

How does brands' participation in an accidental controversy affect their reputation?

An application of the situational crisis communication theory to firestorms

Nina Björnsson

**Bachelor Programme in International Business Administration
2023**

Luleå University of Technology
Department of Social Sciences, Technology and Arts

[This page intentionally left blank]

Abstract

This study aims to investigate the strategies used by brands to recover from firestorms following controversies in the age of social media. The focus is on understanding the brand-customer relationship aspect of firestorms and the importance of monitoring and comprehending them to minimize their impact. The study applies the SCCT to analyze two specific firestorms and their effects on brand reputation. The research questions focus on the initial crisis responsibility attached to the firestorm, the history the brand have with crisis and previous reputation. The study employs an exploratory qualitative research approach using a case study design. Data collection involves observing brands' social media and other communication channels to identify firestorm patterns and brand responses. Judgment sampling is used for sample selection, guided by relevant variables from the literature. Thematic analysis is employed to analyze qualitative data, with the SCCT guiding the analysis. Overall, this study contributes to understanding firestorms, trust recovery, and crisis communication in the digital age. The findings will shed light on effective strategies for managing and rebuilding brand reputation following firestorms.

Keywords: Firestorms, Situational Crisis Communication Theory, reputation, trust recovery.

Contents

1. Introduction.....	1
1.1. Background.....	1
1.2. Problem Discussion.....	3
1.3. Overall Purpose.....	6
1.4. Delimitations of the study	6
1.5. Overview of Entire Thesis.....	6
2. Literature Review.....	8
2.1. Firestorms.....	8
2.2. Trust Recovery.....	9
2.3. Situational crisis communication theory, SCCT.....	9
3. Methodology.....	13
3.1. Research Purpose	13
3.2. Research Approach.....	13
3.3. Research Strategy	14
3.4. Data Collection.....	15
3.5. Sample Selection.....	15
3.6. Data analysis.....	16
3.7. Validity and Reliability.....	16
3.7.1. Validity.....	17
3.7.2. Reliability.....	18
4. Empirical data.....	19
4.1. Case overview.....	19
4.2. Bud light and Dylan Mulvaney.....	19
4.3. BrewDog and the accusation against its CEO James Watt	23
4.4. Key features.....	27
5. Results.....	28
6. Conclusions.....	30
6.1. Limitations.....	31
6.2. Further research.....	31
7. References:.....	32

7.1. Scholarly Articles 32
7.2. Books 34
7.3. News Articles..... 34
7.4. Websites 35
7.5. Videos and other media..... 35

1. Introduction

This chapter is a dive into the background of the subjects related to our research problem. We've found articles of previous research that help us argue for our problem. In addition to the background, we have a problem discussion that brings up theory and our research questions. Finally, we have an overview of the entire thesis.

1.1. Background

Controversies have always been something that companies would like to avoid at all costs, but with the rise of social media and people being able to express their opinions on everything it's become a lot harder for companies to shove issues under the carpet. The study aims to investigate the strategies employed by brands in their efforts to recover from a firestorm following a controversy. How does their customer base respond to the controversy? Is it all negative? What does the brand do to try and recover when finding themselves in controversy that has created a firestorm?

What is a firestorm? A definition that's commonly referred to is written by Pfeffer et al. (2014), and it goes as follows "the sudden discharge of large quantities of messages containing negative word-of-mouth and complaint behavior against a person, company or a group in social media networks". Delgado-Ballester et al. (2020) mention that the brand-customer relationship aspect of this area of research is relatively new and understudied, which is why we would like to dive into this even more. They also discuss the importance of brands monitoring and understanding firestorms, as social networks provide a platform for users to voice their concerns and criticisms. Managers should strive to respond to firestorms in order to minimize their impact on the brand. There are the limited literature on online firestorms, which are recent phenomena that have gained attention due to their ability to rapidly spread to a large number of users and generate numerous negative comments about a brand (Delgado-Ballester et al, 2020).

The area regarding firestorms isn't just the firestorm itself, but what the companies do after the fact. How do they respond? What do they respond with? How is the response received by the public? It's the way the company or brand decides to respond that determines if there will occur a firestorm or not. We're interested in seeing that aspect of it as well. As mentioned before, we would like to deep dive into how the brand or company picks themselves back up after and how their customer base helps or doesn't help with the rehabilitation of said controversy.

With the growing hyperconnected world a brand has a larger chance of creating firestorms. Swaminathan et al. (2020) did an article about how the brand's boundaries have become more blurred due to the technology-induced hyperconnectivity. It examines the evolving nature of branding in contemporary society and explores the impact of hyperconnectivity on traditional perspectives. It discusses the emergence of various types of brands, including platform brands, direct-to-consumer brands, and smart brands, along with the changing consumer-brand interactions facilitated by digital channels and connected devices. The study highlights the blurring of branding boundaries, where multiple stakeholders now participate in cocreating brand experiences and meanings. Additionally, it addresses the broadening of branding boundaries, as hyperconnectivity enables existing brands to expand their geographic reach and societal roles, while new types of branded entities emerge. By analyzing the consequences of hyperconnectivity, the article provides insights into the roles and functions of brands, the co-creation of value, and effective brand management strategies in a hyperconnected environment. It identifies both challenges and opportunities for brands and proposes future research directions. What they mean by that is that brands are shifting away from a single to shared ownership. This is due to the increased accessibility to information. The consequences for this, good or bad, is that existing brands expand their geographic reach and social roles. This allows for more stakeholders to co-create a brand experience and brand meaning (Swaminathan et al., 2020).

An example of a firestorm was covered by the sport site Bleacher Report (2017). The firestorm that then transpired was when the CEO of Under Armour Kevin Plank made comments in an interview suggesting support to now former US president Donald Trump. This was back in 2017 and resulted in backlash from non-supporters of Trump and a boycott. The words that were used by Plank during the interview were comments were made in which he praised Trump's pro-

business stance, calling him "highly passionate" and a "real asset." To try and rectify this Plank took out a full-page advertisement in the Baltimore Sun to clarify comments he made in support of President Donald Trump, which drew the ire of several high-profile athletes who represent the brand. Plank stated that he wanted to clarify the values of Under Armour, which included support for equal rights and that the company was against any immigration measures that impacted negatively on its employees or the community (Wells, 2017).

Another example is a situation with Ben & Jerry's that recently transpired. It was heavily covered by the Independent in 2022. The story was then that Unilever planned to sell its Ben & Jerry's business in Israel to Avi Zinger, the owner of American Quality Products, which is the current Israel-based licensee of the ice cream brand (Williams, 2022). Ben & Jerry's board of directors has criticized the sale of its products bearing the company's insignia in West Bank settlements, stating that it is against the company's values. Unilever, the parent company of Ben & Jerry's, had announced earlier that year that it was selling its business interest in Israel to a local company that would sell Ben & Jerry's ice cream under its Hebrew and Arabic name throughout Israel and the West Bank. Ben & Jerry's had previously said it would stop selling its ice cream in annexed east Jerusalem and the occupied West Bank in 2021. However, a federal judge rejected Ben & Jerry's request to block Unilever's plan to allow its products to be sold in the occupied territories in August of 2022 (Rathke, 2022). The sell will allow the ice cream to remain available to consumers throughout the country and the West Bank. Unilever said it could not block the decision due to a purchase agreement made in 2000 that allowed Ben & Jerry's autonomy over its social-justice policies (Williams, 2022)

1.2. Problem Discussion

Previous studies have focused on the bigger picture of what happens to companies when they're active in a firestorm. Hansen et al. (2018) did a study examining the impact of social media firestorms on consumer brand judgments, both in the short term and over time. They consider firestorms as a digital form of brand crisis and propose a conceptual framework to identify which types of firestorms have the most destructive potential. The study utilizes a unique dataset that

combines secondary data on 78 real-life firestorms with daily brand perceptions collected from the YouGov panel, as well as survey data from 997 consumers. The results indicate that 58% of the affected brands experience a decline in short-term brand perceptions, while 40% suffer from long-term negative effects. This suggests that social media firestorms can indeed harm businesses, but the study also highlights the presence of significant variations among firestorms. The authors conduct contingency analyses using regression and generalized estimating equations to examine the conceptual framework. They find that social media firestorms have the greatest impact on negative changes in brand associations and/or memory effects when they are triggered by vivid stimuli (such as a video in the first firestorm tweet), linked to product or service failures or social failures, characterized by a large volume of social media messages, and have a longer duration (Hansen et al, 2018).

This study then aims to examine if a different theoretical framework can be applied to firestorms and what outcome it has. This study is going to apply the situational crisis theory, which stems from the attribution theory.

The Attribution Theory has been used as a guide since the 1980s to analyze post-crisis communication. Bernard Wiener built this theory on the basis that people have a need to assign responsibility for events. These events are usually unexpected and have negative results. So, with Attribution theory, when applied, the threat of crisis is mostly a function of crisis responsibility. Managers are, according to the theory, advised to evaluate the situation to be able to determine which way is the best to respond to the crisis (Coombs, 2007).

Then there is the Situational crisis communication theory (SCCT), which applies the Attribution Theory's ideas to a wider array of crises. SCCT is based upon experimental methods and social-psychological theory. SCCT differs from the Attribution Theory in the way that it is related to how the perceptions of the crisis situation affects the crisis response. It also looks at the effects of crisis responses, how the outcome results in on such matters as reputation, emotions, and purchase intention (Coombs, 2007).

With SCCT the process begins with examining the crisis situation to then later assess to what extent the reputational threat the crisis has. The term threat is defined as the amount of damage the crisis could inflict on the reputation of the organization if they take no action. To this, there are three factors that shape the reputational threat. The first factor is the initial crisis responsibility, the second is crisis history and, the third one is prior reputation or relationship history. With these three factors, theory is to use a two-step process to assess the reputational threat (Coombs, 2007).

The first step in the two-step process is to determine the initial crisis responsibility that is attached to the crisis. The initial crisis responsibility is defined as how much the stakeholders believe that the actions of the organization caused the crisis. The stakeholders also use frames to interpret the crises. From these frames the theory has with time developed and identified three clusters of crises based on attributions of crisis responsibility by the crisis type (Coombs, 2007).

The first cluster type is the victim cluster. This cluster has weak attributions of crisis responsibility, and the organization is seen as a victim of the event. Examples of this kind of crisis in this cluster is workplace violence, product tampering, natural disasters, and rumor. The second cluster is the accidental cluster. Crises in this cluster has minimal attributions of crisis responsibility and the event is considered to be unintentional or uncontrollable by the organization. Examples of crises in this cluster are technical error accident, and/or product harm. The third cluster is the intentional cluster. This cluster has strong attributions of crisis responsibility, and the event is considered to be done on purpose. Examples of events in this cluster is organizational misdeed, human-error accidents, and/or product harm (Coombs, 2007).

The second step in the two-step process involves two additional factors that are to be assessed, consistency and distinctiveness. The consistency factor is about whether or not an organization has been involved in similar crises in the past. The distinctiveness factor is about the organization's prior reputation and relationship history. It is about how well or poorly the organization has threatened its stakeholders. These two factors are used to adjust the initial assessment of the situation. Depending on all the factors together the reputational threat of a crisis might intensify (Coombs, 2007).

The use of SCCT with firestorms has not been done before. Since the firestorms are a relatively new phenomenon, how to handle them is hard with a hyperconnected world. The SCCT has not been used on the type of crisis a firestorm presents. It has been used on what would be considered a “normal” crisis, such as natural disasters and organizational crisis. More about previous studies than have been using the SCCT will be presented in the literature review.

1.3. Overall Purpose

The purpose of this thesis is to see how firestorms impact brands when they become involved in controversy. This is to be done by applying the SCCT to two different firestorms, doing the two-step process, to see if the theory is applicable to firestorms. To answer the overall purpose of this, three questions are stated below:

RQ1: What is the initial crisis responsibility that is attached to the firestorm?

RQ2: Have they been involved in similar situations before?

RQ3: How was the brands reputation before?

1.4. Delimitations of the study

The delimitation of this study is to look at two brands that recently has or are currently experiencing a firestorm. The purpose of that is to narrow the study due to the limited time. A firestorm can also go on for months or years before the outcome is settled depending on the size of the firestorm.

1.5. Overview of Entire Thesis

This thesis will consist of six chapters, as shown in figure 1 below. The first chapter is the introduction, it contains the following sections: background, problem discussion, and overall purpose. The second chapter is a literature review. This chapter will contain important theories and studies that will help build the framework for this thesis. The third chapter will present the methodology, which will contain information about how this study was conducted. The fourth

chapter will contain the collected data. After that the data will be analyzed in chapter five. In the final chapter, chapter six, the findings, and a conclusion for this thesis will be presented.

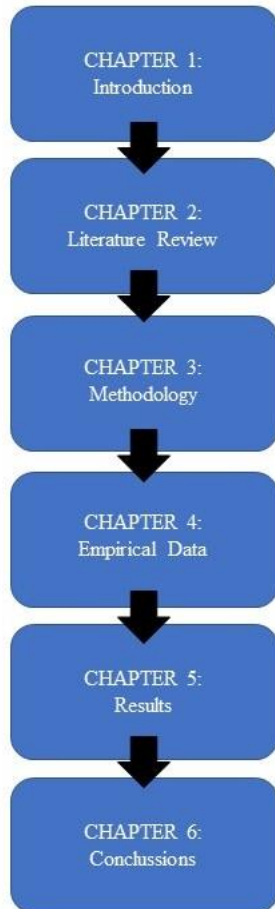


Figure 1: Overview of Thesis

2. Literature Review

This chapter is containing the literature review which will present previous studies done about firestorms and the SCCT. It also presents the importance of trust recovery, which strenghtens the argument for having theories that can be applied to crises and affective ways of dealing with them.

2.1. Firestorms

Firestorms are as previously mentioned a new challenge for marketing communications as the online platforms grow. It has become a fast-working word of mouth that spreads wide online. Pfeffer, Zorach and Carley (2014) wrote an article about understanding online firestorms. In that article they describe the problems and difficulties that social media can create today. The users of social media can create huge waves of outrage in just a few hours. The focus that the article has is to identify related social and economic science theories, and to create generalized factors that may form a base for a profile for the new challenges that market communications face with online firestorms (Pfeffer et al, 2014).

Gruber, Mayer and Einwiller (2020) did a study about what drives people to participate in firestorms. They argued that social media empowers people to voice their opinions about questions, issues, or situations that they deem unacceptable. This then adds up in quantities of negative word-of-mouth and the more people that adds to it makes it spread faster, creating an online firestorm. When a firestorm then occurs, it can oppose a real threat to an organization as it raises concern among their stakeholders. Gruber et al (2020) characterize participating in firestorms as communicative action of problem-solving. This is due to the core problem of a firestorm is that social norms are perceived as violated. These communicative actions are then preformed by sharing or forwarding problem related information by commenting, liking, or sharing posts. To then participate in these actions are influenced by the individual persons ability to recognize problems. By recognizing a problem there is a possibility for a person to have the motivation to solve it and engage in communicative actions. It also matters on what level a person

relates to the problem on a personal level. What the study then found is that people are more likely to engage in online firestorms if they relate to the problem on a personal level. Then there are emotions involved, creating a significance for the person (Gruber et al, 2020).

2.2. Trust Recovery

Previous studies about how a company or organization may recover from firestorms has had different outcomes. One was conducted by Khamitov, Grégoire and Suri (2020) about brand transgression, service failure recovery and product-harm crisis. In that article they define brand transgression as “An act of violation of the implicit or explicit rules guiding consumer-brand relationship performance and evaluation”. So, in the act of service recovery, all actions that the organization takes in order to recover from the losses caused by service failure are counted towards this. The actions that the organization then might take in order to recover might be to attempt to provide a gain to make up for the customer’s loss. All the actions and activities that the organization does, counts towards making up for the failure. This also includes mechanisms to try and rebuild the trust after violations (Khamitov et al, 2020).

Basso and Pizzutti (2016) did an article about how trust recovery might work after a service failure with double deviations. In this article they formed seven different hypotheses related to trust violation and recovery. Most is centered around the different impact an apology versus a promise made to the trust recovery. It also compares strategies for recovering from a single deviation or a double deviation. The results that they found was that with double deviation, apologies and promises that the problem will not happen again are the most effective. They also found that it is important to match the type of deviation to a recovery strategy. Apologies were shown to be more effective when dealing with integrity violations and promises were more effective with competence violations (Basso et al, 2016).

2.3. Situational crisis communication theory, SCCT

As previously mentioned, SCCT is a theory about situational crisis communication. This means Coombs (2007) created a theoretical framework for how organizations can assess and respond to

a crisis. Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) applies Attribution Theory principles to a broad range of crises. SCCT utilizes experimental methods and social-psychological theory, staying true to its roots in Attribution Theory. It advances and tests hypotheses related to how perceptions of the crisis situation influence crisis responses and the subsequent effects on outcomes such as reputation, emotions, and purchase intention. SCCT research expands upon and aligns with previous studies on product harm and ethical crises found in management and marketing literature. The initial step in SCCT involves the crisis manager assessing the reputational threat posed by a crisis by examining the crisis situation. This threat represents the potential damage the crisis can inflict on the organization's reputation if no action is taken. Three factors within the crisis situation shape this reputational threat: (1) initial crisis responsibility, (2) crisis history, and (3) relationship history/prior reputation. Crisis managers follow a two-step process to evaluate the reputational threat based on these factors (Coombs, 2007).

The first step involves determining the initial crisis responsibility associated with the crisis. This responsibility is determined by stakeholders' attributions of the organization's control over the crisis, i.e., the extent to which stakeholders believe the organization's actions caused the crisis. Research consistently shows that higher attributions of crisis responsibility result in lower reputational scores, indicating a greater reputational threat. The initial assessment is based on the crisis type, which refers to how the crisis is framed. Crisis types serve as cues for stakeholders to interpret the crisis events—for example, whether the event was an accident, sabotage, or criminal negligence (Coombs, 2007).

SCCT suggests that each crisis type generates specific levels of crisis responsibility, i.e., attributions of organizational responsibility for the crisis. SCCT research has identified three crisis clusters based on crisis responsibility attributions: the victim cluster (e.g., natural disasters, workplace violence, product tampering, rumors) with weak crisis responsibility attributions, where the organization is viewed as a victim; the accidental cluster (e.g., technical-error accident, technical-error product harm, challenge) with minimal crisis responsibility attributions, indicating unintentional or uncontrollable events; and the intentional cluster (e.g., human-error accident, human-error product harm, organizational misdeed) with strong crisis responsibility attributions, suggesting purposeful events. By identifying the crisis type, crisis managers can determine the

extent of crisis responsibility stakeholders attribute to the organization at the onset of the crisis. Crisis responsibility, in turn, indicates the initial reputational threat, as it has been consistently found to be negatively related to organizational reputation (Coombs, 2007).

The second step in assessing the threat involves two factors: consistency and distinctiveness. Consistency is measured by crisis history, indicating whether the organization has previously experienced similar crises. A high consistency suggests an ongoing problem that needs to be addressed, signaling that the organization consistently faces issues. Distinctiveness is measured by relationship history/prior reputation, reflecting how well or poorly the organization has treated stakeholders in other contexts. A low distinctiveness implies a history of mistreating stakeholders, indicating that the crisis is not distinctive but part of a pattern of behavior (Coombs, 2007).

An example when the SCCT has been used is by Hilary Sisco. Sisco (2012) did a study where she tested the theory and the effects it has on a non-profit organization. In this study Sisco looked at two different scenarios, one where the non-profit is a victim and one where they act intentionally. Sisco used the theory to create an experimental situation to examine how effective the theory is when applied and how the respondents respond to the crisis response strategy. With her findings Sisco concluded that the strategy is successful, but the least effective strategy in her scenarios was when the non-profit was responding to an accident. Which according to Sisco is the most common type of crisis situation (Sisco, 2012).

Kriyantono (2012) argued that the SCCT is often overlooked and most research done with the theory has often been an organization-centered approach, which led him to do his study about measuring a company's reputation in a crisis situation to have a public approach. Kriyantono's study then had an ethnography approach. With the public approach Kriyantono meant the public's perspective of the crisis. The studied crisis was a mudflow that had occurred in Indonesia (Kriyantono, 2012).

Claeys et al. (2010) did a study that tested a theory about how organizations should respond to crises to protect their reputation using the SCCT. They conducted an experiment with 316 consumers, who evaluated different types of crises and response strategies. They found that

preventable crises had the worst impact on reputation, while a strategy focused on rebuilding was the most effective for improving reputation. Participants who saw a crisis as more serious had a more negative opinion of the organization's reputation. The specific combination of crisis type and response strategy didn't have a strong effect on reputation, but people's beliefs about their control over events influenced their preference for response strategies. Those who felt less in control preferred denying responsibility more than those who felt more in control (Claeys et al, 2010).

3. Methodology

This chapter contains how the methodology will be conducted for this study. It presents the research purpose, approach, strategy, data collection, sample selection, data analysis, validity and reliability.

3.1. Research Purpose

For this study we find that an exploratory study is the best suited. This is because the research question starts with a “How” and the study aims to examine firestorms and the impact of it for brands. Exploratory research is useful when seeking new insights, assessing phenomena or asking questions. The purpose is to explain why or how a previously studied phenomenon takes place (George, T. 2021). Exploratory studies tends to be categorized into two categories. Either studies that makes a new and first analysis of a topic, or those that provide new ideas or hypotheses to an old topic (Swedberg, 2020). It consists of collecting, analyzing and interpret observations about designs, systems, models, or abstract theories. Studies that are like this are usually inductive in the process of gaining understanding. It looks at a specific phenomenon to look for patterns to be able to conclude a general theory of behavior. The emphasis for this type of studies is on evaluation or data analysis, not to create new designs or models. It focuses on perspectives and the relative importance (Edgar et al, 2017).

The choice to do an exploratory study of firestorms using the SCCT, is because it has not been done much. Most research on firestorms are quantitative. An exploratory study then seems like an appropriate method to answer the research questions and to see if the SCCT is applicable to firestorms. It would provide a new use of the SCCT and strengthen its relevance.

3.2. Research Approach

A qualitative research approach is anchored in an interpretive approach to scientific knowledge. Observations are dependent on an external reference point, and empirical descriptions are therefore

influenced by the theoretical starting point. A qualitative research approach is characterized by an inductive or abductive working method. This means that patterns and connections in the empirical data are identified and interpreted by using the theoretical starting point (Lind, R. 2020). With qualitative research, the study explores and gives a deep insight in real-world problems. It helps to form hypotheses, and further investigate and understand quantitative data. It gathers participants' perceptions, behaviors, and experiences. Qualitative research focuses on the how and why. It is looking for patterns that can be difficult to quantify, which is why it is important to ensure that the context is not lost by trying to quantify it (Tenny et al, 2022).

Observations seem like the most suitable research approach for this study. Since it contains firestorms, an online phenomenon. Using the SCCT as a theoretical starting point, the empirical data can then later be interpreted and connections can be made to the theory.

3.3. Research Strategy

This study has focused on case study as its research strategy due to it being an empirical study of a particular contemporary phenomena. It is a case study with a focus on processes, events, actions, and actors that are studied in their concrete organizational and social context (Lind, 2020). Heale and Twycross (2018) gives the explanation of case studies as an intensive, systematic investigation of a single individual, group, community, or other unit that the researcher can examine in-depth with data relating to different variables. The researcher examines the phenomena in the natural setting to increase their understanding of them. A case study allows the researcher to take a broad and complex topic and narrow it down to manageable research questions. To study several similar cases will provide a better answer to a research question than if only one case is examined. It is because although they are similar, the cases are complex and have unique features (Heale et al, 2018).

The strategy for this study is therefore to do a systematic investigation of the community's response to brands and their controversial situations. The title for this thesis is quite large but with the RQs the study will become narrowed down to be more manageable. There will be multiple case study, consisting of two cases. The two case studies are of companies within the same branch. It is for the cases to be more relevant to each other and shows that no firestorm is the same.

3.4. Data Collection

To be able to conduct this study we feel like it is suitable and most appropriate to collect the data through observations. By observing some companies' social media and other communications channels one might detect a pattern for when firestorms are created and how they might find a solution to their problem when accidentally finding themselves in controversy. Edgar and Manz (2017) gives an explanation on why observations are useful when trying to understand real cyber systems and related technosocial behavior. Observations are best used when trying to understand how a system behaves and how to generate theoretical models to be able to learn. This type of method is useful when the topic is difficult to build a controlled experiment for. Studying topics on the internet makes it difficult to create a good representative experiment and it is near impossible to recreate. This means that the topic needs to aim its research to try and create an understanding for the studied phenomenon only from monitoring and analyzing the real environment (Edgar et al, 2017).

The data collection will therefore be conducted by following brands through social media and news articles to be able to analyze the events. The news articles are to follow the brands responses to the firestorm they find themselves in. The social media is to follow how the consumers view the situation. This is to be collected to later be analyzed with the SCCT.

3.5. Sample Selection

The sample selection is an important factor when conducting a study. It can determine whether a research question can be answered or not. With a good sample selection and size, the study gains strength. It is also important to acknowledge the limitations of the study and its design. It can be balanced between the ideal sample and what is convenient (Shorten et al, 2014).

For this study, it would mostly like be to look what companies do to redeem their brands when finding themselves in controversy and how their consumer base responds to these situations. These are the two areas that have been selected for this research purpose and therefore must collect data from to be able to conduct this study.

To do this, the method of judgement sampling can be used. It is also referred to as purposeful or selective sampling. This method relies on the practical knowledge of the researcher to identify and select the participants. To be able to do this selection, a framework can be developed from variables that can be identified in the literature combined with the knowledge of the phenomena (Shorten et al, 2014).

The sampling for this study is to look at the brand managerial work and how they handle a firestorm. The two brands selected are in the same branch, two beer manufacturers, which has recently experienced firestorms for different reasons.

3.6. Data analysis

When doing a qualitative study, the data collection will not consist of numbers. It usually consists of text, which needs to be analyzed. The challenge with qualitative research is to present a cohesive representation of the data. The process of the data analysis is to reconstruct the data so that it becomes meaningful and comprehensive. There are different approaches that can be done when analyzing the data. One method is thematic analysis, it looks for patterns of meaning. It takes data and sort it into groups depending on similarities. This type of analysis is useful when looking at people's experiences and opinions (Warren, 2020).

To then analyze the data, the situational crisis communications theory will be used. The empirical data has been collected with the theory in mind so that the necessary information is presented to make the analysis in regards to the research questions. The analysis will then be conducted with the SCCT.

3.7. Validity and Reliability

Validity has not the same meaning in qualitative research as it has in quantitative (Creswell, 2014). In qualitative research both the validity and reliability is crucial for developing a research. If the possibility of invalidity or unreliability is reduced than the answers to the research questions is more highly valued (Creswell, 2014).

3.7.1. Validity

Validity refers to the extent to which research findings accurately represent the intended concepts or relationships (Saunders et al, 2012). Constructing validity refers to the extent to which a study accurately measures the intended constructs or concepts. To enhance constructed validity, researchers can employ various techniques. These include using multiple sources of evidence during data collection, such as interviews, documents, and artifacts, to reduce researcher bias. Additionally, establishing a chain of evidence by documenting interview transcripts and observation notes helps ensure citations and cross-checking of specific sources. Another strategy is to have draft case study reports reviewed by key informants and research assistants to clarify any unclear aspects (Riege, 2003).

Internal validity is about the accuracy of causal relationships within a study. To increase internal validity, researchers can use within-case analysis, cross-case analysis, and pattern matching during data analysis. Displaying illustrations and diagrams can aid in explaining and understanding the data. It is also important to ensure internal coherence of findings by cross-checking the results (Riege, 2003).

External validity refers to the generalizability of research findings beyond the specific context of the study. To enhance external validity, researchers may adopt replication logic, either literal or theoretical, by conducting multiple case studies across different industries and countries. Clearly defining the scope and boundaries of the research design can help achieve reasonable analytical generalizations. Comparing evidence with existing literature helps outline contributions and generalize within the research's scope, rather than to a larger population (Riege, 2003).

To ensure the internal validity in this study, it will contain a cross-case analysis and tables to create a better understanding of the data. Images that are discussed in the empirical data are also included so that the reader can get a greater understanding of the case. As for the external validity, the cases studied are though in the same industry, but are not in the same country.

3.7.2. Reliability

Reliability refers to the consistency and stability of research findings. To increase reliability, researchers should provide a comprehensive account of theories and ideas for each research phase. Ensuring congruence between research issues and study design features also contributes to reliability (Riege, 2003).

To ensure reliability, this study uses multiple sources for the empirical data. The theory used has been used before in previous studies, but not for the purpose of this study. The issue that this study is surrounded around are firestorms and then hopes to provide another applicable theory that can be used when dealing with a firestorm.

4. Empirical data

This chapter presents the collected empirical data. The chapter will start with an overview of the studied cases, then each case will be presented, and the chapter finishes with the key features from each firestorm. The data has been collected from observations of social medias and news articles. It is from mostly from secondary sources such as news articles to be able to follow the developments in the cases. The social media was used with the purpose of widening the perception by the public of the studied cases. It gives more depth to with the case causes controversy. The two presented cases will later be analyzed in chapter 5.

4.1. Case overview

The two cases that has been studied are from the same industry, beer breweries. The cases started out differently. The first one about a crisis that Bud Light has recently faced started on the internet with the collaboration with the transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney. The outcome from this firestorm did not only affect Mulvaney and Bud Light, but it also affected Bud Lights parent company Anheuser-Busch. It raised a lot of questions concerning the LGBTQ+ community regarding both the collaboration and the response action Bud Light and Anheuser-Busch took. The second one is concerning BrewDog and the recent accusations against their CEO James Watt and a supposed toxic work environment across their operations. This firestorm started when a signed letter from former employees were published on different medias. The backlash they received is that many current employees started to also speak up. The BBC also did a documentary regarding the accusations resulting in more attention to the company and other accusations against James Watt to rise.

4.2. Bud light and Dylan Mulvaney

In March of this year, 2023, Bud light sent the influencer Dylan Mulvaney, who is transgender, a custom beer can with her face on it as for a promotion post about March Madness. Mulvaney (2023) posted a video on April 1st on her Instagram account. The video is though mostly about promoting march madness, which is a sports celebrations month. In the video she mentions that Bud Light had a contest thing where one had a chance to win 15 000 dollars in celebration of

March Madness. In the post this contest is also presented in the caption, tagging Bud Light's own Instagram page. In this video when she talks about March Madness and that she did not know it was a thing, but is still promoting it and Bud Light, she also mentions that she had her own celebration in March. She celebrated one-year of womanhood. Then she shows a quick picture of the personalized beer can that Bud Light had sent her, see figure 2.



Figure 2: Dylan Mulvaney's personalized beer can from Bud Light

In the video, this picture is only shown for 2 seconds out of close to a minute long video. Then Mulvaney continues to talk and promote March Madness for the rest of the video (Mulvaney, 2023).

In the comments on Mulvaney's (2023) Instagram post, there is a mix of both positive and negative response. The comments that are on the more positive side are questioning why people are reacting to the video. While the negative comments are ranging from questioning Bud Light for choosing this person for a promotion collaboration or that Mulvaney's way of acting and behaving is degrading to women (Mulvaney, 2023).

The aftermath of this has affected Bud Light and has been reported about in several news sites and magazines. One of which is the New York Times, one of their reporters Amanda Holpuch (2023) wrote an article titled *Behind the Backlash Against Bud Light's Transgender Influencer*. Bud Light has received backlash from well-known conservatives that called for a boycott of the brand. The boycott of Bud Light by conservative commentators and celebrities have had mixed results, and it is unclear what the critics were seeking. The calls for boycott did not include any specific demand, and some of the prominent voices supporting it have attacked the transgender community in the past. The criticism of Bud Light, along with other complaints about brand partnerships with transgender people, is happening as Republican state lawmakers are proposing legislation to restrict the lives of young transgender people, among other things. Research on boycotts has found that such efforts tend to be short-lived and don't have a long-term effect, and finding replacement products can be a challenge. Some supporters of the boycott have opted for a "buycott," where they buy products to protest the boycott against it. One country musician said that he would stop including Bud Light in his tour rider, while the guitarist for the Offspring said that the band would include Anheuser-Busch products in its rider (Holpuch, 2023).

The Wall Street Journal discusses in a podcast by Jennifer Maloney and Ryan Knutson (2023) about the fallout from a backlash against Bud Light when they partnered with transgender influencer, Dylan Mulvaney, for a sponsored post on Instagram in April. Some Bud Light drinkers objected to the beer brand partnering with the transgender influencer, causing a controversy, and US retail sales of Bud Light fell roughly 21% amid the controversy compared to the previous year. The Journal highlights the strength and duration of the backlash and asks whether a big brand like Bud Light can be welcoming to everyone given the polarization in the country. The article discusses Bud Light's history of supporting gay pride parades, and recent efforts by the company to turn things around by being more inclusive and appealing to a broader and younger audience, as consumers have turned away from light beer and moved to other drinks like craft beer, hard seltzer, and cocktails (Maloney et al, 2023).

It was also reported in Holpuch's (2023) article that Anheuser-Busch, the parent company of Bud Light, has reversed its decision to pull the beer's sponsorship from the LGBTQ+ media company,

OutFront Media, following calls for a boycott from conservative groups. The calls for the boycott did not include a specific demand, and it is unclear what critics were seeking. The brand had been in decline and needed to attract young drinkers, according to Alissa Heinerscheid, vice president of marketing for Bud Light. Ms. Heinerscheid, along with Daniel Blake, who oversees marketing for Anheuser-Busch's mainstream brands, are now on leave. The company said it would focus marketing efforts on sports and music and would assign senior executives to oversee those campaigns. LGBTQ+ people in the United States have an estimated \$1.1 trillion in annual purchasing power, according to a 2019 report by LGBT Capital (Holpuch, 2023).

Holpuch (2023) later in the article wrote that because of the boycott, Bud Light's sales slumped, and Anheuser-Busch, the beer's brewer, announced that two executives were taking a leave of absence. The company also stated that it would focus its marketing campaigns on sports and music. Dylan Mulvaney, who has more than 10.8 million followers on TikTok, has faced personal attacks from public figures, including Senator Marsha Blackburn and Caitlyn Jenner. Despite not addressing the Bud Light boycott directly, Mulvaney commented in an interview that she has become an easy target due to her newfound fame (Holpuch, 2023).

New York Post (2023) did an interview with Dylan Mulvaney, where she has admitted that the backlash over her Bud Light partnership has been difficult to handle and has caused her sleepless nights. Mulvaney has received intense criticism and transphobia on social media since announcing her paid sponsorship with the beer company. She suggested that the fallout from the controversy may have been a blessing in disguise, as it has forced her to break her people-pleasing mentality. Mulvaney has also said that she may not have been the best representative for the transgender community in the jobs she took. In response to the controversy, she has announced that she will no longer accept spokesperson positions for companies looking to "check a box" by partnering with a transgender person (Donlevy, 2023).

The Wall Street Journal podcast with Maloney and Knutson (2023) continued to discuss about the backlash faced by Anheuser-Busch, the parent company of Bud Light, following a sponsored Instagram post by a transgender influencer, Dylan Mulvaney. Although the influencer's post was one of many sponsored posts by Anheuser-Busch, it received immediate backlash, resulting in

calls for boycotts and even bomb threats against the company's facilities. The focus of the discussion is on the impact of the boycott, which affected not just Anheuser-Busch, but also Bud Light's distributors. The distributors bore the brunt of the boycott, with their drivers and employees facing angry shoppers and protesters. The backlash occurred in the context of heated debates around transgender issues in America, and Bud Light sales dropped by 23% by the end of April, while rival brands Coors Light and Miller Light saw sales increase by around 20% (Maloney et al, 2023).

4.3. BrewDog and the accusation against its CEO James Watt

The BBC wrote an article in the beginning of 2022 that CEO of Brewdog, James Watt, has been accused of inappropriate behavior and abuse of power in the workplace by more than 15 former employees. The allegations include making female bartenders feel uncomfortable and powerless. Brewdog, a Scottish beer company founded in 2007, has its headquarters in Ellon, Scotland, and operates over 100 bars worldwide with more than 2,000 employees. The accusations against Watt were brought to light by the BBC's Disclosure program, following an investigation triggered by a letter signed by nearly 300 former and current Brewdog employees, alleging a toxic culture of fear. The documentary "The Truth about Brewdog" features interviews with 12 former Brewdog USA staff who have made claims of inappropriate behavior and abuse of power by Watt. These claims include instances of Watt kissing an intoxicated customer, advising female bartenders on how to avoid his attention, and taking women on late-night private brewery tours, which made staff uncomfortable. Watt's lawyer denies the allegations, stating they were fully investigated and unsubstantiated. Other former employees also describe feeling uncomfortable and powerless in the face of Watt's behavior. Brewdog chairman Allan Leighton has stated that Watt has committed to improving his management style, and the company has implemented an action plan to address the issues raised. The BBC investigation does not make allegations of criminal behavior by Watt towards women (Daly et al, 2022).

One of the responses that Mr Watt made was to write a statement on twitter, see figure 3.

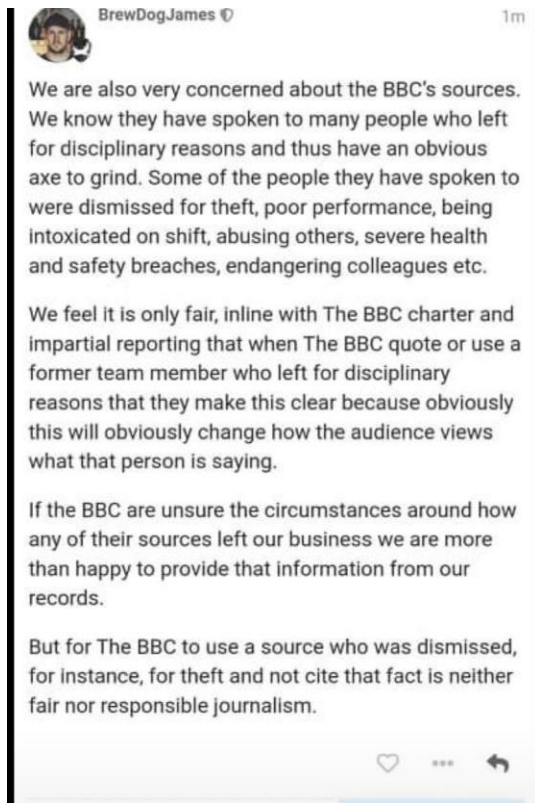


Figure 3: Tweet from James Watt

In the comments for this is more people sharing their negative experiences of working for BrewDog. Many also criticise them for not hiring a PR team to handle this situation. Also following the accusations against BrewDog for their negative work environment, they started a campaign for mental health, see figure 4. Which people did not respond well to on social medias. They were upset about BrewDogs way of handling the situation and felt like they were mocking the situation.



Figure 4: BrewDog's campaign for mental health

Another thing that the CEO did after the allegations were made against him and the documentary by the BBC was released was to hire private investigators to gather information on individuals he believed were involved in a smear campaign against him. The investigators approached people and asked about their experiences with the targeted individuals, claiming to be serious crime investigators working for Watt's lawyers. They left business cards and contacted individuals associated with those targeted by Watt. One woman, who had conversations with a former acquaintance of Watt, received multiple messages from Watt himself, accusing her of involvement and threatening legal action. Despite her denials, Watt persisted until she blocked him. Last year, BrewDog issued an apology to former employees who accused the company of fostering a culture of fear. Watt was later accused of trying to intimidate individuals appearing on a BBC documentary about BrewDog. Lawyers acting for BrewDog pressured one former staff member to retract his statements made on the show. Watt disputes the documentary's allegations and has filed a complaint against the BBC with Ofcom. BrewDog states that investigators were hired to uncover the source of false allegations and that legal action is being pursued against those involved. Integritas, the investigative company, claims to have found evidence of a criminal campaign organized by a small group targeting Watt and BrewDog (The Guardian, n.d.).

In an article in the DailyMail from the summer of 2022 James Watt has admitted to being "too intense and demanding" in the workplace. He made this admission during an interview on the Diary of a CEO podcast while discussing his leadership at the company. Watt has been at the center of a series of misconduct accusations, including allegations of inappropriate behavior towards women and abuse of power. Watt acknowledged that there were times when he pushed people too far due to his high standards and unrealistic deadlines. He stated that his actions were driven by good intentions and a strong focus on building the company, creating more jobs, and delivering value to customers. However, he recognized that his intensity and demanding nature may have been overwhelming for some team members (Aoraha, 2022).

These revelations come in the wake of numerous allegations made by former BrewDog employees. Over 15 ex-staff members have spoken out, with some claiming that Watt made female bartenders feel uncomfortable and powerless. An investigation by BBC Scotland's Disclosure program uncovered instances where female staff members were advised to dress down and avoid attention from Watt when he visited their bars. One former employee, Katelynn Ising, who worked at a BrewDog bar in Ohio, revealed that they would warn new female staff members whenever Watt was expected to visit, advising them to leave after their shift and not draw attention to themselves. Other former employees have accused Watt of inappropriate behavior, including kissing an intoxicated customer on a roof terrace at another BrewDog bar (Aoraha, 2022).

Last year, a scathing open letter was published by a group called "Punks With Purpose," comprising disgruntled former employees. The letter criticized BrewDog's toxic attitudes and accused the company of fostering a "culture of fear." It claimed that employees were subjected to burnout, fear, and misery, with some experiencing mental illness as a result of their time at the company. The letter also called for a genuine apology and addressed allegations of sexism, discrimination, and sexual harassment in the craft beer industry. In response to the open letter, Watt expressed his concern and stated that the focus would be on listening, learning, and taking action. He acknowledged that BrewDog had not always gotten things right and pledged to do better. The company has been known for its unconventional policies, such as offering "pawternity leave" for employees who get a new pet and providing monetary incentives for employees to quit

if they feel they are not a good fit. In addition to the workplace culture allegations, Watt has initiated a private prosecution against a woman named Emili Ziem. He accuses her of providing false information about individuals responsible for making malicious online comments about him. The case is being pursued as a private prosecution by Watt individually, rather than by BrewDog as a company (Aoraha, 2022).

4.4. Key features

In table 1 below, the key features from both cases are presented in order to provide a clearer picture of these situations. It also provides a comparison of the two cases.

Table 1

Key features from the case studies

Case	Reason	Protagonist	Response	Peak	Long term effect
Bud Light	A collaboration with a transgender influencer	Dylan Mulvaney	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Anheuser-Busch, reversed its decision to pull sponsorship from an LGBTQ+ media company □ Two executives from Bud Light took a leave of absence in response to the situation □ Focus marketing efforts on sports and music 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Bud Light's sales declined □ Executives took a leave of absence □ The company shifted its marketing focus □ Mulvaney faced personal attacks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The boycott affected Bud Light's distributors, and sales dropped while rival brands saw increases □ Damage to Bud Lights reputation
BrewDog	Accusations against the CEO regarding inappropriate behavior and abuse of power in the workplace	James Watt, CEO of BrewDog	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Statements on Twitter by Watt regarding his management style □ BrewDog did a mental health campaign □ Watt initiated legal proceedings against those who made the accusations, separate from Brewdog 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The mental health campaign □ Watt hired private investigators to gather information on individuals involved 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ The situation raised concerns about workplace culture, sexism, discrimination, and the craft beer industry □ The allegations and response sparked public discussions and scrutiny of Brewdog and its CEO

5. Results

This chapter will present the results of the empirical data when applied to the RQs and the presented theory. From the theory SCCT, the empirical data can give the following results.

As presented in previous chapters, this study is about applying the SCCT to firestorms. So if we look back at the first research question which is related to the first step in the SCCT. The first step in crisis management is determining the initial crisis responsibility, which is based on stakeholders' attributions of the organization's control over the crisis. By looking at table 1 in chapter 4, we may see that for the case of Bud Light, the initial crisis responsibility is on themselves. This is because withing their American market, questions concerning LGBTQ+ community are causing controversial situations. This is a well know knowledge and is a sensitive question in general. Companies and brands are receiving backlash both for being supportive of the LGBTQ+ and for not being it. It depends on their target market. As for the case with BrewDog, the initial crisis responsibility is on James Watt. He is the target of the accusations made about the hostile and discriminating work environment. He is so connected to BrewDog as a brand since he co-founded it, it makes it harder for people to differentiate between him and the brand.

Higher attributions of crisis responsibility led to lower reputational scores, indicating a greater reputational threat. Crisis types, such as accidents, sabotage, or negligence, serve as cues for stakeholders to interpret the crisis events. The case with Bud Light would fall in the accident type of crisis. But the case with BrewDog would fall under negligence type of crisis. Based on SCCT research, crisis responsibility attributions fall into three clusters: the victim cluster with weak attributions, the accidental cluster with minimal attributions, and the intentional cluster with strong attributions. Bud Light would be in the accidental cluster, while BrewDog would be in the international cluster. Why BrewDog is placed in the intentional cluster will be explained in the second step of the SCCT. Identifying the crisis type helps crisis managers gauge the extent of crisis responsibility stakeholders assign to the organization, which in turn indicates the initial reputational threat. Crisis responsibility has consistently been found to be negatively related to organizational reputation.

The second step in assessing the threat involves two factors: consistency and distinctiveness. Consistency refers to the organization's past experiences with similar crises, indicating whether it has a history of facing similar issues. As for Bud Light, they appear not have been involved in similar events in the past, meaning they do not have a history of facing similar issues. But as for BrewDog, they have made themselves known by doing radical marketing campaigns in the past. Meaning they have a history of facing controversial situations. High consistency suggests an ongoing problem. Distinctiveness, on the other hand, relates to the organization's relationship history and prior reputation with stakeholders. It reflects how well or poorly the organization has treated stakeholders in other situations. A low distinctiveness implies a pattern of mistreatment, indicating that the crisis is not unique but part of a larger behavioral pattern. Bud Light has treated their stakeholders relatively well in the past. They listen to the backlash/feedback or wishes that their stakeholders express. Meaning Bud Light would have a high distinctiveness. BrewDog on the otherhand has not had a history of treating their stakeholders well. They are known for not caring and bending some rules to run their business. Meaning they have a low distinctiveness. Both consistency and distinctiveness provide insights into the severity and potential impact of the crisis.

So from this we can see that the impact that the cases will have are going to be different. Bud Light will have a lesser impact on their reputation than BrewDog according to the SCCT.

6. Conclusions

This chapter will present conclusions that can be made from the results presented in the previous chapter. It will also conclude an overall answer to the research questions.

In conclusion, both Bud Light and Brewdog faced significant crises that required them to take action in order to recover their reputation and address the issues at hand.

Bud Light's initial crisis responsibility stemmed from its partnership with influencer Dylan Mulvaney, which sparked controversy and backlash. To recover from the crisis, Bud Light took several steps. They reversed their sponsorship decision, demonstrating a commitment to inclusivity. They shifted their marketing efforts to focus on sports and music, potentially aiming to rebuild brand loyalty among a broader audience. Bud Light also assigned senior executives to oversee campaigns, indicating a proactive approach to managing their promotional activities. Addressing the decline in sales would likely involve implementing strategies to regain market share and win back customers. Lastly, Bud Light aimed to support their distributors who faced the brunt of the boycott.

On the other hand, Brewdog faced a crisis due to allegations of inappropriate behavior and abuse of power by CEO James Watt, leading to negative workplace culture. To recover, Brewdog acknowledged the accusations and issued a public apology. They implemented an action plan to address the problems within the organization and aimed to improve Watt's management style. However, their communication efforts and the launch of a mental health campaign faced backlash and were seen as inadequate or inappropriate. Hiring private investigators further added controversy to the situation. Brewdog's recovery strategy faced challenges in rebuilding trust and mitigating the damage caused by the crisis.

Both cases highlight the importance of carefully considering partnerships, addressing concerns raised by stakeholders, and effectively managing crises. The responses of Bud Light and Brewdog demonstrate the complexities and difficulties involved in recovering from such situations,

emphasizing the need for transparent communication, genuine efforts to address issues, and a focus on rebuilding trust with the public. Though the longterm effects these cases will have for the brand differ from each other, we can see that the SCCT are applicable to firestorms.

6.1. Limitations

The results and conclusions have become limited due to the fact that there was a limited time for conducting this study. Doing the work by myself has also limited the extent of the study. As previously mentioned in chapter one, the study looked at recent firestorms. Meaning that an analysis of the long-term and “final” effects cannot be done yet. The long-term effect can be seen and analyzed in a few years. A firestorm can go on for months or years before the outcome is settled depending on the size of the firestorm.

6.2. Further research

Further research on this subject could be done both on firestorms and on the SCCT alone, but also further together. Further together research on this topic could be done by analyzing if it would have a greater impact if the SCCT are used as a preventative measure when responding to a firestorm. The theory could also be analyzed for the same reason but on other types crisis. Meaning it would be used on a managerial level when handling a crisis. The SCCT are a theory that can be used in studies to make it more applicable and useful. It has not really been used much in studies. Firestorms are also a relatively understudied subject. Though it has been done more studies on firestorms than the SCCT.

7. References:

7.1. Scholarly Articles

Basso, K., & Pizzutti, C. (2016). Trust recovery following a double deviation. *Journal of Service Research*, 19(2), 209-223. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1094670515625455>

Claeys, A-S., Cauberghe, V., & Patrick Vyncke, P. (2010). Restoring reputations in times of crisis: An experimental study of the Situational Crisis Communication Theory and the moderating effects of locus of control. *Public Relations Review*. Volume 36, Issue 3, Pages 256-262. ISSN 0363-8111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2010.05.004>

Coombs, T. (2007). Attribution Theory as a guide for post-crisis communication research. *Public Relations Review*. Volume 33, Issue 2. Pages 135-139. ISSN 0363-8111. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2006.11.016>

Delgado-Ballester, E., López-López, I., & Bernal-Palazón, A. (2020). How harmful are online firestorms for brands? : An approach to the phenomenon from the participant level. *Spanish Journal of Marketing - ESIC*, 24(1), 133–151. <https://doi.org.proxy.lib.ltu.se/10.1108/SJME-07-2019-0044>

Edgar, T.W., Manz, D.O. (2017). Research Methods for Cyber Security. *Syngress*. p. 63-92. <https://doi.org/10.1016/B978-0-12-805349-2.00003-0>

Gruber, M., Mayer, C., Einwiller, S.A. (2020), "What drives people to participate in online firestorms?", *Online Information Review*, Vol. 44 No. 3, pp. 563-581. <https://doi.org/10.1108/OIR-10-2018-0331>

Hansen, N., Kupfer, A.-K., & Hennig-Thurau, T. (2018). Brand crises in the digital age: The short- and long-term effects of social media firestorms on consumers and brands.

International Journal of Research in Marketing, 35(4), 557–574. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ltu.se/10.1016/j.ijresmar.2018.08.001>

Heale R, Twycross A. (2018). What is a case study?. *Evidence-Based Nursing*. 2018;21:7-8. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/eb-2017-102845>

Khamitov, M., Grégoire, Y., & Suri, A. (2020). A systematic review of brand transgression, service failure recovery and product-harm crisis: integration and guiding insights. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. 48:519–542. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11747-019-00679-1>

Kriyantono, R. (2012). Measuring a company reputation in a crisis situation: An ethnography approach on the situational crisis communication theory. *International Journal of Business and Social Science*, 3(9).

Pfeffer, J., Zorbach, T., & Carley, K. M. (2014). Understanding online firestorms: Negative word-of-mouth dynamics in social media networks. *Journal of Marketing Communications*, 20(1/2), 117–128. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ltu.se/10.1080/13527266.2013.797778>

Riege, A. M. (2003), "Validity and reliability tests in case study research: a literature review with "hands-on" applications for each research phase", *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, Vol. 6 Iss 2 pp. 75 – 86. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/13522750310470055>

Scholz, J., & Smith, A. N. (2019). Branding in the age of social media firestorms: how to create brand value by fighting back online. *Journal of Marketing Management*, 35(11/12), 1100–1134. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ltu.se/10.1080/0267257X.2019.1620839>

Shorten A, Moorley C. (2014). Selecting the sample. *Evidence-Based Nursing*. 2014;17:32-33. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1136/eb-2014-101747>

Sisco, H. F. (2012). Nonprofit in Crisis: An Examination of the Applicability of Situational Crisis Communication Theory. *Journal of Public Relations Research*. Volume 24, 2012 - Issue 1. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1062726X.2011.582207>

Swaminathan, V., Sorescu, A., Steenkamp, J.-B. E. M., O'Guinn, T. C. G., & Schmitt, B. (2020). Branding in a Hyperconnected World: Refocusing Theories and Rethinking Boundaries. *Journal of Marketing*, 84(2), 24–46. <https://doi-org.proxy.lib.ltu.se/10.1177/0022242919899905>

Swedberg, R. (2020.). Exploratory Research. The Production of Knowledge. *Enhancing Progress in Social Science*. (pp. 17-41). <https://doi.org/10.1017/9781108762519.002>

7.2. Books

Lind, R. (2020). *Vidga Vetandet, Teori, metod och argumentation i samhällsvetenskapliga undersökningar* (Andra upplagan). Studentlitteratur

Tenny S, Brannan JM, Brannan GD. (2022). Qualitative Study. StatPearls [Internet]. Treasure Island (FL): StatPearls Publishing. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK470395/>

7.3. News Articles

Aoraha, C. (4 July 2022). 'I pushed people too far': BrewDog CEO James Watt admits to being 'too intense and demanding' amid workplace culture row at craft brewery after he was accused of inappropriate behaviour and abuse of power. *DailyMail*. <https://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-10980039/BrewDog-CEO-James-Watt-admits-intense-demanding-amid-workplace-culture-row.html>

Daly, M., Bonnar, M. (24 January 2022). Brewdog chief James Watt accused of inappropriate behaviour. *BBC News*. <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-59957485>

Donlevy, K. (11 May 2023). Transgender influencer Dylan Mulvaney ‘can’t sleep’ over Bud Light backlash. *New York Post*. <https://nypost.com/2023/05/11/dylan-mulvaney-says-she-cant-sleep-over-bud-light-backlash/>

Holpuch, A. (4 May 2023). Behind the Backlash Against Bud Light’s Transgender Influencer. *The New York Times*. <https://www.nytimes.com/article/bud-light-boycott.html>

The Guardian. (n.d). BrewDog boss hired private investigators to gather evidence of alleged smear campaign. *The Guardian*. https://www.theguardian.com/business/2022/mar/14/brewdog-boss-hired-private-investigators-to-gather-evidence-of-alleged-smear-campaign?CMP=Share_AndroidApp_Other

7.4. Websites

George, T. (2021). *Exploratory Research | Definition, Guide, & Examples*. Scribbr. <https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/exploratory-research/#:~:text=Exploratory%20research%20investigates%20research%20questions,previously%20studied%20phenomenon%20takes%20place.>

Warren, K. (2020). Qualitative Data Analysis Methods 101: The “Big 6” Methods + Examples. *GradCoach*. <https://gradcoach.com/qualitative-data-analysis-methods/>

7.5. Videos and other media

Mulvaney, D. [dylanmulvaney] (1 April 2023). *Happy March Madness* [Video] Instagram. https://www.instagram.com/reel/CqgTftujqZc/?utm_source=ig_web_copy_link&igshid=ZmUxMWFiMWExZg==

Maloney, J., Knutson, R. (Host). (8 May 2023). Can Bud Light Still Be the Beer for Everyone? [Podcast]. The Journal. The Wall Street Journal. <https://www.wsj.com/podcasts/the-journal/can-bud-light-still-be-the-beer-for-everyone/e7942700-326f-4216-919d-79813298b154>