspection of the material is required (Bryman & Bell, 2015). We have maintained and stored all the information and data used during this study on a safe external space. Lastly, Bryman and Bell (2015) mention that confirmability is about researchers carrying out their study in good faith, which we have always kept in mind when carrying out this study.
5. Case presentation

The fast fashion retailer H&M has come a long way across the globe since the first store (originally called Hennes) opened in the Swedish city Västerås in 1947, founded by Erling Persson (H&M, 2018d). H&M is second only to Inditex, owner of Zara, as the world’s largest fast fashion retailing company in the world. Today H&M operates in 4,743 stores across 69 countries (H&M, 2018b). H&M advertising campaigns are one of their many ways to communicate their business idea, aiming to inspire a wide and diverse target group by working with many models, style icons and celebrities (H&M, 2018c). H&M has a broad set of various policies and corporate values in place to guide them in their work, as well as Global policy on diversity, inclusiveness and equality, where H&M mentions that there is zero tolerance for discrimination (see Appendix 5) (H&M, 2018a).

In this chapter the case is based on H&M crisis in 2018. The second biggest fast fashion retailer in the world, managed to miss the mark by using an ad that provoked so many people all over social media. This has not been the only controversy that the company has faced throughout the years and has been a common theme for similar retailers, making this case current to study.

In January 7th 2018, H&M experienced a serious crisis after the image of a black boy modelling a sweatshirt emblazoned with "Coolest Monkey in the Jungle" spread all over social media. The image was advertised on the Swedish clothing retailer’s website in Britain, where H&M was criticized for racist undertones behind the ad (Bever, 2018).

The scandal did not only draw public accusations of racism because of the outcry over its ad that showed a black boy dressed in a hoodie with the words “coolest monkey in the
“jungle”. But the backlash was exacerbated by H&M use of a white boy model the range’s other jungle-themed sweatshirts on the same collection wearing a sweatshirt with images of animals reading the text “Mangrove jungle survival expert”, which add fuel to the fire.

Picture 1: H&M apologized for running this advertisement for a hoodie, (H&M via AP).
Source: Adapted from Bever, (2018).

Many people on social media thought it was inappropriate and offensive to why the white kid was a “jungle survivor” while the black kid was the “coolest monkey in the jungle” (RT Question more, 2018). The question was also brought up by several on Instagram, as to why the black child was not modelling both hoodies or vice versa and criticised H&M for being racist (Okogwu, 2018).

The reason many people were offended by the controversial clothing ad, was because of the word “monkey”. The word monkey has historically been used as a racial slur towards African Americans (Chervokas & Rothman, 2018). In modern time the word has been used in a derogatory way, and therefore thought that the ad had a lot to do with H&M sitting in a position of privilege (Okogwu, 2018). The style blogger Stephanie Yeboah tweeted the image on January 7th 2018 addressing the racial issue with the hoodie (see Appendix 1,
In less than 24 hours, the tweet had over 18,000 retweets and 23,000 likes, which the majority responses were negative against the brand (Tate, 2018).

In the SCCT model, Coombs (2015) points out that one of the intensifying factors is crisis history. This implies that if there is a consistent crisis history, it leads to greater crisis responsibility and that the company will be subjected to a higher reputational damage. Looking into the past of H&M they had been criticised before for using few black models in their advertisement, which they were accused for racism, in November 2015 (West, 2018) which can be another reason for their recent crisis. H&M had just launched in South Africa, when customers noticed the lack of diversity in their 2015 campaigns, especially the absence of zero black models. Customers took to twitter to hit up the company for some answers (Ohl, 2015). In tweets, H&M South Africa responded to that by saying:

*H&M’s marketing has a major impact and it is essential for us to convey a positive image.*
*We want our marketing to show our fashion in an inspiring way, to convey a positive feeling* (McGevna, 2015).

People that criticised H&M insinuated that the company believed that white models conveyed a more “positive image” and that only white models could portray fashion in an inspiring way, which rubbed salt in the wound (McGevna, 2015). H&M using the black boy in the context of being imaged as a “monkey” while the white boy was imaged as a “survivor”, highlighted the white boy conveying a more positive feeling, which many people thought was inappropriate. H&M South Africa later regretted the response to the social media Twitter, where they clarified the intention of the message and apologised for the tweet implying that they featured white models to convey a positive image (Wallwork, 2015).

If consumers emotions are not addressed as mentioned in the SCCT model, their behavioural intentions toward the company are affected negatively, leading to undesired
outcomes (Coombs, 2007). In the case of H&M’s ad of the black boy, many celebrities cut ties with the company as an outcome of the crisis. According to Chervokas and Rothmans (2018) news article, the disturbing image of the black boy led to many celebrities announcing on social media such as Instagram and Twitter their feelings about the ad. The rapper G-Eazy announced in a tweet on Instagram that he was genuinely excited to launch his upcoming collaboration with H&M, but after the ad, is now ending his partnership with the Swedish Retailer H&M. He could not understand how H&M could be so oblivious to let something so racially and culturally insensitive deemed acceptable and could not allow his name and brand to be associated with this (Chervokas & Rothman, 2018). The Canadian singer, The Weeknd, that had partnered with H&M for its 2017 Spring Icons Collection and modelled some of its apparel, posted on Twitter along with a photo of the ad, that he was shocked, embarrassed and deeply offended and that the will not be working with H&M anymore. There is a long list of other celebrities that denounced the ad, like the Cleveland Cavilers star LeBron James and the rapper Sean Combs known as P Diddy, as well as many of H&M customers threatened to boycott the clothing company (Meyer, 2018; Chervokas & Rothman, 2018).

After the advertisement of the hoodie on H&M’s online website in the United Kingdom, not only did artists cut ties with H&M, but many people used social media to condemn the company as well as some of the H&Ms shops in South Africa were trashed and forced to close as a result of protests related to the ad. The child’s mother has also received backlash for defending the brand (Finley, 2018).

H&M took several actions, including hiring a diversity leader and issuing a public apology that was featured at the top of their website on the 9th January (Olsen, 2018). In their statement, H&M clearly explain that they understand that many people are upset about the image being taken, and therefore removed it from their channels, but also the garment from their product offering globally, as well as making sure that this type of mistake will not happen again (Bever, 2018).
In the next chapter, we will further analyse H&M’s statement on their website and four posts that H&M posted on social media, alongside comments and other posts by various stakeholders such as business collaborators (artists and athletes), consumers and a journalist.
6. Empirical findings and analysis

In this chapter the empirical findings are presented and analysed based on the central concepts of crisis management and crisis communication. For this study, we have collected data through observations on Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, H&M’s website as well as a focus group.

6.1 Crisis management and communication

A crisis is defined as a significant threat to operations or reputations that can have negative consequences if not handled properly. In crisis management, the treat is the potential damage a crisis can inflict on an organisation, its stakeholders and an industry (Falkheimer et al., 2009). Coombs (2007) considers that crisis management is a critical function for an organisation, because failure in managing a crisis can result in serious harm to the stakeholders, losses for an organisation, or end its very existence. Crisis management aims to help organisations to manage crises and to minimize its negative impacts.

Crisis management is a process designed to prevent or lessen the damage a crisis can inflict on an organisation and its stakeholders. As a process, crisis management is not just one thing, but can be divided into the three phases, pre-crisis, crisis event and post-crisis aiming to help organisations to manage crises and to minimize its negative impacts (Coombs, 2007). Managing a crisis entails using communication to receive and share information and plays a determining role in all the stages (Dynes, 1970). This means to achieve effective communication, characteristics of a crisis situation must be taken into account, where the SCCT model provides an understanding to the actions needed to implement the desired communication respond (Coombs & Holladay, 2004).

When reviewing the findings, H&M’s pre-crisis planning could not foresee or prevented the development of the crisis, as it was stated by H&M on social media that the cause of the crisis was an internal oversight of routines (see Table 2 post 1).
Before further presenting the findings and analysis, three tables are presented to give an overview of how the crisis event developed and the different statements created by H&M during the crisis. Table 1 presents the timeline of the crisis. Table 2 presents the four different posts published by H&M on social media, following with table 3 that shows when and on which social media platform H&M published the posts. In addition, the statement by H&M on their website January 9th, 2018 will also be further analysed in this chapter.

The timeline of the crisis started on the 7th January, which was the day H&M published the ad of the black boy wearing the hoodie on their online website. During a period of ten days, there were many reactions from stakeholders, in particular customers and business collaborators such as celebrities all over social media posting their opinion about the ad. During this period, we could see how H&M interacted with their stakeholders by posting a statement on their website on the 9th January as well as four other posts on social media during 9th January to 17th January. H&M also interacted with their stakeholders by responding to the comments they received on the different posts. The end of the immediate crisis period was after an interview made by SVT news on the 18th of January featuring the mother of the boy. In table 1 the timeline of the crisis is presented.

**Table 1: Timeline**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January 7th</th>
<th>January 9th</th>
<th>January 10th</th>
<th>January 13th</th>
<th>January 16th</th>
<th>January 17th</th>
<th>January 18th</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start</td>
<td>Post 1 &amp; Web</td>
<td>Post 2</td>
<td>Post 3</td>
<td>Post 4</td>
<td>Post 4</td>
<td>End</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Posts by stakeholders on social media.</td>
<td>First post is made by H&amp;M stating the removal of the product. A similar post is published on the H&amp;M website.</td>
<td>Some emotions are addressed by H&amp;M's statements.</td>
<td>People vandalize H&amp;M stores to show their anger.</td>
<td>H&amp;M stores closed as a result of the protest.</td>
<td>Posts and comments by stakeholders.</td>
<td>H&amp;M hires a new diversity leader.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
H&M posted four statements in total on social media where they were able to apologise to their stakeholders for the ad but also explain how they would solve the consequences of the crisis moving forward. In the table below (Table 2), we present the four statements that H&M released on their social media accounts from 9th January to 17th January, naming them Post 1, Post 2, Post 3 and Post 4. Except their posts on social media, H&M also posted a statement on their website 9th of January. The different posts will be further analysed in this chapter.

**H&M**

**Table 2: The 4 posts**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Post 1</th>
<th>Post 2</th>
<th>Post 3</th>
<th>Post 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>We understand that many people are upset about the image of the children’s hoodie. We, who work at H&amp;M, can only agree. We’re deeply sorry that the picture was taken, and we also regret the actual print. Therefore, we’ve not only removed the image from our channels, but also the garment from our product offering. It is obvious that our routines haven’t been followed properly. This is without any doubt. We’ll thoroughly investigate why this happened to prevent this type of mistake from happening again.</td>
<td>We would like to put on record our position in relation to the controversial image of our hoodie. Our position is simple – we have got this wrong and we are deeply sorry. We have a responsibility to be aware of and attuned to all racial and cultural sensitivities – and we have not lived up to this responsibility this time. This incident is accidental in nature, but this doesn’t mean we don’t take it extremely seriously or understand the upset and discomfort it has caused. We have taken down the image and we have removed the garment. We will now be doing everything we possibly can to prevent this from happening again in future.</td>
<td>We are aware of the recent events in several of our South African stores. Out of concern for the safety of our employees and customers, we have temporarily closed all stores in the area. We strongly believe that racism and bias in any shape or form, deliberate or accidental, are simply unacceptable. We stress that our store staff had nothing to do with your poor judgement of producing the children’s hoodie and the image.</td>
<td>The recent incident was entirely unintentional, but it demonstrates so clearly how big our responsibility is as a global brand,” the statement read. “We have reached out, around the world, inside and outside H&amp;M to get feedback. Our commitment to addressing diversity and inclusiveness is genuine, therefore we have appointed a global leader, in this area, to drive our work forward. There will be more from us soon.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It appeared that H&M was aware of the need to communicate with their stakeholders during the crisis. H&M communicated with their consumers in a variety of ways, such as through social media using Facebook, Twitter and Instagram as their main platforms but also their website. Reviewing the different posts, there are some similarities to post 1 and post 2 compared to the other ones. In post 1, H&M shows their understanding of people being upset about the ad, and apologised by explaining that the ad and the garment had been removed. H&M also continues to explain that its routines have not been followed properly and that they will investigate why this happened to make sure it does not happen again. In
post 2 H&M apologised again and explained that the ad and the garment had been removed and further clarified that they will do everything to make sure it does not happen again. In comparison with their previous post the day before (post 1), H&M highlighted that the ad was accidental even though they understand the damage that it caused. H&M also pointed out that they had a responsibility to be aware of racial and cultural sensitivities, which they explain that they did not live up to this time. In Post 3, H&M showed their concern about their employees and customers safety as a respond to the protest that was going on in South Africa 13th of January, leading to several of their South African stores being closed. H&M message with this post was to clarify that their staff had nothing to do with their poor judgement of producing the hoodie. Post 4 is where we can see how H&M is trying to prevent this kind of incident from happening again, by hiring a diversity leader to drive their work forward.

The participants had different views and thoughts regarding the posts after reading them, as it was their first time seeing the posts. For example, Participant 4 thought it was good that H&M realised they made a mistake and was afraid that the four posts would not make up for how people felt around the world. She believed it would be hard for people to forget about the crisis due to its affect. On the other hand, Participant 5, emphasised that H&M came a long way in terms of how they handled the crisis. However, Participant 1 did not agree and believed that H&M should have removed everything that had to do with how great they acted and focus more on what they did wrong.

When looking at the individual posts and their contents, the participants felt post 1 was a way for H&M to buy more time to respond to their stakeholders. They believed that H&M already knew what routine had not been followed properly, and that H&M saying “we will investigate why this happened” was a strategy for them to act as if the crisis was not something they could have prevented from the beginning. The participants felt H&M took more responsibility in post 2 than in post 1, were they felt that H&M was more genuine in their statement. They pointed out that H&M did not blame their routines but took full
responsibility by admitting that “We have a responsibility (...) and we have not lived up to this responsibility this time”, which showed that H&M understood their mistake. In post 3 the participants felt that H&M did not really apologise, but more informing the people about what happened in South Africa. However, the participants acknowledge that H&M puncture that it was not their intent with the crisis and that the staff had nothing to do with it, which they appreciated. Post 4 the participants thought it was good of H&M to hire a diversity leader and would have liked to hear from the diversity leader as well. However, participant 8 wondered what more feedback H&M needed, when they got so many reactions from people. She also believed that the post was necessary as it showed the future outlook but does not believe that many people would listen right away due to them still being angry (see Appendix 4).

In the table below (Table 3), we further present what social media platforms were used for the four different statements, as well as the number of comments, likes and shares received by each of the statements that H&M posted on their social media accounts.

According to Schultz et al. (2011), organisations’ communication with stakeholders become even more powerful the more communication channels they use, as they will have a greater opportunity to influence, in the case of H&M. Post 1 was published on Twitter,
Instagram and Facebook on 9\textsuperscript{th} of January, which unified and contained the same message. Post 2 published on the 10\textsuperscript{th} of January was on the other hand not posted on any other social media channel except for Instagram. Here H&M explained their responsibility to be aware of racial sensitivity (see Table 2). H&M also posted post 3 on Twitter 13\textsuperscript{th} of January that they did not post on any other social media channels either, showing their concern about the staff due to the protest in South Africa (see Table 2). However, post 4 was publicize as post 1 on all three social media channels, where H&M explained that a diversity leader has been hired (see Table 2). Looking at the different comments, likes and reactions of the different post on social media, we can conclude that Instagram was the platform that contained most likes and comments following with Twitter being second, and then Facebook with the lowest likes and comments (see Table 3).

Based on the communication channels we reviewed, H&M used social media as their main platform. H&M were not only able communicate about the crisis situation but could quickly and constantly respond to the stakeholders’ comments. This is something that Schultz et al. (2011) point out it is beneficial to communicate through social media, mainly because the organisations can build relationships with their stakeholders faster than through traditional media.

Except the different post on social media, H&M did publish on the same day as post 1, 9\textsuperscript{th} of January a formal statement on their website, apologising for the ad of the black boy wearing the hoodie, where H&M stated:

“To all customers, staff, media, stakeholders, partners, suppliers, friends and critics. We would like to put on record our position in relation to the image and promotion of a children’s sweater, and the ensuing response and criticism. Our position is simple and unequivocal – we have got this wrong and we are deeply sorry. H&M is fully committed to playing its part in addressing society’s issues and problems, whether it’s diversity, working conditions or environmental protection – and many others. Our standards are high and we feel that we have made real progress over the years in playing our part in promoting diversity and inclusion. But we clearly haven’t come far enough.”
We agree with all the criticism that this has generated – we have got this wrong and we agree that, even if unintentional, passive or casual racism needs to be eradicated wherever it exists. We appreciate the support of those who have seen that our product and promotion were not intended to cause offence but, as a global brand, we have a responsibility to be aware of and attuned to all racial and cultural sensitivities – and we have not lived up to this responsibility this time.

This incident is accidental in nature, but this doesn’t mean we don’t take it extremely seriously or understand the upset and discomfort it has caused.

We have taken down the image and we have removed the garment in question from sale. It will be recycled.

We will now be doing everything we possibly can to prevent this from happening again in future.

Racism and bias in any shape or form, conscious or unconscious, deliberate or accidental, are simply unacceptable and need to be eradicated from society. In this instance we have not been sensitive enough to this agenda.

Please accept our humble apologies” (H&M, 2018e).

An overview of the different tables and posts that H&M did during the crisis has now been reviewed. In the following of this chapter the different elements from the SCCT model in context with the empirical findings will be analysed.

6.1.1 Crisis responsibility

To develop an understanding about crisis situation, one must review the crisis responsibility element within the SCCT model, which explains who is responsible for a crisis. Dietz and Gillespie (2015) mentioned that it is important that a statement includes who is responsible for the crisis. To evaluate what responsibility the organisation has for what has happened is also an initial step in the process of regaining the stakeholder’s trust during a crisis (Dietz & Gillespie, 2012).

When approaching the responsibility for H&Ms crisis in January 2018, it is certain that H&M share some of it, as it has been addressed by the company with a statement via their website and the different posts on social media (see Table 2), where it showcases that H&M is aware of the error they made. H&M is not only apologizing but showing their
stakeholders that they understand and can only agree to how the ad was upsetting. H&M also takes initial steps to remove the garment for their product offering.

Coombs (2015) and Xu and Li (2013) present various crisis clusters that organisations may be in depending on how much responsibility they attributed. The different types of clusters are: victim-, accidental-, and preventable cluster. When examining the empirical findings and analysis of the responsibility H&M had for the crisis and how it emerged in the communication channels, we could not see any indications that H&M was in, what Coombs (2007) calls for the victim cluster.

Based on the empirical findings, we argue that H&M falls between the category accidental- and preventable cluster. H&M could have prevented the crisis if the source of it was addressed properly, but at the same time they are stating that this was not something they did intentionally to harm anybody. In the preventable cluster, organisations have a lot of responsibility for what has occurred (Coombs, 2007), and the organisation is often the source of the emergence of the crisis as a result of improper actions (Coombs, 2015). Based on the various channels of communication, we could see that H&M discussed what was the source of the crisis’s rise. Following on their posts on social media January 9th, post 1, they emphasized that: “It is obvious that our routines haven’t been followed properly. This is without any doubt (...)” (see Table 2). On their Instagram January 10th post 2, they again explain “(...) We have got this wrong and we are deeply sorry” (see Table 2).

With this statement, we consider that they should have followed their routine and policies more properly, which H&M also clarifies by saying “(...) We’ll thoroughly investigate why this happened (...)” on post 1. According to Mejerei and De Wolf (2013), this means that the organisation oversees higher crisis responses, which H&M also takes responsibility for. On the other hand, H&M is also communicating in post 2, saying “(...) This incident is accidental in nature”, and in post 4, stating “The recent incident was entirely unintentional (...)” (see Table 2). With these statements it is clear that H&M did not have crisis intentions
in mind when operating the ad, and therefore shows indication of accidental cluster (Coombs, 2006).

Looking at the statement H&M released on their website, they were fully committed to have played a part in addressing the crisis. Participant 1 in the focus group thought H&M’s statement in post 1 was better than the one released on their website as it addressed more specifically what they did wrong. However, Participant 8 disagreed and asked what more could H&M have done, when they did apologise (see Appendix 4).

6.1.1.1 H&Ms interaction with stakeholders
Looking at the comments that H&M got on post 1 on Facebook, they still acknowledge their fault, regardless if they were responding to someone that did not think H&M did anything wrong. One comment, which was met by the most negative reactions (312 reactions), was the comment:

“I do not think you guys did anything wrong. The question is why people see the image as racist, it says more about them than about you” (see Appendix 1 picture 4).

H&M respond to this was:

*We understand that the image upset many, and we who work at H&M can only help. We are extremely sorry that the picture was taken, and we regret printing the shirt itself (...).*

Participant 3 in the focus group did not agree with the stakeholder’s comment above. She believed that the stakeholder had never experienced racism before and could therefore not relate to ad (see Appendix 4).

Another comment that H&M received on post 1, the person wrote:

*“H&M What are you doing? Do you understand the context? History? The present time? I cannot stop wondering about your ignorance? How many eyes have seen this and not*
responded? How is that possible? Would like to have answers to this”, (see Appendix 1 picture 4).

H&M responded to this person by saying:

“Hi xxx, thank you for your comment. We realize that we have made a mistake and apologize for the publication of the image with the shirt. It was never our intention to make anyone upset and it is clear that our routines broke internally. There will of course be an examination of the situation and were it broke internally to prevent the emergence of similar situations”.

Moreover, H&M posted a picture (see Appendix 1 picture 6) on the 17th January on Facebook saying: “We are listening”, following with their statement post 2, where they wrote “The recent incident was entirely unintentional, but it demonstrates so clearly how big our responsibility is as a global brand (...)”, (see Table 2).

Here we could clearly see that H&M was taking responsibility by mentioning how big their responsibilities are, but they also wanted to remind the stakeholders that this was entirely unintentional. In the same sentence, we interpret that H&M take responsibility for what had happened but also tries to minimise their responsibility by constantly stating that the ad was an incidental accident or unintentional which they did in post 2 and post 4, (see Table 2).

A reflection to consider when H&M expresses themselves, is that they use the words “We who work at H&M”, “Our responsibility”, when communicating, which shows an unified organisation in front of a message. But at the same time when H&M is informing the stakeholders, it does not show exactly who in H&M is responsible for the failure of the ad. Both Dietz & Gillespie (2012) and Gillespie et al. (2014) highlight the importance that the organisation’s communication to stakeholders should include a statement of whom is responsible for the failure. From Dietz and Gillespie (2012) article, it is not possible to read about what level they mean when saying "whom", whether it is the executive, the department or a person that should be responsible. But what we can find here is that it is
H&M as an organisation that takes responsibility, but maybe not directly that this for example is the CEO who is speaking.

By examining H&M communication both immediately when the crisis broke out but also after a while, we realized that H&M took on more responsibility, the more time went on. This is shown by H&M on their last post 17th of January, post 4 (see Table 2), saying that they are still listening and is taking serious actions to avoid this from happening again by hiring a diversity leader in hopes of keeping the company clear of further accusations of racism. Xu & Li (2013) believes that recognition from the organisation is about saying that they take responsibility for what has happened and ask to be forgiven by the stakeholders, as we could see in H&Ms statements. This could also initiate trust repairing between H&M and its stakeholders, as Dietz and Gillespie (2012) further argue that claiming responsibility is an essential first step towards regaining trust.

6.1.2 Crisis response strategy
As H&M evaluated the responsibility they faced, next up would be to form a response strategy adequate to the level of responsibility. One important step to regaining stakeholders’ trust is to inform them of how they will go about remedying their mistakes (Coombs, 2007; Coombs, 2015; Xu & Li, 2013). Having a goal-oriented trust building plan is of great importance according to Falkheimer et al. (2009) as the stakeholders are in strong need of information. Organisations should therefore show what they are doing and what their plans are to solve the problem. H&Ms response strategy on social media could be tracked using the four posts from the different social media platforms (see Table 2), as well as their statement on the website.

When analysing the content of two statements, post 1 and post 4, they received different amount of views, likes and comments. As Table 3 showcases, it is important to note that these two posts where the two only post to be posted on all three different social media platforms. Post 1 was published on the 9th of January, shortly after the incident occurred
and received on Facebook over 601 reactions, 452 likes and 99 negative emojis, which was the lowest out of the three different social media platforms. On Instagram it received the highest amount of attraction, with 314,400 likes and 62,400 comments. Meanwhile, post 4 was published in a form of a picture on the 16th of January on Twitter and Instagram, and on the 17th of January on Facebook, over one week after the incident. This following post received a lower reaction count across all three social media platforms (see Table 3).

The three response strategies available according to Coombs (2006) are deny, diminish and deal. In post 1 that H&M released on the 9th of January, H&M started the implementation of their response strategy on social media by apologising and displaying concern (see Table 2). This post confirms that out of the three responses available, H&M chose a deal response. This is indicated as with a deal response, concern is raised, and an apology is issued, which H&M did in post 1. Furthermore, H&M went on to state that they were deeply sorry that the picture was taken. This further strengthen the indication that H&M chose a deal response, as it showcases regret and fully absorbed responsibility (Coombs, 2007).

Post 4 that was published after the incident, being H&Ms last posts, shows how H&M reinforce their deal response strategy. This post was published 16th on Twitter and Instagram following with the same post on 17th January on Facebook (see Table 3), which was over one week after the incident, which might suggest that H&M was working on a proper communication strategy during the crisis. According to Coombs (2015) it is not easy to develop a crisis strategy during a crisis, as it could help in the successfulness and effectiveness of a crisis response strategy.

6.1.3 Emotions
All the posts and comments published on social media contained different emotions emitted by stakeholders. To develop an understanding of the emotions displayed during the crisis, posts and comments is to identify words that have significant emotional meaning. Posts are picked if deemed relevant, reliable and have attracted a lot of attention on social media.
Some will consist of business collaborators and celebrities, but there will also be posts from consumers, all of which accumulated high amount of reactions, likes and comments. All the statements made by these different individuals are still being upheld to this day, and there have been no other posts published to retract what has been stated.

6.1.3.1 Posts and comments from celebrities

One post that displayed a lot of emotions was posted on January the 8th of 2018 on Twitter, by the artist The Weeknd, saying:

“Woke up this morning shocked and embarrassed by this photo. I’m deeply offended and will not be working with @hm anymore…”, (see Appendix 1 picture 3).

This post got 303,000 likes and over 136,000 retweets. The words used by The Weeknd are “shocked”, “embarrassed” and “offended”, which are negative emotions that are hard to confront, and were not confronted before the post was made. Instead, H&M released the first statement one day later, on the 9th of January. This indicate that H&M did not use communications straight away, to address emotions so that stakeholders would not dictate their behaviour around the negative emotions they were feeling during the crisis.

Yet another post published on the 8th of January on Instagram was by the artist Sean Combs, known as P Diddy. Sean Combs is a very well-known rapper, singer and entrepreneur. He published the following post:

“Put some respect on it!! When you look at us make sure you see royalty and super natural God sent glory!! Anything else is disrespectful”, (see Appendix 1 picture 3):

This post received 492,395 likes and 16 234 comments. Words used that insinuate emotion are “super natural”, “glory” and “disrespectful”. This individual chose to add a picture of the boy in the garment, removing the wordings on it and instead putting “Coolest king in the world”. It is clear that the person chose to react how they were feeling about the
incident, by altering the garment so that their emotions could be manifested and understood by H&M and the public.

Another post on Instagram that contained highly emotional words was published by another artist named G-eazy, that had 743,848 likes and 25,911 comments. G-eazy posted the following:

“Unfortunately, after seeing the disturbing image yesterday, my excitement over our global campaign quickly evaporated, and I’ve decided at this time our partnership needs to end. Whether an oblivious oversight or not, it’s truly sad and disturbing that in 2018, something so racially and culturally insensitive could pass by the eyes of many and be deemed acceptable. I can’t allow my name or brand to be associated with a company that could let this happen. I hope that this situation will serve as the wakeup call that H&M and other companies need to get on track and become racially and culturally aware, as well as more diverse at every level.”, (see Appendix 1 picture 3).

Emotional words that could be identified were “evaporated”, “sad” and “disturbing”, later backed by how something so culturally insensitive could not have caught the attention of so many employees working on the product.

The behavioural intentions displayed by G-eazy are supported by Participant 3 in the focus group, where she illuminated that if you do not agree with H&M’s action, you should not support them by collaborating with them. She continued explaining that he would protect his brand, which is a representation of him (see Appendix 4).

Yet another post on Instagram that had an astonishing number of likes, with 1,230,633, is of an athlete by the name of Lebron James. This was the most liked comment on all the social platforms with 30,868 comments. Lebron James posted:
“@hm u got us wrong! And we ain’t going for it! Straight up! Enough about y’all and more of what I see when I look at this photo. I see a Young King!! The ruler of the world, an untouchable Force that can never be denied! We as African American will always have to break barriers, prove people wrong and work even harder to prove we belong but guess what, that’s what we love because the benefits at the end of the road are so beautiful!!”, (See Appendix 1 picture 3).

Looking over the language used in the post, an observation could be made to how the person is trying to communicate negative emotions. Words such as “enough”, “untouchable force”, “denied” and “wrong” could be identified. The person is trying to present his emotions and although they are somewhat negative, the overall message of the post is trying to reach a positive point.

Looking at the journalist Charles M. Blow that made a short comment on Twitter, where he stated:

“. @hm, have you lost your damned minds?!?!?!” (See Appendix 1 picture 3).

The journalist used many “exclamation marks” and “questions marks” to express his frustration as well as the words “damned minds”, where it is clear that negative emotion was shown. He got over 13,600 likes and 8,774 retweets.

In the focus group, Participant 6 stated that she agreed with the celebrities’ comments, and that H&M acted wrongfully according to her opinion. Participant 4 raised the issue that most of the celebrities that reacted to the ad, were dark skinned. Participant 8, responded by saying this is understandable as this was their platform to speak out, due to the word monkey being used historically as a racial slur towards them. She went on to say that their opinion matters and that it is important for H&M to listen. Many of the participants thought it was strange how H&M, a big international fast fashion retail could not have seen the racial context of the ad. They also argued that the ad is supposed to be seen by many within
the organisation before revealing it on the website and could not understand why this was
never stopped by anyone at H&M. Participant 6 believed that this was a strategy made by
H&M to gain more publicity. Participant 4 agreed and commented that H&M received a
lot of publicity all over social media. She compared it to bloggers that sometimes receive
bad reactions for something they have done, but ultimately adds to their “fame”, therefore
a good thing due to many people talking about them. She meant that H&M might have used
the same trick to gain publicity.

6.1.3.1 Posts and comments from consumers
Next post observed is a consumer’s twitter post with over 100 likes and shares, which was
also published on the 8th of January 2018. The user big_deen75 known as Big_deen issued
the following statement:

“So, the black kid gets to wear the H&M sweater with “Coolest monkey in the jungle” and
the white kid with “Survival expert”. This is beyond disgusting. It’s a projection of your neo-
colonial thinking. You won’t see me anywhere near your shops these days @hm”, (see
Appendix 1 picture 4).

This consumer uses the word “disgusting”, which is a negative loaded word to show their
protest and current state of mind regarding the incident. It is noticeable that this consumers
anger drove them to post a statement and share it with everyone on twitter, and with
everyone associated with H&M by tagging them in the post.

H&M received a comment on post 1 on Facebook, where a person commented:

“Of course, there are two perspectives to look at this ... but I agree with the majority that you
should have understood how this would be met by the world”, (see Appendix 1 picture 4).
The person later commented again saying:

“However, I still have to add that there is a BIG difference now that I see what the other boy has for shirt – survival expert and white skin. No, I immediately became horrendous and do not understand what you guys were thinking”, (see Appendix 1 picture 4).

This shows again that people were not only angry because of the hoodie but that it was offensive to why the white boy portrayed a better image than the black boy which Big_deen also stated on Twitter (see Appendix 1 picture 4). Participant 6 from the focus group stated that it is more “touching” when seeing the white boy in the same collection as the black boy, wearing the “survival expert” hoodie. She said it is here you can see the significant difference, where other participant commented that this is so wrong and that they have never seen anything like this before. Participant 5 was also wondering how come H&M could not have thought about how wrong this would look, when making the ad and that H&M should have known better. Participant 2 responded to this by saying she just believed H&M did not think so far. The participants’ overall thoughts when viewing the ad with only the black boy, were that they did not notice anything wrong at first. But after seeing the reactions it received on social media, that is when it became more visual how other people perceived the ad. Participant 7 added that if H&M would have changed hoodies the boys were wearing, this issue would have not occurred. Participant 8 agreed to this and added that due to the history, the reactions from stakeholders were understandable. Participant 8 also commented that the phrase “coolest monkey” is not negatively charged due to the word “coolest”, but the word “monkey” is where it becomes wrong. She explained that the way you see the ad lies in the eyes of the beholder to how you perceive the ad the first time seeing it. It has to do with the association to the word, where she meant that white people do not see it in relation to the black people due to the racial history (see Appendix 4).
When reviewing all the different posts and comments above, it somewhat indicates that people who accumulated the most emotions over the crisis where of countries with ties to colonialism. According to White (2012) colonialism was the act of a policy, were a certain country would seek to extend or retain its authority over other countries, with the intent to exploit its people and resources. United States of America and South Africa are the two countries the crisis drew most attention in, and both countries where affected by colonialism (White, 2012). The Weeknd, Lebron James, P Diddy, Charles M. Blow and Big deen are African Americans living in the United states of America, which historically has seen great inequality and cultural insensitivity throughout its time. Their posts hint to cultural insensitivity and colonialism.

On the one hand, when looking at the boy used in the advertisement by H&M, he was born and raised by his family in Sweden, which has little to none ties to colonialism and is a very secular country (Zuckerman, 2009). This was further illustrated in the focus group discussions. A consensus was reached, and the participants agreed that there is extreme division in the United States of America when it comes to racism, compared to Sweden. They meant that in the United States of America, you could associate racism in a historical context, that cannot be done in Sweden (see Appendix 4).

The mother of the boy commented on Facebook responding to people who tried to communicate their negative emotions to H&M. The mother commented the following:

“Am the mum and this is one of hundreds of outfits my son has modelled……. stop crying Wolf all the time, unnecessary issue here…. get over it (see Appendix 1 picture 5).

The mother got a lot of backlash where she later responded to a person saying:

“xxx that’s my son…I have been to all photoshoots and this was not an exception, everyone is entitled to their opinion about this, (see Appendix 1 picture 5).
The person that the mom responded to, commented by saying:

“xxxx you are!!! Well do you understand why people are confused and enraged by this? H&M should really have swapped shirt on the kids (sad emoji)”. (see Appendix 1 picture 5).

The mother responded again to this person by saying:

“I really don’t understand but not coz am choosing not to but because it’s not my way of thinking”, (see Appendix 1 picture 5).

This showcases that the emotions displayed by people, depend on which country they are from. The mother of the boy concluded her comment by stating that “it’s not my way of thinking”, implying that her thinking process is different from those who were posting and commenting from United states of America and other countries affected by colonialism. The mother received a lot of backlashes for telling people to “get over it” and that they were “crying wolf”. An interview on the 18th of January, was conducted by the SVT news with the mother of the boy explaining her point of view. She told that her first reaction was that people on social media were overreacting, where she later expressed herself by the comments she made on Facebook. She went further to tell that after she had made the comments, she was met with a barrage of abuse, receiving several threats, hate mail, text messages and comments (Sturm, 2018).

The participants in the focus group had different opinions about the mother’s comment. Participant 7 thought that the print on the hoodie itself was not acceptable, as she would never allow her child to wear the hoodie to avoid him from getting bullied. Participant 5 explained that the mother is maybe saying that to protect herself, as she did not act to stop the photoshoot from happening. However, Participant 3 argued that this maybe is just the mother’s way of thinking. Where Participant 6 explained she did not agree with the mother’s statement but believes that the mother calmed the situation. Participant 8 believed
it was beneficial that the mother made the statement. She meant it showcased that it was not a big deal and that she was happy with the collaboration, which Participant 1 agreed to, as you might see that no harm towards the boy occurred.

6.1.4 Behavioural outcomes
With the emotions analysed in form of posts published by various stakeholders, negative emotions, if not addressed, can lead to severe behavioural outcomes that affect the reputation, trust relationship and collaboration between H&M and its stakeholders. By looking at the posts business collaborators and consumers published, the negative emotions were accompanied with negative behavioural intentions. The posts and comments reveal that business collaborators decided to end their business relationship with H&M because of the incident.

The post by the artist Weeknd, published on the 8th of January showcases how he was one of many to end the relationship and even boycott H&M (see Appendix 1 picture 3). A behavioural outcome by P Diddy, was to offer the black boy a modelling contract worth one million dollars. P Diddy wanted the boy to model for his own brand “Sean John” instead of modelling for H&M due to the way they portrayed the boy (Baillie, 2018).

Business collaborators as well as the average consumer communicated their intentions towards H&M via social media. For instance, the post by Big_deen in the section above (Appendix 1 picture 4) starts by displaying negative emotions that later turns into hostile stance towards H&M. This is in line with what Coombs (2007) states about if emotions are not addressed quickly, the behavioural outcome or intention become less supportive and could even turn hostile. In Big_deen’s post, the person ends by stating and presenting their behavioural intention towards H&M in the future. This statement indicates that this consumer decided to boycott H&M because of the incident and had over 100 likes, which could also indicate that over a hundred individuals endorsed the boycott idea.
Reviewing the fact that the post by Big_deen, a regular consumer, had over 100 shares and 95 comments, is a prime example of how it spread negative word-of-mouth. By having over 100 shares, this allowed the word to spread. By that time, H&M had yet to post a statement, which could have reinforced the statement made by Big_deen and lead other consumers that had seen the post question their behavioural intentions towards H&M.

6.2 Trust repair

As mentioned in the behavioural outcome section, stakeholders tend to base their intentions towards a company based on the emotions they have developed over time after the crisis. Crisis history and reputation, the two intensifying factors according to Coombs (2007), play a role in affecting stakeholders attitudes and intentions long after and before a crisis.

A comment that H&M got on post 1 on Facebook was:

“It’s not the first time you do something like this. Do you not remember your advertising campaign 2015 in South Africa that got a big backlash? That you guys did not learn from that”, (see Appendix 1 picture 4).

Another comment that H&M also received on post 1 on Facebook was:

“How are you responsible for the slavery / child trafficking that you have in order to get your clothes made? It cost you guys few but are selling it for several hundred?”, (see Appendix 1 picture 4).

This was also displayed in the focus group by Participant 8, where she said it looked as if H&M got backlash for other things in the past as well, not only for the crisis itself. Participant 7 expressed not buying any of H&M’s statements due to this not being the first time they have done something similar. She continued to say that H&M makes the same mistakes repeatedly and would not be surprised if it happened again. Participant 8 also
agreed to this by commenting she felt H&M has a reputation in this style and wonders how much bad reputation H&M really need (see Appendix 4).

In the case of H&M, their crisis history that consists of various crisis relating to child labour, cultural insensitivity and discrimination had already formed a reputation history of getting things wrong. Measures taken to rebuild trust and reputation after some of the experienced crisis would have taken H&M a long time. When a new crisis occurs, all of the effort put into rebuilding trust and reputation become redundant, and a start over is required. Looking at the comments above it is clear to see how the stakeholders are holding H&M accountable for their past crisis while H&M is facing their new crisis.

An initial part of the gathering of empirical findings was to find out if H&M communication revealed their ambition to regain consumers trust again. We also wanted to see if the organisation was aware of the importance of stakeholders in a crisis and that their communication to them was important.

H&M communicated that they were aware that the events affected stakeholders’ trust, and this is something that they were working on by the several posts they uploaded on their social media accounts. On post 4 which H&M posted on 17th of January on Facebook (see Table 2), it is clear how they once again are apologizing and explaining that the ad was unintentional and that they are taking responsibility as they are open for feedback. It is also a way of making sure to deliver clear, repeated and consistent signals to how they want to regain the lost trust, which Gillespie, Dietz and Lockey (2014) argue one should do.

Unlike their previous posts, there were more people showing how appreciated they were for H&M listening and saying, “Thank you” on all three social media platforms. The comment with the most likes on Facebook was written by a woman saying:
“I’ve had enough of seeing how people can hold on and criticize forever. You apologized which shows regret, but it is not enough for people. What more do you want? I think it’s crazy and super stupid but because you have apologized and regretted what has happened, I think you have to be able to move on and learn from what has happened. What had life been like if you were punished time and time again despite apologizing and regretting everything and it had led to exploration? There must be a limit on how much criticism is given and shit. Give HM a new chance, you are not flawless people any of you. "Throw stone if you have never done something wrong", (see Appendix 1 picture 4).

This shows that at least some of the stakeholders are being more forgiving, and that H&M is trying their best to regain consumers trust as we can see the turnover from many comments compared to before. Looking at their first post on Facebook which is post 1 (see Table 2), H&M got 99 negative emojis and on their last post, post 4, they only got 5 negative emojis. A comment from participant 3 in the focus group pointed out that trust is also seen by the stakeholders if they still shop a H&M after the crisis, which she means indicates if they have forgiven H&M or not (see Appendix 4). Another indication to forgiveness or that people forgot is the fact that the post received way less amount of negative emojis on the last post.

Empirical findings also showed that H&M was aware that communicating only with interested parties was not enough, but actions needed to be taken. This became clear when they employed a diversity leader that was going to be committed to address diversity and inclusiveness in this area, to ensure that something like the ad would not happen again (Olsen, 2018).

In the conducted focus group, Participant 5 thought that H&M handled the crisis quite well as they made the best out of the situation. He believed that H&M could not have formulated themselves better to their stakeholders to show that their intent was not to be racist. Meanwhile, Participant 8 concurred to the fact that H&M did all they could and that only time will tell if they are genuine. Participant 6 explained H&M could not do more than
apologies for the situation as their last post (post 4), indicated that the issue was taken seriously by H&M, and agrees with participant 8 that the future will determine if it is true (see Appendix 4).

6.3 Stakeholders and their importance in a crisis

After a crisis has affected the organisation, it is important that the company provide immediate response to their stakeholders (Coombs, 2015; Dietz & Gillespie, 2012; Gillespie et al., 2014; Mejeri & De Wolf, 2013). In order to regain trust from stakeholders, the organisation should communicate information about the event, which also reduces the uncertainties of stakeholders (Kodish, 2014). We reviewed H&M’s first response to stakeholders and the public on the 9th of January both on social media (see Table 2) and their website. In their statement, H&M wrote that they understood that many people are upset about the image of the children’s hoodie and are deeply sorry that the picture was taken. It took one day for H&M to contact their stakeholders again with more information on Instagram on the 10th (post 2) saying that ad was accidental in nature, and that they take this extremely seriously, where they explained that the image and the garment has been removed and will do everything to prevent this from happening again. Next contact H&M had with their stakeholders was on the 13th January (post 3) on Twitter explaining that their store staff had nothing to do with their poor judgement of producing the hoodie and the image. Their last post about this crisis (post 4) was on the 17th of January on Facebook sharing the same post they uploaded on Instagram the day before saying “we are listening”, where H&M is explaining how big their responsibilities as a global company by appointed a global leader.

Based on this information, we could see that H&M acted in accordance with what Mejeri and De Wolf (2013) and Dietz and Gillespie (2012) talk about regarding direct response within the first two hours and the first two days. With their statement, we believe that H&M tried to regain trust with stakeholders by explaining that they would hire a global leader to figure out why this happened. We also believe that the most important factor was that H&M
showed they are listening to their stakeholders and doing their best to make sure this would not happen again. However, there are both advantages and disadvantages for this approach. Benefits in terms of making it clear for the stakeholders that they take this seriously and are doing something about it. The disadvantage is that stakeholders still have not gotten a response from H&M to why it did happen. On their last post, post 4 H&M wrote (…) *There will be more from us soon*, (see Table 2) but they have not posted anything after that.

In the focus group, Participant 5 said he had not heard from H&M and believed that H&M thought that people have forgotten about the crisis and therefore is the reason we have not heard from them. Participant 7 stated that if it is going to take this long for us to hear something from H&M, it should be something worth waiting for. She continued saying that if she would not hear from H&M again, then their statement would be a lie.

According to both Harrison et al. (2015) and Ulmer (2001), strong relationships with their stakeholders are significant for an organisation. In H&M’s communication around the crisis they spoke on several occasions about the importance of their stakeholders such as customers and partners. On their website from 9th January, they also underlined that they were extremely sad to let their stakeholders down, stating: “*To all customers, staff, media, stakeholders, partners, suppliers, friends and critics (…)***”, (H&M, 2018e).

Ulmer (2001) highlights the importance of organisations identifying their stakeholders. H&M is clearly mentioning them in their statement, clarifying that this is anybody that was affected by the ad. We argue that H&M has reflected on the importance of stakeholders in their communication. This shows that H&M not only directed its communication to a group, but everyone who showed interest in H&M. However, the participants in the focus group thought that H&M needed to apologise to the boy as he was the one displayed on the ad. They also agreed on wanting to hear from the expert hired to help H&M navigate through the crisis, informing what went wrong and what measures have been taken so it does not happen again.
7. Thesis conclusions

The last chapter in this dissertation is the conclusions of the empirical findings and analysis. The empirical findings will be linked to the purpose of the study. The chapter begins with a summary of the dissertation and then a discussion follows with a conclusion of the research. The chapter ends with a discussion on proposals for further research within the crisis management and crisis communication field.

7.1 Summary of the thesis

The thesis aimed to explore how fast fashion retail companies, especially H&M, handle self-inflicted crisis spread via social media to regain stakeholders trust. This thesis sheds light on how essential communication is during a crisis, but also the importance of a two-way interactive communication when trying to regain trust. Through a qualitative study and with the help of an abductive approach, observations were made on social media to gain a deeper understanding of crisis communication and trust repair. Posts and comments were chosen based on the attraction they accumulated. With the help of previous research, an analytical model was formed with additional elements introduced to help us conduct our analysis of the social media feed. Furthermore, a focus group was formed to gather more data and consisted of students from Kristianstad University. There were several reasons behind conducting a focus group, which were: to gather more data and strengthen the results of the social media feed analysis. Another reason was to acquire relevant information regarding individuals’ subjective thoughts surrounding trust, only obtainable through interaction. The main findings of this study showed that social media is essential in dealing with a crisis and when trying to repair trust.

7.2 Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to gain an insight into how trust repair works in relation to crises spread via social media. The focus of the study was examining which approach fast fashion retail company, H&M used. Previous research has been conducted into crisis management and crisis communication with one specific theory (SCCT) being the most
used overall when it comes to general crisis (Fussell, Collins, & Lynn, 2010). The SCCT model addresses crisis responsibility with a general approach, categorising them into three different clusters which are victim, accidental and preventable. Coombs (2015) indicates that a crisis can only be placed in one of these clusters. When considering self-inflicted crisis such as the one studied in this thesis, the findings indicate that H&M’s crisis was both accidental and preventable in nature. This leads to the need of putting H&M into both clusters, which the model does not accommodate for. After conducting our methodology to gather data regarding H&M’s crisis management and crisis communication, it became clear that Coombs (2015) SCCT model was implemented in terms of how H&M manged the crisis. Coombs (2015) mentions how important the need of communication and information is during a crisis. A consequence of waiting with communicating the response strategy gives the stakeholders time to let their emotions escalate. H&M responded according with what Dietz and Gillespie (2012) and Mejeri and De Wolf (2013) mention, which is that direct response should be within the first two days.

The findings showed that H&M used several different approaches in their communication to repair and build trust with their stakeholders. The review of H&M communication initially showed a focus on informing stakeholders what they were doing to regain their trust. One important step to regaining stakeholders’ trust is what Coombs (2007;2015) and Xu & Li (2013) mention, which is to inform them of how they will go about remedying their mistakes. Out of Coombs (2015) three different response options, H&M used the deal response. H&M clearly showed regrets and took full responsibility by several apologies.

Furthermore, Coombs (2007; 2015) points out that the effectiveness of a crisis response is also influenced by how the organisation managed the pre-crisis phase (prevention and preparation) and the post-crisis phase, which is learning from their mistakes. H&M was criticised for not being culturally appropriate when providing the ad. A consequence of not being culturally aware, is that advertising policies, values and CSR objectives become less effective, making a company less prepared to prevent a crisis from occurring. This could
lead to losing reputation as well as trust and having to repair it over time, just as H&M did. After analysing the empirical findings, a conclusion could be drawn that H&M did not account for cultural awareness in their pre-crisis phase, communicated by H&M themselves. Therefore, a finding we highlight is that cultural appropriation was not taken into account, which was one of the factors that contributed to the development of the crisis. However, by hiring a diversity leader to address cultural sensitivity within H&M, the company has developed its post-crisis phase.

We argue that fast fashion retail companies could seek to achieve favourable behavioural outcomes by following the SCCT, so that stakeholders can recognise the effort put into communicate and redeem the crisis. By pursuing the correct crisis response strategy, like H&M did, helps to repair the relationship and reduce negative emotions and behavioural outcomes (Coombs, 2007). The issue is not that an organisation goes through a crisis, its more about how organisations choose to respond to the crisis. Shared values, shared interest and proven empathy by meeting the stakeholders demands is determining whether a company can be trusted again or not.

7.3 Theoretical contribution

Previous research has focused on how communication should be done and how reputation building works after a crisis occurs (Coombs & Holladay, 2004; Dietz & Gillespie, 2012; Coombs, 2015). Our thesis has explored how companies should use social media as a tool to handle a crisis, but also how they use the available social media platforms to help regain consumer trust, rather than reputation. Coombs (2007) suggested that each crisis is different from one another, therefore crisis research needs to be applied to individual crisis. This thesis has done so by taking into consideration H&M’s crisis of January 2018. No other research has investigated crisis communication and how to communicate to regain trust on social media.
The SCCT model developed by Coombs is concerned with crisis communication and reputation building. The findings of this paper add insight into the academic field by integrating trust repair with the model, within the frame of social media. Our study has provided the interpretation of how trust repair needs to be communicated rather than focusing on rebuilding reputation. Furthermore, our study proposes that consistency is of great importance when communicating with consumers to regain trust, indicating that the use of social media to communicate would be more beneficial than the use of traditional media. Furthermore, we propose introducing a new cluster when evaluating crisis responsibility. As the self-inflicted crisis studied in this paper could be placed into two different clusters mentioned by Coombs (2015), a new cluster, nonintentional cluster, is proposed to accommodate such crisis.

7.4 Practical implications

Social media has seen a remarkable increase in usage all over the world (Falkheimer et al., 2009). It is important for organisations to remember to keep up with social media communication, as the lack of a presence on such platforms would lead to not being able to keep up with evolving crisis. Therefore, organisations need to develop a deeper understanding regarding communication over social media, so they can be able to address stakeholder concern and emotions. This study has contributed to showing how important social media communication is in the modern day. Without an interactive communication between an organisation and its stakeholders, concern and emotion cannot be resolved.

In the case of H&M, this interactive communication has been inspected and the findings indicate that H&M did resolve to intimate general, as well as individual, communication as seen with the four posts released. However, interacting with every individual that posts, or comments seems unlikely as the amount of time required in doing so would be great. Therefore, this could be seen as a limitation and organisations need to formulate general statements (like H&M) to address most of the stakeholder concern. On the other hand, fast fashion retail companies can benefit from this study by practically being aware of cultural
sensitivity within their marketing department. This can be done by hiring a diversity leader that can monitor ads and garments before they are published. Having the right people with a high level of cultural awareness and intercultural competence in an organisation is the key when operating internationally, which helps avoid tone-deaf ads or designs.

7.5 Limitations and future research
There is still need for further academic research within the field of crisis management and crisis communication, as research is limited around Coombs SCCT theory. The study in this paper has been conducted with observations on social media and a single focus group consisting of consumers. Although the research question is of relevance to other fast fashion retail companies, only one company was examined. In future research, it would be of interest to conduct similar research, investigating several studies that share some characteristics to further increase the transferability of the findings. Furthermore, the observed social media feed was of a limited sample due to the ability of being able to remove posts and comments on social media. The number of post and comments were also limited to the ones that attracted most attention. Hence, it would be of interest to try and include a greater number of posts and comments which would also affect transferability of the research. This could not be done in this thesis due to the time limit of this study. Lastly, the focus group consisted of students with age varying from 21-26 with most of the participants being women. Although additional focus groups from the same demographic would increase the validity, it would be of interest in future research to form several focus groups with different demographics and gender to capture opinions of a higher amount of people.
References


Appendix 1 – Observed posts and comments

Picture 1 – The ad of the black boy:

Source: Adapted from Bever, (2018).

Picture 2 – The ad of the black boy in the same collection with the white boy:

Source: Adapted from Bever, (2018).
Picture 3 – Celebrities comments (artists, athlete, blogger and journalist):

These post were found on the social media channels: Twitter and Instagram under the different celebrities accounts.

Artists:

The Weeknd

woke up this morning shocked and embarrassed by this photo. I'm deeply offended and will not be working with @hm anymore...

9:20 PM - Jan 8, 2018

303K 136K people are talking about this

492 395 gilla-markeringar
diddy Put some respect on it!! When you look at us make sure you see royalty and super natural God sent glory!! Anything else is disrespectful.

Visa alla 16 234 kommentarer

743,848 gilla-markeringar
g_eazy Over the past months I was genuinely excited about launching my upcoming line and collaboration with @HM... Unfortunately, after seeing the disturbing image yesterday, my excitement over our global campaign quickly evaporated, and I've decided at this time our partnership needs to end. Whether an oblivious oversight or not, it's truly sad and disturbing that in 2018, something so racially and culturally insensitive could pass by the eyes of so many (stylist, photographer, creative and marketing teams) and be deemed acceptable. I can't allow for my name and brand to be associated with a company that could let this happen. I hope that this situation will serve as the wake up call that @H&M and other companies need to get on track and become racially and culturally aware, as well as more diverse at every level.

visa alla 25,911 kommentarer
**Blogger:**

Stephanie Yeboah @NerdAboutTown

Whose idea was it at @hm to have this little sweet black boy wear a jumper that says ‘coolest monkey in the jungle’?

I mean. What.

11:58 PM - Jan 7, 2018

28.8K 22.7K people are talking about this

**Athlete:**

kingjames

KING OF THE WORLD

1,230,633 gilla-markeringar

kingjames @hm u got us all wrong! And we ain’t going for it! Straight up! Enough about y’all and more of what I see when I look at this photo. I see a Young King!! The ruler of the world, an untouchable Force that can never be denied! We as African Americans will always have to break barriers, prove people wrong and work even harder to prove we belong but guess what, that’s what we love because the benefits at the end of the road are so beautiful!! #LiveLaughLove #LoveMyPeople

visa alla 30,668 kommentarer

FOR 3 MÂNADER SEDAN

**Journalist**

Charles M. Blow @CharlesMBlow

. @hm, have you lost your damned minds?!?!?!

5:31 AM - Jan 8, 2018

13.6K 8,774 people are talking about this
Picture 4 – Stakeholders comments

These posts were found on the social media channels: Twitter and Facebook. The Facebook comments were found under H&M's different posts on Facebook. Big_deen’s comment was found on his personal account on Twitter.

>Petter Edvardsson: Tycker inte ni gjort fel. Frågan är varför folk ser bilden som rasistisk, säger mer om dem än om Er.


Malin Krooniud: Det finns ju självklart två perspektiv att se detta ur... men håller med majoriteten att ni borde insett hur detta skulle bémäras av omvärlden...

Like · Reply · 16w

Lilia Namroud: Hur står ni till svars för det slaveri/barnhandel som ni har för att få era kläder framställda? Bekostar er fåtal kronor men säljer för flera hundra? Delia Okaro

Like · Reply · 15w

"Kasta sten cen som aldrig har gjort något fel"
Picture 5 - The black boys mother’s comments:

These boys mother’s comments were found on the social media channels: Facebook.

Picture 6 - HM’s comment on Facebook 17th January 2018:

The H&M post can be found on their Facebook account.
Appendix 2 – Focus Group interview guide

Formalities:

- The focus group is being held at Kristianstad University, Monday 14th May 2018 at 3.00 pm.
- The interviews will be sound- and video recorded. The material will only be available to us and our supervisors, as the participants remain anonymous.
- The purpose of the focus group was to get an insight of what the participants thought about the crises and the way H&M communicated to their stakeholders. We also wanted to see if the participants regain H&Ms trust.
- The focus group would take approximately 60minutes in a group of 8 participants.

For the focus group, some ground rules were implemented:

- To be able to participate, you must be aware of the recent H&M crises, which requires that you use one of the three social media channels, as well as you need to be a H&M consumer.
- Keep a good tone in the group, as you guys should feel free to express your feelings.
- It is okay to disagree on issues, where it makes sense that you have different opinions. There are no right or wrong answers.

To start the focus group, a general question was asked in order to introduce the participants to the topic as well as make them comfortable with it so that the discussion could continue smoothly. The general questions were:

- What do you know about the recent H&M crises from January 2018, regarding an ad featuring a black child donning a sweatshirt with the words “coolest monkey in the jungle” etched on the front?

This question allowed the participants to explain their view of the crisis, where we also asked where they first heard about the crisis.

After the question was asked, additional questions were added to create a deeper discussion and receive more profoundly answers on how participants had experienced the ad and the public accusations of H&M being racist all over social media

We first showed the ad of the black boy wearing the hoodie to the participants and asked them what they thought of it. What feelings aroused?
We later showed the ad of the black boy in the same collection with the white boy that was wearing the images of animals reading the text “Mangrove jungle survival expert”. The questioned we asked was, what they thought of this ad and what feelings aroused?

After showing the ads and discussing the participant’s feelings, we now wanted their opinions about what they thought of the celebrities’ comments that H&M received after the ad. We showed the participants pictures of Charles M.blow, Lebron James, G-Eazy, P Diddy and Weeknd comments as well as other stakeholders comments.

The next step was to show the participants H&M respond to the crisis. We showed H&M statement on the website 9th of January as well as their social media comments, post 1 to post 5 one at the time. The following questions that we asked the participants was

- What do you think and feel about H&Ms posts?
- What feelings aroused?
- Have you seen these posts earlier during the actual period in January? If so, how did you perceive them then?
- How do you think and feel about H&M due to the occurrence?
- Has your picture of H&M changed? If so, how?
- Has your trust in H&M changed? If so, how?
- Do you forgive H&M or would you not buy their anymore? If not, why?
- Do you believe H&M could have done something differently?

We asked participants to discuss the text, its contents and messages. We also asked how the text (and different parts of it) awakened understanding, sympathy, other feelings as well as restored the trust of H&M.

The last step of the focus group, was showing the black boys mother comments, when she stated that: “(...I really don’t understand but not coz am choosing not to but because it’s not my way of thinking”.

We asked the participants what they thought about her comment and if they have the same mind-set. We also ended the focus group by asking why they believed that the ad drew more attention in United states and South Africa compare to Sweden.
Appendix 3 – Presentation of participants from focus group

Gender, age, what social media platform they read about the crisis and what social media channels each participants has presented in each column.

Participant 1
Female, 22 years old.
I have social media channels: Facebook and Instagram.
Read about the crisis on: Facebook.

Participant 2
Female, 22 years old.
I have social media channels: Facebook and Instagram.
Read about the crisis on: Facebook.

Participant 3
Female, 26 years old.
I have social media channels: Facebook and Instagram.
Read about the crisis on: Facebook and Instagram.

Participant 4
Female, 26 years old.
I have social media channels: Instagram
Read about the crisis on: Instagram

Participant 5
Male, 22 years old.
I have social media channels: Facebook.
Read about the crisis on: Facebook.

Participant 6
Female, 23 years old.
I have social media channels: Facebook and Instagram.
Read about the crisis on: Facebook.

Participant 7
Female, 21 years old.
I have social media channels: Facebook and Instagram.
Read about the crisis on: Facebook.

Participant 8
Female, 25 years old.
I have social media channels: Facebook and Instagram.
Read about the crisis on: Facebook.
Appendix 4 - Categorisation of empirical findings from Focus Group

The section below presents the empirical findings from the focus group, where we have categorised the different questions that were asked combined with the answers from the different participants.

What they knew about the recent H&M crises from January 2018, regarding an ad featuring a black child donning a sweatshirt with the words “coolest monkey in the jungle” etched on the front:

Participant 1: Jo att det blev sån stor grej just för att de hade en ljus kille som var ”survival in the jungle” eller något.. En kontrast, det var därför det blev så stort för att de hade gjort skillnad där emellan.

Participant 8: Jo att det blev väldigt mycket uppståndelse just då för att det var en svart pojke som hade på sig tröjan ”coolest monkey in the jungle” så råde det väldigt så delde meningar, där många tyckte det var väldigt rasistiskt och andra menade på att hur kan det vara det, att det spelar ingen roll.

The ad of the black boy: What they thought about the ad and what feelings aroused:

Participant 6: Om man är insatt till det vill säga det här som har hänt förr.. hur folk har delat upp svarta och vita, så är det klart att man reagerar negativt på detta här när man ser det. I alla fall min uppfattning.

Participant 1: Asså min uppfattning snarare är att det inte är något fel på bilden bara i sig, utan att det är flera bilder på en vit kille som har andra hoodies på sig där det står annat. Hade det bara varit bilden på den svarta pojken så hade jag inte reagerat, men eftersom det är kombinationen av olika så blir det fel.

Participant 6: Ja, hade det bara varit bilden på pojken hade jag kanske inte reagerat.

Participant 4: Hade det inte blåst upp i median hade man inte reagerat på de sättet.. asså dem gör det till en större grej än vad det hade behövt vara. Man kopplar inte det direkt, men såklart när man börja läsa det och folk påpekar det då börjar man reagera och det blir såhär diskriminering och rasism.

Participant 3: Det är ju lite den här kopplingen till folk tidigare, ordet apa, det finns ju en koppling vad folk har gjort tidigare och därför det också blir väldigt fel och göra så, även om man inte själv ser det så.
Participant 3: Först i början när det diskuterades tyckte jag att det kanske var lite överdrivit, men det är ju för att man själv inte har den rasistiska tankarna heller. Men jag fattar att det är fel, 100% fel.

Participant 7: Jag tycker det hade varit fel oavsett om det hade varit en ljus kille som hade varit på bilden, själva texten i sig är fel. Varför ska en människa vara en apa, jag förstår inte själva syftet med det.

Participant 8: Jag kan ju känna lite så här att jag reagerar inte jätte starkt på det, för att för mig så känner jag lite att förmodligen har det bara varit ett sammanträffande. Men sen på andra sidan helt årligt, jag är inte svart, jag vet inte hur man tar det med tanke på historian med just det här ordet förknippat till det. Jag känner lite att det kanske inte är riktigt min plats att uttala mig om vad jag tycker om det... Jag är lite delat på det, samtidigt när man hörde också att mamman sa ”nej men jag ser inget fel med det”, då tolkar jag det lite som att det beror lite på innebörden med, det verkar som att samarbetet har varit bra och det kan vara en olyckshändelse. Men andra sidan borde man ha tänkt ett steg längre, känner jag. Jag är lite delad där, jag förstår vad båda parter kommer ifrån.

The ad of the black boy in the same collection with the white boy: What they thought about the ad and what feelings aroused:

Participant 6: Det är just där jag känner att man ser den kraftiga skillnaden.

Participant 8: Nu blir det lite mer fel.

Participant 4: Det är det sjukaste jag har sett.

Participant 5: Mer fel nu, där tänker man lite att det bara var lite konstigt att dem inte tänkte på det innan de producerade. Men där är det som att det försökte säga någonting också.

Participant 8: Här ser man det på svart och vitt, och det ser ju inte bra ut. Så jag vet inte vem som tänkte ut det.

Participant 6: Det bir ju lite mer ”touching” nu, vad det gäller den svarta killen. Men jag tror inte det hade väckt samma känslor som nu, om den vita kille hade haft på sig den.

Participant 8: Hela historian bakom det, gör att det blir en väldigt stark reaktion på det, och det kan man förstå.

Participant 7: Hade man bytt hoodie så hade man inte sett det så tydligt.. Här känns det som att det pekar ut just han för att han kanske är mörkhyad och förlåt.. mer relaterat till en apa.
What they thought about the celebrities and the stakeholders comments that H&M received after the ad:

**Celebrities:**

Participant 4: Många av kändisarna är mörkhyade och dem känner sig mer träffade då de får känna det på ett helt annat sätt än vad jag skulle känna.

Participant 6: Jag tycker precis som de tycker. Dem har inte fel, enligt min åsikt.

Participant 8: Man förstår liksom att de uppmärksammar det och att det finns reaktion på det... speciellt just att det är många då så klart som är svarta som reagerar på det... jag tycker på nått sätt har en mer sågande i detta, vad som faktiskt är fel och rätt. Jag tycker ändå att det är deras plattform, och då tycker jag att man egentligen ska lyssna, det är ändå dem som blir utsatta... nej jag tycker att de inte tänkte längre tycker jag är märkligt.

Participant 4: Det verkar som att det finnas i luften i alla fall, bara att folk inte vågar prata om det längre på samma sätt och schh:ar det istället. Det är så konstigt att H&M som är så stort och internationellt företag kan visa en sån grej.

Participant 3: Att det inte stoppas någonstans på vägen är ju helt sjukt.. känns som inkompetenta personer som jobbar där, helt sinnes.

Participant 5: Och att det inte finns någon i den gruppen som säger ifrån.

Participant 3: det finns ju hur många som helst i det ledet som ska titta på det innan det kommer ut.

Participant 6: När man tänker så långt, det är där jag känner att det är lite uppgjort. Finns det verkligen inte en ända person som tänker steget längre... som att man vill starta någon sorts diskussion för att marknadsföra sig.

Participant 4: Jag häller med, både bra eller dåligt, de har fått mycket publicitet för det här och många pratar om det och det finns på alla sociala medier, kanske ett knep att få reaktion från folk. Många instagram:are eller bloggare som blir hatade och ändå får ”fame”.

Participant 2: Jag tror bara inte de tänkte så långt.

Participant 5: De borde veta bättre.

Participant 3: Jag häller med G-Eazy, om man inte häller med H&M tycker jag inte man ska stå bakom det heller vilket man göra via ett samarbete... han skyddar sitt varumärke.

Participant 8: Det verkar som att det har fått backlash för andra grejer de har gjort tidigare.

Participant 3: Jag tycker att de borde byta ut folk på H&M.

**Stakeholders:**

Participant 8: Det verkar som att det har fått backlash för andra grejer de har gjort tidigare.
Participant 3: Personen som kommenterade att ”han inte såg något fel med bilden” han tycker inte det för han har aldrig varit med eller upplevt rasism i hela sitt liv antagligen. Om folk tar illa upp av ordet apa så ska man bara förstå det. Det verkar som han inte kan sätta sig in i situationen.

Participant 8: Har mycket med associeringen, varför vita inte riktigt ser det i förhållande till svarta.

Participant 4: Att man har sett en bild och lyfter fram det rasistiska, vilket visar att det fortfarande finns i luften.

Participant 3: Första kollen på bilden, ser man inte det rasistiska men med tiden ser man det mer och mer.

Participant 8: Just meningen ”coolest monkey in the jungle” det är ju inget som direkt är negativt laddat. det är mycket mer ”in the eyes of the beholder” lite vad man ser det som. Första anblicket kanske man bara sveper över och inte riktigt lägger märke till, men efter jämförelse bilderna blir det väldigt obehagligt, inte så smart.

H&M respond to the crisis (statement on website and post 1-4). Their discussion of the text, its contents and messages. How the text (and different parts of it) awakened understanding, sympathy, other feelings as well as restored the trust of H&M:

What they thought and felt about H&Ms posts and what feelings aroused:

Participant 1: Jag tycker det hade varit väldigt bra om de hade tagit bort allting som har med hur bra dem är och lagt fokus på det dem gjorde fel istället för det dem har gjort rätt.

Participant 5: Dem betonar ändå att de har kommit en lång väg i hela grejen, som att det har varit tvungna och tänka på detta innan, som att deras värderingar till och med hade kunnat vara annorlunda som dem då har förbättrat.

Participant 8: Jag ser inte H&M som ett rasistiskt märke överlag, men det är ett jätte stort märke med jätte mycket kontorer överallt i hela världen, och det är ju inte bra att något sånt här händer, uppenbarligen, på andra sidan tycker jag att de borde kolla om inom organisationen vad det är som brister, kanske kommunikationen eller något sånt som inte stämmer.

Participant 4: Det är bra att de inser att de har gjort fel, men jag vet inte om posterna kan leva upp till det som har skapats i hela världen, känns som att många inte kommer glömma det här på ett bra tag och är väldigt påverkade av det här.

Website:

Participant 1: Jag tycker post 1 är bättre än uttalandet de gjorde på hemsidan. För att på post 1 har de mer fokus på att de har gjort fel och inte bara en allmän formell text.
Participant 8: Vad mer kan man göra, liksom skadan är redan gjord och de har bett om ursäkt.

Post 1:

Participant 5: Det känns som att de redan vet var det brister, och att de bara säger att det ska ta reda på det, så att det ska låta som att det är ingenting de kunde förhindra från första början.

Participant 8: Känns som att de försökte köpa tid, då de redan vet vad som gick fel.

Participant 6: Försöker rädda sig själva.

Participant 1: De borde ha bett om ursäkt till pojken, vad hände med det? Det är ändå han som har hängts upp.

Post 2:

Participant 7: Detta är inte första gången H&M är med om en kris, om det hände liknande 2015.. känns som en bortförklaring ”att detta inte ska hända igen”.

Participant 8: Bättre ursäkt än post 1, då de tar mer ansvar. I post 1 känns det som att ”det var inte meningen, vi kunde inte hjälpa det” medan post 2 säger dem, ”vi har gjort fel”, ”vi har ett ansvar”, ”detta ska inte hända igen”.

Participant 3: De skylar inte ifrån sig lika mycket som i post 1. Mer genuint. Att de tar upp att de har ”misslyckats att ta ansvaret”.

Post 3:

Participant 5: Jag tycker att det var bra att de punkterar det här med kollegorna, att de ställer sig bakom dem lite grann.. och det hade jag som medarbetare tycktt om, som aldrig har associerats med H&Ms värderingar.

Participant 8: Jag har svårt för denna post.. det är bra grej att de tar upp att medarbetarna inte har nått med det att göra liksom, att de bara jobbar i affären.. med det känns lite som att det finns en underliggande ton i det. Jag bara får en känsla att det inte är riktigt 100, inte riktigt ärligt med det.. jag får en känsla att de försöker dra undan uppmärksamheten, och skylla ifrån sig istället för att ta ansvar.

Participant 5: De stänger bara ner butikerna för att det inte ska förstöras mer och inte på grund av de anställda.

Participant 3: De ber heller inte riktigt om ursäkt här, utan det är bara information mer eller mindre.
Participant 1: Det är som att de vill få sagt att ”det är inte så här det var menat, släpp det”.

Post 4:

Participant 5: Det som hade gjort mest, hade ju varit om man lite längre fram fick en bekräftad förändring. Vilket är det de försöker göra i post 4, genom att ta in en annan expert. Då gäller det att experterna talar med oss också.

Participant 5: Här vill de att man ska se det från deras synpunkt. Det känns som att de ber om empati, att de är så stora att de inte kan kontrollera allting som händer.

Participant 8: Vad behöver de för möjligvis feedback? När de har fått de reaktioner de har fått.


Participant 5: Vi har inte hört från dem.. de tror att folk har glömt och vill inte väcka det igen.

Participant 7: Om det tar så långt tid för dem att höra av sig, så borde de komma med något stort.

Participant 1: Tycker det är en sjuk avslutande mening.

Participant 7: De sa att de skulle höra av sig, så gör dem inte det så ljuger dem, igen.

If they had seen the posts earlier during the actual period in January and If so, how they perceive them then:

- Nobody had seen the posts before.

How they thought and felt about H&M due to the occurrence:

Participant 5: Det här stärker det man kanske tänkte innan, att de har gjort någonting utan att tänka efter, men att de visste vad de gjorde.

Participant 6: Detta blev så himla stort att de fick nästan en hel värld att reagera.

Participant 8: Känns som att de hela tiden gång på gång har nått rykte i denna stilen, att behöva släta över händelsen eller någonting. Hur mycket ”bad reputation” ska man behöva ha.
If their picture of H&M has changed and if so, how. If their trust in H&M changed and if so, how:

Participant 5: Jag tycker inte att deras värderingar är på nått sätt mot ett rasistiskt håll, utan mer att ledningen inte vet bättre.

Participant 6: Ja det stämmer, och det är det som är det tragiska.

Participant 7: Jag känner inte en enda av deras uttalanden, detta är inte liksom första gången H&M gör något. De gör samma misstag om och om igen. Skulle inte förvåna mig om det skedde igen.

Participant 6: På post 4 att de hade bilden ”we are listening”, visar på att de har tagit det på allvar då, men framtiden kommer att avgöra om det verkligen är så till 100 procent.

Participant 3: Jag tycker det är svårt att allmänt ha ett förtroende till H&M.

If they forgave H&M or would not buy their anymore:

Participant 8: Jag tycker inte att de kan göra mer. Framtiden får avgöra.

Participant 3: Man vill ju svara ja, men asså förtroende syns ju bara i om man handlar i H&M efter detta, och det gör man ju. Man handlar ändå på H&M vilket visar på att man har förlåtit dem.

Participant 6: De kan inte göra mer utan de har bett om ursäkt.

Participant 3: Jag tycker inte att det påverkar en från att gå handla på H&M.

If they believed H&M could have done something differently:

Participant 3: Ja, innan kunde dem har stoppat hoodie:n innan den kom ut.

Participant 1: Jag tycker att efter, borde de ha bett om ursäkt till pojken.


Participant 8: Jag skulle vilja veta vilken avdelning det gick fel.

The mother’s comments: What they thought about her comment and if they agreed:

Participant 7: Jag tycker inte trycket i sig är okej, om jag hade haft barn hade jag aldrig köpt hoodien till mitt barn .. alltså själva trycket i sig, alltså... mitt barn hade blivit mobbad.

Participant 5: Hon kanske säger så, eftersom hon inte gjorde något åt saken från första början, kanske för att skydda sig själv.

Participant 3: Jag tror bara att det inte är hennes sätt att se på det.

Participant 6: Jag kanske inte direkt kan säga att jag håller med. Men jag tycker att hon har lugnat ner situationen.

Participant 8: När man hör mamman, tycker man kanske inte att det är en ”big deal”. Det verkar som att hon är nöjd med arbetet och att H&M kanske har varit trevliga.

Participant 5: Man vänds ändå lite av hennes kommentarer, hon visar på ett annat sätt att tänka.

Participant 6: Lättnar verkligen på situationen, men de har fortfarande gjort fel och det kan man inte förneka.

Participant 8: Jag tror det är bra för H&M att hon gick ut med det.

Participant 1: Om mamman visar på att det är lugnt, så kanske man kan se det mer som att ingen skada har skett.

Participant 7: Hade varit värre om hon var emot H&M.

Why they believed that the ad drew more attention in United States and South Africa compared to Sweden:

Participant 3: Det är väl för rasism.. att det har varit en sån extrem uppdelning i USA.

Participant 5: Man känner att man förknippa de typ av problem i andra sammanhang, historiskt sätt.

Participant 6: Många fler mörkhyade i USA, kan vara därför också.

Participant 8: Mer en strukturell rasism i de länder... I Sverige har vi inte det på samma sätt. USA är mer ett klassamhälle, man får kämpa mer i de länder.. det här med ”people of colour”.. poliser och allting i USA, de har en längre väg att gå.

Participant 3: Det bläste upp väldigt snabbt sen försvann det också väldigt snabbt och därför tror jag inte heller det blev så stort i Sverige. Vi tänker inte på samma sätt här i Sverige och har inte samma historia heller.
Appendix 5 – H&M’s Global Policy on Diversity

GLOBAL POLICY ON DIVERSITY, INCLUSIVENESS AND EQUALITY

Within the H&M Group we believe that diversity is an important contributor to our success and long-term competitiveness. Diversity in our teams, can contribute to innovations and creativity, and increase our ability to cope with change. By better reflecting the diversity of our customer it is easier to meet their needs. We are committed to actively work for, and maintain, an inclusive workplace where respect for human rights has the highest priority, and there is zero tolerance for discrimination.

Diversity refers to a variety of differences, which include not only traditional categories such as gender, ethnicity, colour, religion, national extraction, or age, but also where we come from our experiences and perspectives.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure inclusive workplaces throughout the H&M Group. An inclusive workplace is one where differences are welcome and respected, where different ideas and perspectives are expressed and listened to, where each employee finds a sense of belonging and has equal opportunities to grow.

Our commitment

- Within the H&M Group fairness and equality are integrated into all business processes including, but not limited to, hiring, promotion, development, remuneration and termination.

- Within the H&M Group all appointments will be based on equal opportunities, proven competence and capacity to perform the work.

- All managers in the H&M Group work actively to ensure diverse teams, which includes a balanced gender composition.

- In order to include groups of people that for various reasons have limited access to the labour market, the H&M Group promotes reasonable adaptations necessary to enable employment, development and retention.

An employee who needs more information or has questions about this policy can turn to the manager or to HR.

Grievance procedure

If an employee feels that the company has failed to act in accordance with the commitments in this policy, the employee should bring this up with the manager or HR, and refer to the local grievance procedure.

1 National extraction includes distinctions made on the basis of a person’s place of birth, ancestry or foreign origin; for instance, national or linguistic minorities

Global HR Employee Relations is the owner of this policy. The policy is subject to an annual review.