UNIVERSITÄT BERN

Consumer Aggression in Marketing

Inauguraldissertation zur Erlangung der Würde eines

Doctor Rerum Oeconomicarum

der Wirtschaft- und Sozialwissenschaftlichen Fakultät

der Universität Bern

vorgelegt von

Andrea Kähr

Bern, März 2017

Originaldokument gespeichert auf dem Webserver der Universitätsbibliothek Bern

Dieses Werk ist unter einem Creative Commons Namensnennung-Keine kommerzielle Nutzung-Keine Bearbeitung 2.5 Schweiz Lizenzvertrag lizenziert. Um die Lizenz anzusehen, gehen Sie bitte zu http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/ch/ oder schicken Sie einen Brief an Creative Commons, 171 Second Street, Suite 300, San Francisco, California 94105, USA.

source: https://doi.org/10.24442/boristheses.1264 | downloaded: 12.10.2024

Urheberrechtlicher Hinweis

Dieses Dokument steht unter einer Lizenz der Creative Commons Namensnennung-Keine kommerzielle Nutzung-Keine Bearbeitung 2.5 Schweiz.
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/ch/

Sie dürfen:

dieses Werk vervielfältigen, verbreiten und öffentlich zugänglich machen

Zu den folgenden Bedingungen:

Namensnennung. Sie müssen den Namen des Autors/Rechteinhabers in der von ihm festgelegten Weise nennen (wodurch aber nicht der Eindruck entstehen darf, Sie oder die Nutzung des Werkes durch Sie würden entlohnt).

Keine kommerzielle Nutzung. Dieses Werk darf nicht für kommerzielle Zwecke verwendet werden.

Keine Bearbeitung. Dieses Werk darf nicht bearbeitet oder in anderer Weise verändert werden.

Im Falle einer Verbreitung müssen Sie anderen die Lizenzbedingungen, unter welche dieses Werk fällt, mitteilen.

Jede der vorgenannten Bedingungen kann aufgehoben werden, sofern Sie die Einwilligung des Rechteinhabers dazu erhalten.

Diese Lizenz lässt die Urheberpersönlichkeitsrechte nach Schweizer Recht unberührt.

Eine ausführliche Fassung des Lizenzvertrags befindet sich unter
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/2.5/ch/legalcode.de

Die Fakultät hat diese Arbeit am 18.05.2017 auf Antrag der beiden Gutachter Prof. Dr. Harley Krohmer und Prof. Dr. Andreas Fürst als Dissertation angenommen, ohne damit zu den darin ausgesprochenen Auffassungen Stellung nehmen zu wollen.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS II

SUMMARY OF THE DISSERTATION 1

PAPER I – Andrea Kähr, Bettina Nyffenegger, Harley Krohmer, Wayne D. Hoyer .. 12

When Hostile Consumers Wreak Havoc on Your Brand:

The Phenomenon of Consumer Brand Sabotage

MANUSCRIPT II – Andrea Kähr and Bettina Nyffenegger 45

When and Why Does Consumer Brand Sabotage

Cause Damage Among Other Consumers?

MANUSCRIPT III – Andrea Kähr, Marco Casanova, Patrick Heri..... 111

The Effectiveness of a Defensive versus Accommodative Response Strategy to Negative

Electronic Word-Of-Mouth: The Role of Message Credibility

SELBSTÄNDIGKEITSERKLÄRUNG 164

Acknowledgements

Writing this dissertation at the Marketing Department of the University of Bern has been a very rewarding experience, allowing me to conduct research in a very interesting, interdisciplinary area to develop individual expertise and myself personally. At this point, I would like to thank all those people who have supported and encouraged me and made this thesis an unforgettable experience for me.

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Dr. Harley Krohmer. With his exceptional interconnected way of thinking and his remarkable expertise, he has not only supported me in my research projects but his optimism and confidence in me also allowed me to aim higher than I would have imagined. I owe my deepest gratitude to his continuous advice and encouragement throughout the course of this thesis. I would also like to thank him for the opportunity to visit the University of Texas at Austin and to participate at various seminars and conferences.

It has also been a privilege working with Prof. Dr. Wayne D. Hoyer of the University of Texas at Austin, one of the most distinguished marketing professors worldwide. His unique expertise and great advice has been invaluable, especially in the review process of publishing my first scientific article.

I am deeply grateful to Prof. Dr. Bettina Nyffenegger for her constructive comments and warm encouragement throughout my work on this thesis. I have greatly benefited from all the insightful discussions with her. I would also like to offer my special thanks to Marco Casanova and Patrick Heri for their valuable contributions and fruitful ideas on our joint research project.

I am indebted to many of my former and current colleagues at the Institute of Marketing at the University of Bern: Daniela Herzog, Andreas Hediger, Lucia Malär, Clemens Ammann, Dimitri Wittwer, Olivier Pahud, Regina Dändliker, Sahar Hasher, Franz Kölliker, Daria Erkhova and the rest of the current and former team. Thank you very much for all the stimulating and delightful conversations. I would also like to thank the former and current junior research assistants who have supported my work: Elena Corazza, David Becker, and Alexandra Wälti.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my family and friends. To my parents, they have supported me in more ways than I can ever thank them for. Caroline, Simon, and Manuel, I feel privileged to have such wonderful siblings who support me in everything I do, distract me when needed, and make me laugh. Most of all, I would like to thank Guy for his unconditional love, his unlimited support and encouragement, for cheering me up whenever I needed it, and for believing in me.

Bern, March 2017

Andrea Kähr

Summary of the Dissertation

In today's networked and interactive world, firms are advised to enter a dialogue with their existing and potential customers to better serve them and satisfy their needs (Sashi 2012). Accordingly, firms increasingly involve consumers in content and value creation such as in the development of new products or personalized customer experiences (Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004), creating more intimate long-term customer-firm relationships (Sashi 2012). Such behavior has been addressed in the context of customer engagement referring to "customer's behavioral manifestations that have a brand or firm focus, beyond purchase, resulting from motivational drivers" (van Doorn et al. 2010, p. 254). Such customer engagement can go as far as that highly devoted consumers (see also Pimentel and Reynolds 2004) create advertisements for a brand that does not want to produce advertisements on its own. This was the case with the car brand Tesla, for which the consumer Noah Magel created an advertisement and put it on YouTube where already more than 20,000 consumers have watched it (Magel 2015). This example illustrates how consumers, empowered by new technologies, not only have access to a vast amount of information but that they also create and shape information (Labrecque et al. 2013).

Such customer engagement can be highly beneficiary for firms for example in the context of new product development whereby the likelihood of new product success is increased (Hoyer et al. 2010) or positive word-of-mouth where customers share positive recommendations about a firm or brand with potential customers, encouraging them to purchase the respective product or brand (Brown et al. 2005). However, consumer empowerment and the networking effects in our digital age have also motivated less beneficiary forms of consumer behavior for firms. For example, to restore equity after an unacceptable service, some customers purposely spread negative word-of-mouth (NWOM) about a product or brand, discouraging other consumers from buying it (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). Some consumers go

even further than that and aggressively attack brands which can result in a tremendous brand damage. For example, the consumer Jeremy Dorosin became outraged when his complaint about a defective espresso machine was not resolved to his satisfaction by Starbucks (Flinn 1995). He purchased an advertisement in the Wall Street Journal (WSJ) to gather complaints from other customers. He then threatened Starbucks by warning them to either apologize to all its customers on an entire page in the WSJ or he would take out two full pages to publish the complaints he had collected. As Starbucks did not apologize, he spent $ 10,000 on such an advertisement publishing all customer complaints that criticized Starbucks. Several news programs on national television and in newspapers conducted interviews with him and reported his story. In addition, he created an anti-Starbucks website and wrote a book where he shared his story.

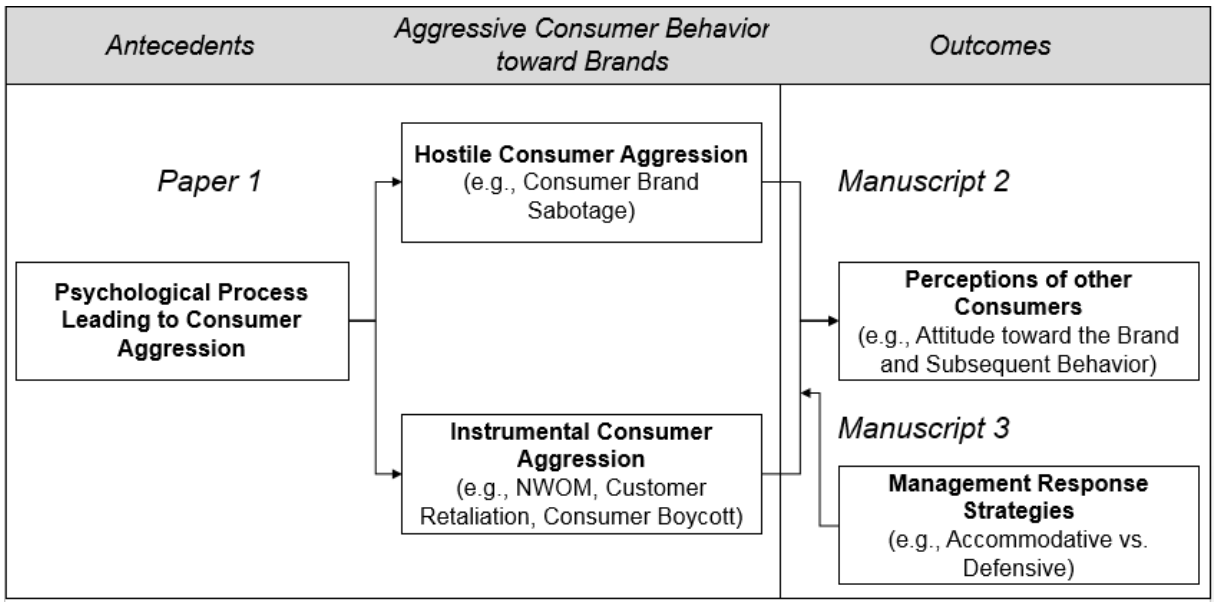
So far, the focus of research has largely been on positive consumer behavior and its positive aspects on companies or brands (e.g., Brown et al. 2005; Labrecque et al. 2013; Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; van Doorn et al. 2010). By contrast, negative consumer behavior such as NWOM (e.g., Zhang, Feick, and Mittal 2014) or consumer boycott (e.g., Klein, Smith, and John 2004) have received much less attention. With regard to more destructive forms of negative consumer behavior such as customer revenge (e.g., Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009) where the consumer intends to harm the firm or brand, research has been particularly scarce, despite their damage potential.

To address this research gap, this dissertation introduces a conceptual framework of aggressive consumer behavior toward brands and examines the complex psychological mechanisms leading to such behavior (Kähr et al. 2016). Thereby, the conceptual framework distinguishes between hostile aggression where the consumer has the conscious desire and dominant motive to harm the brand and instrumental aggression where the consumer behaves aggressively to achieve other objectives such as restoring equity or venting negative emotions.

In addition to the antecedents leading to consumer aggression, this dissertation also investigates the outcomes of consumer aggression and how managers can respond to diminish its damage (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Overall Framework of the Dissertation



Paper 1 (Kähr et al. 2016) introduces the phenomenon of consumer brand sabotage (CBS) as a form of hostile aggression and develops a conceptual framework of aggressive consumer behavior toward brands, explaining its underlying psychological mechanisms and distinguishing between instrumental and hostile aggression. *Manuscript 2* examines the brand damage of CBS as a form of hostile aggression, i.e., the processes by which a CBS activity of a consumer brand saboteur affects other consumers' brand attitude and subsequent behaviors while taking those consumers' cognitions and brand relationship quality into account. Finally, *Manuscript 3* investigates how a company should respond to negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) as a form of instrumental aggression depending on its credibility.

When Hostile Consumers Wreak Havoc on Your Brand: The Phenomenon of Consumer Brand Sabotage

Paper 1 "When Hostile Consumers Wreak Havoc on Your Brand: The Phenomenon of Consumer Brand Sabotage" (Kähr et al. 2016) introduces the phenomenon of CBS as a form of hostile aggression to the marketing literature. Based on aggression (e.g., Anderson and Bushman 2002) and appraisal theories (e.g., Arnold 1960; Moors 2009) from social psychology as well as in depth interviews with actual brand saboteurs, this paper provides an understanding of the mental escalation process leading to aggressive consumer behavior toward brands and distinguishes between hostile and instrumental aggression. Two quantitative studies support the distinction between CBS as a form of hostile aggression and existing concepts of negative consumer behavior such as negative WOM as forms of instrumental aggression. Furthermore, these studies provide empirical evidence that, in comparison to instrumental aggression, CBS is preceded by stronger negative emotions such as outrage, anger, and hatred, more intense rumination, more failed interactions, and stronger hostile thoughts and perceived identity threats.

This paper contributes to academic research by developing a conceptual framework of aggressive consumer behavior toward brands, explaining the complex psychological mechanisms leading to such behavior, and distinguishing between hostile and instrumental consumer aggression. Thereby, it unites the rather fragmented literature on negative consumer behavior by integrating different forms of negative consumer behavior in one conceptual model. This paper also contributes to existing literature on consumer-brand relationships by transferring and adapting specific concepts of aggression theories to a consumer-brand relationship context. Furthermore, it introduces the construct of CBS to the academic literature which reflects a phenomenon that is increasingly observed in practice but that has not yet received suf-

ficient attention in academic research. This paper suggests a research agenda to stimulate further research on this under-researched phenomenon. Finally, from this study, managers can learn that CBS is a new and distinct form of negative consumer behavior, containing a huge damage potential for brands.

When and Why Does Consumer Brand Sabotage Cause Damage among Other Consumers?

Manuscript 2 addresses the brand damage of the novel phenomenon of CBS, a form of hostile consumer aggression toward brands, by examining the processes by which a CBS activity affects other consumers' attitude toward the brand and their subsequent behavior (e.g., purchase intention) who observe this CBS activity. Based on an experiment with consumers who were confronted with an actual CBS activity, this manuscript shows that a CBS activity can harm the brand by decreasing consumers' attitude toward the brand and purchase intention and by increasing their intention to engage in NWOM. More specifically, the results of the experiment demonstrate that the damage occurs via two different mechanisms: (1) a CBS activity increases consumers' perceived betrayal, decreasing their attitude toward the brand and (2) a CBS activity increases consumers' perceived social identity threat, decreasing consumers' purchase intention and increasing their intention to engage in NWOM. Furthermore, the results suggest that these mechanisms depend on the brand relationship quality of those consumers, i.e., consumers' brand trust and actual self-congruence with the brand.

As such, this study contributes to existing literature on consumer aggression toward brands (Kähr et al. 2016), by outlining the negative consequences of hostile consumer aggression toward brands and the processes by which it affects other consumers who observe such hostile aggression. By including consumers' cognitions such as perceived social identity threat, it introduces a new mechanism to the literature on the damage of negative consumer

behavior which is based on social psychology. Furthermore, the results add to the ongoing debate on the role of brand relationship quality after brand transgressions, i.e., on the buffering (e.g., Hess, Ganesan, and Klein 2003; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran 1998) versus love-becomes-hate effect (e.g., Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). The results of the experiment in this paper support a love-becomes-hate effect by showing that brand trust and consumers' actual self-congruence with the brand increase the negative effects of a CBS activity on their attitude toward the brand and subsequent behavior. Finally, these findings outline that managers should respond to CBS in order to limit its damage and that they should be ready to react in a short period of time to prevent its damage from spreading further through NWOM.

The Effectiveness of a Defensive versus Accommodative Response Strategy to Negative Electronic Word-of-Mouth: The Role of Message Credibility

Manuscript 3 examines the damage of negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) as a form of instrumental aggression and how companies should respond to reduce its damage, depending on the credibility of the negative eWOM. Thereby, it compares the effects of different response strategies from crisis communication (Coombs 1998; Marcus and Goodman 1991), i.e., an accommodative response such as an apology, a defensive response such as a denial of the existence of a problem, and no response to negative eWOM. With a large-scale online experiment based on positive and negative online reviews, this study supports prior research findings that negative eWOM negatively affects other consumers' brand evaluation (i.e., attitude toward the brand and perceived service quality) and purchase intention (Chang et al. 2015; Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006), thereby causing damage to the brand and company. The results of this study also show that an organizational response can decrease this damage and that the adequacy of the response strategy depends on the credibility of eWOM. More specifically, the results outline that when credibility of negative eWOM is high, the choice of re-

sponse (accommodative vs. defensive) has no effect on consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention. In contrast, when credibility of the negative eWOM is low, a defensive response by the company increases consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention compared to an accommodative response.

This paper adds to the literature on consumer aggression (Kähr et al. 2016) by providing further empirical support on the adverse effects of negative eWOM as a form of instrumental aggression on other consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention. It also makes an important contribution to literature on the response effectiveness to negative eWOM. Whereas in previous research an accommodative response is generally regarded as increasing customers' trust and brand reputation (Lee and Cranage 2012), a defensive response is often seen as threat to the brand reputation (Chang et al. 2015). However, this study suggests a more contingency-based point of view when determining an adequate response strategy to negative eWOM, e.g., by taking message credibility into account – a factor that is highly relevant in the anonymous environment of the Internet (Metzger 2007). These findings have direct implications for managers when deciding on whether and how to adequately respond to negative eWOM.

Outlook and Further Research

To capture and understand the complex phenomenon of aggressive consumer behavior toward brands and its negative consequences, this dissertation is based on a broad theoretical foundation, diverse methodology (i.e., qualitative interviews, quantitative surveys, and experiments) as well as on extensive empirical data among 1,958 consumers. However, despite this comprehensive approach, there are still open questions that need to be answered with regard to aggression in the marketplace.

Unfortunately, aggression is an omnipresent phenomenon in our world and further research is needed to enable its prevention and appropriate organizational responses once it occurred. Whereas this dissertation focused on aggression in the consumer-brand relationship and in the interaction between consumers and brands, further research is required to examine aggression in marketing which is directed at other targets than the brand. In our connected, digital world, some consumers aggressively attack other consumers who do not share their opinion. A recent example for such behavior can be found in the online comment section of an article in the Swiss newspaper 20 Minuten on the withdrawal of Samsung's smartphone Galaxy Note 7 from the market (20 Minuten 2016). A consumer accused Samsung of having replaced the smartphones Galaxy Note 7 due to the fire risk of its battery without conducting any further investigations. He was then aggressively attacked by another consumer who defended Samsung by stating that the new replaced series had a different problem than the series at product launch and accusing the consumer of being an illiterate person. A future study could examine when and why such consumer aggression among consumers takes place and how it affects the product or brand which is subject to the discussion and also the newspaper brand allowing such discussions in the comment section of articles. Furthermore, aggressive behavior in the marketplace can also stem from other sources than consumers. For example, employees or competitors can also act aggressively toward the company or brand such as in employee sabotage (e.g., Analoui 1995) or in price wars among competitors (e.g., Busse 2002). Further research is required that examines aggressive behaviors from such other sources, especially when they occur and how they affect the company or brand.

References

Analoui, Farhad (1995), "Workplace Sabotage: Its Styles, Motives and Management," *Journal of Management Development*, 14 (7), 48–65.

Anderson, Craig A. and Brad J. Bushman (2002), "Human Aggression," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53 (1), 27–51.

Arnold, Magda B. (1960), *Emotion and Personality Volume 1: Psychological Aspects*, New York: Columbia University Press.

Brown, Tom J., Thomas E. Barry, Peter A. Dacin, and Richard F. Gunst (2005), "Spreading the Word: Investigating Antecedents of Consumers' Positive Word-of-Mouth Intentions and Behaviors in a Retailing Context," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 33 (2), 123–38.

Busse, Meghan R. (2002), "Firm Financial Condition and Airline Price Wars," *The RAND Journal of Economics*, 33 (2), 298–318.

Chang, Hsin Hsin, Yao-Chuan Tsai, Kit Hong Wong, Jian Wei Wang, and Fang Ju Cho (2015), "The Effects of Response Strategies and Severity of Failure on Consumer Attribution with regard to Negative Word-of-Mouth," *Decision Support Systems*, 71, 48–61.

Chevalier, Judith A. and Dina Mayzlin (2006), "The Effect of Word of Mouth on Sales: Online Book Reviews," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 43 (3), 345–54.

Coombs, W. Timothy (1998), "An Analytic Framework for Crisis Situations: Better Responses from a Better Understanding of the Situation," *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 10 (3), 177–91.

Flinn, John (1995), "Starbucks Got Him Steamed Now He Fights Coffee Chain," *The Baltimore Sun*, (June 5), [available at http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1995-06-05/features/1995156107_1_starbucks-espresso-apology].

Grégoire, Yany, Thomas M. Tripp, and Renaud Legoux (2009), "When Customer Love Turns into Lasting Hate: The Effects of Relationship Strength and Time on Customer Revenge and Avoidance," *Journal of Marketing*, 73 (6), 18–32.

Hess, Ronald L., Shankar Ganesan, and Noreen M. Klein (2003), "Service Failure and Recovery: The Impact of Relationship Factors on Customer Satisfaction," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 31 (2), 127–45.

Hoyer, Wayne D., Rajesh Chandy, Matilda Dorotic, Manfred Krafft, and Siddharth S. Singh (2010), "Consumer Cocreation in New Product Development," *Journal of Service Research*, 13 (3), 283–96.

Kähr, Andrea, Bettina Nyffenegger, Harley Krohmer, and Wayne D. Hoyer (2016), "When Hostile Consumers Wreak Havoc on Your Brand: The Phenomenon of Consumer Brand Sabotage," *Journal of Marketing*, 80 (3), 25–41.

Klein, Jill Gabrielle, N. Craig Smith, and Andrew John (2004), "Why We Boycott: Consumer Motivations for Boycott Participation," *Journal of Marketing*, 68 (July), 92–109.

Labrecque, Lauren I., Jonas vor dem Esche, Charla Mathwick, Thomas P. Novak, and Charles F. Hofacker (2013), "Consumer Power: Evolution in the Digital Age," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27 (4), 257–69.

Lee, Chung Hun and David A. Cranage (2012), "Toward Understanding Consumer Processing of Negative Online Word-of-Mouth Communication: The Roles of Opinion Consensus and Organizational Response Strategies," *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 38 (3), 330–60.

Magel, Noah (2015), "Tesla Ad.," (June 1), [available at https://youtu.be/1lCNoJDHyLA].

Marcus, Alfred A. and Robert S. Goodman (1991), "Victims and Shareholders: The Dilemmas of Presenting Corporate Policy During A Crisis," *Academy of Management Journal*, 34 (2), 281–305.

Metzger, Miriam J. (2007), “Making Sense of Credibility on the Web: Models for Evaluating Online Information and Recommendations for Future Research,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 58 (13), 2078–91.

Moors, Agnes (2009), “Theories of Emotion Causation: A Review,” *Cognition and Emotion*, 23 (4), 625–62.

Pimentel, Ronald W. and Kristy E. Reynolds (2004), “A Model for Consumer Devotion: Affective Commitment with Proactive Sustaining Behaviors,” *Academy of Marketing Science Review*, 2004 (5), 1–45.

Prahalad, C. K. and Venkat Ramaswamy (2004), “Co-Creation Experiences: The Next Practice in Value Creation,” *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18 (3), 5–14.

Sashi, C. M. (2012), “Customer Engagement, Buyer-Seller Relationships, and Social Media,” *Management Decision*, 50 (2), 253–72.

Tax, Stephen S., Stephen W. Brown, and Murali Chandrashekaran (1998), “Customer Evaluations of Service Complaint Experiences: Implications for Relationship Marketing,” *Journal of Marketing*, 62 (2), 60–76.

van Doorn, Jenny, Katherine N. Lemon, Vikas Mittal, Stephan Nass, Doreén Pick, Peter Pirner, and Peter C. Verhoef (2010), “Customer Engagement Behavior: Theoretical Foundations and Research Directions,” *Journal of Service Research*, 13 (3), 253–66.

Zhang, Yinlong, Lawrence Feick, and Vikas Mittal (2014), “How Males and Females Differ in Their Likelihood of Transmitting Negative Word of Mouth,” Journal of Consumer Research, 40 (6), 1097–108.

20 Minuten (2016), “Samsung nimmt Galaxy Note 7 vom Markt,” *20 Minuten*, (October 11), [available at http://www.20min.ch/finance/news/story/14874693].

Paper I

When Hostile Consumers Wreak Havoc on Your Brand: The Phenomenon of Consumer Brand Sabotage [1]

Kähr, Andrea, Bettina Nyffenegger, Harley Krohmer, and Wayne D. Hoyer (2016), "When Hostile Consumers Wreak Havoc on your Brand: The Phenomenon of Consumer Brand Sabotage," *Journal of Marketing*, 80 (3), 25–41. URL: https://doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0006

[1] Reprinted with permission from the American Marketing Association (Journal of Marketing, 80 (3), 2016).

Andrea Kähr, Bettina Nyffenegger, Harley Krohmer, & Wayne D. Hoyer

When Hostile Consumers Wreak Havoc on Your Brand: The Phenomenon of Consumer Brand Sabotage

In recent years, companies have been confronted with a new type of negative consumer behavior: consumers who have turned hostile and who are strongly determined to cause damage to the brand. Empowered by new technological possibilities, an individual consumer can now wreak havoc on a brand with relatively little effort. In reflection of this new phenomenon, the authors introduce the concept of consumer brand sabotage (CBS). On the basis of different underlying motives, a conceptual framework distinguishes CBS (a form of hostile aggression: harming the brand as dominant motive) from other forms of negative consumer behavior, such as customer retaliation and negative word of mouth (instrumental aggression: harming a brand is only a means to achieve other objectives, e.g., restoring equity). This framework adapts insights from aggression and appraisal theories as well as qualitative interviews with actual saboteurs to a consumer–brand relationship context in order to develop an improved theoretical understanding of the under-researched phenomenon of CBS. The authors analyze the mental escalation processes of individual consumers toward CBS and develop a road map for future research.

Keywords: marketing theory, consumer brand sabotage, brand management, consumer–brand relationships, relationship breakdown

Online Supplement: http://dx.doi.org/10.1509/jm.15.0006

A few years ago, musician Dave Carroll got upset with United Airlines for breaking his cherished guitar. Due to repeated inadequate responses from United's management, Carroll turned hostile and produced a music video titled "United Breaks Guitars" about his negative experience. Since it was posted on YouTube, the video has been viewed by more than 15 million people, causing an estimated damage of more than $180 million to United (*The Economist* 2009), as well as creating a long-lasting impression that United "breaks guitars." This example illustrates a relatively new phenomenon wherein consumers empowered by new technologies (Labrecque et al. 2013) and driven by negative experiences with brands become hostile and aggressively attack, with the dominant motive of causing harm to the brands. Now, similar to saboteurs in warfare, consumers can have a dramatic negative impact on a brand relatively easily. In a networked, digital world, even one single consumer can cause a brand to lose numerous existing customers and can alienate innumerable potential customers, which can result in millions of dollars of damage to a brand. Thus, academics and marketing managers need to understand this new phenomenon and, especially, what drives consumers to engage in such hostile behavior.

Against this background, we introduce the concept of consumer brand sabotage (CBS), which is a deliberate form of hostile, aggressive behavior on the part of a consumer, designed to harm a brand. This type of behavior occurs when a consumer–brand relationship completely breaks down (i.e., "bridges are burned") and has been understudied in the literature. In contrast, other forms of negative consumer behavior, such as customer retaliation, consumer boycotts, and negative word of mouth (WOM), represent forms of instrumental aggression, wherein a consumer exerts aggressive actions against a brand or company, not necessarily to cause harm to the brand, but to achieve other objectives, such as restoring equity and venting negative emotions (Anderson and Bushman 2002). A key point is that in the large majority of cases in which consumers are angry or unhappy with a brand, the consumers are more likely to

Andrea Kähr is a doctoral student of marketing, Institute of Marketing and Management, University of Bern (e-mail: Kaehr@imu.unibe.ch). Bettina Nyffenegger is Assistant Professor of Marketing, Institute of Marketing and Management, University of Bern (e-mail: Nyffenegger@imu.unibe.ch). Harley Krohmer is Professor of Marketing and Chairman of the Marketing Department, Institute of Marketing and Management, University of Bern (e-mail: Krohmer@imu.unibe.ch). Wayne D. Hoyer is James L. Bayless/William S. Farish Fund Chair for Free Enterprise and Chairman of the Department of Marketing, McCombs School of Business, University of Texas at Austin (e-mail: Wayne.Hoyer@mccombs.utexas.edu). The authors thank the review team for their insightful and constructive comments on this article. Barbara Kahn served as area editor for this article.

© 2016, American Marketing Association
ISSN: 0022-2429 (print)
1547-7185 (electronic)

Journal of Marketing
Vol. 80 (May 2016), 25–41
DOI: 10.1509/jm.15.0006

engage in instrumental aggression than CBS. However, there are important instances in which consumers engage in a different kind of behavior and actually try to hurt a brand. Given the potential severe consequences of CBS, it is important for marketers to develop an understanding of what we argue is a unique phenomenon.

In this article, we contribute to the literature on brand management and consumer–brand relationships by introducing the new construct of CBS and developing a conceptual framework of aggressive consumer behavior toward brands. Guided by conceptual considerations from aggression and appraisal theories in social psychology (person-to-person context) as well as in-depth interviews with actual consumer brand saboteurs, our framework develops a novel theoretical perspective for understanding this type of behavior in a brand relationship context. In this article, we will (1) illustrate how CBS represents a unique form of aggressive behavior in a consumer–brand context that merits special attention, and (2) show that the phenomenon and concept of CBS is distinct from other forms of negative consumer behavior (e.g., negative WOM). Furthermore, we report some initial empirical findings regarding CBS and its antecedents from two quantitative studies among consumers. Our article culminates with the development of an agenda for future research on CBS. Managers can gain important insights from our framework on how to recognize and to deal with the challenging new phenomenon of CBS.

Definition of CBS

The term "sabotage" originates from the French word *sabot*, a type of wooden clog that disgruntled French workers threw into machines during the Industrial Revolution in order to harm their companies. This phenomenon of sabotage by employees has been examined in management research (e.g., Analoui 1995). In marketing research, brand saboteurs have been defined as employees who work actively against their brand (Wallace and De Chernatony 2007). However, this definition does not recognize that individuals outside a company can also harm the brand. Therefore, in our study, we adopt a company-external perspective and examine sabotage activities by consumers. We define CBS as deliberate behavior by customers or noncustomers who have the dominant objective of causing harm to a brand through the impairment of the brand-related associations of other consumers. This definition comprises five key elements. First, a "deliberate act" implies that an action is taken consciously and intentionally; CBS activities are not impulsive but thoughtful actions that are carefully selected because of their potential to damage the brand. Thus, sabotage refers to consumers' conscious and planned behavior (see Fishbein and Ajzen 1975), in contrast to instinctive, automatic responses to stimuli (Anderson and Bushman 2002).

Second, the word "behavior" signifies that some action must be undertaken. Thus, thoughts of committing CBS (i.e., behavioral intention) without engaging in any activity or preliminary activity (e.g., making a brand sabotage video without publishing it) would not be classified as CBS. This action-oriented perspective can also be found in military law, in which "sabotage" refers to actual activities and not just intentions (Warner 1941). CBS activities can differ with regard to their scope and modality. Concerning geographical and temporal scope, CBS comprises local and global activities (Van Doorn et al. 2010) and can involve both sporadic and customary behavior (Harris and Ogbonna 2002). With regard to modality, sabotage activities can be either offline or online (e.g., creating and uploading a sabotage video to the web) or can combine online and offline activities (e.g., using social media to spur graffiti relating to British Petroleum's (BP's) oil catastrophe; Flickr 2010). However, there is no specific activity that automatically qualifies as CBS. Rather, a particular activity qualifies as CBS if the objective to harm a brand is the dominant underlying motive.

Third, CBS can be executed by both customers and noncustomers. Consumers who actually have purchased and consumed the brand's products can engage in CBS activities, but people who have never experienced the brand as customers can do so as well. This was the case for Abercrombie & Fitch, when a noncustomer was outraged by the following statement of the company's chief executive officer (CEO): "A lot of people don't belong [in our clothes], and they can't belong. Are we exclusionary? Absolutely. Those companies that are in trouble are trying to target everybody: young, old, fat, skinny" (Denizet-Lewis 2006). As a consequence, the consumer engaged in CBS by creating a viral YouTube and Twitter campaign ("Abercrombie & Fitch Gets a Brand Readjustment: #FitchTheHomeless"; Karber 2013) in which he tried to reposition the brand as the "uncool brand for the homeless" by asking other consumers to donate Abercrombie & Fitch clothes to homeless people. In addition, CBS can be committed by one individual consumer or can be the result of a group activity whereby multiple consumers work together. For example, the brand sabotage campaign against Abercrombie & Fitch was created by one consumer (Karber 2013), whereas graffiti relating to BP's oil catastrophe sprayed on buildings worldwide was created by multiple consumers (Flickr 2010).

Fourth, the dominant objective of CBS is to harm a brand. The objective of causing harm is consistent with the concept of hostile aggression in social psychology, for which this objective is a key defining element (Anderson and Bushman 2002; Baron and Richardson 1994). A brand saboteur acts as a hostile aggressor and chooses activities that he/she believes will cause harm to the object of his/her aggression (i.e., the brand). According to military literature, a saboteur typically targets a crucial element of the enemy (Lefevre 2001). This is also the case with a brand, which is a highly valuable but also somewhat vulnerable asset of a company and, therefore, represents a worthwhile target for sabotage activities of consumers.

Finally, the brand saboteur tries to harm the brand by impairing the brand-related associations of other consumers. Because the power and true value of a brand lies in the brand associations made and held by consumers (Keller 1993), altering these associations in a negative way represents a key means of causing harm to the brand.

Distinction of CBS from Other Related Constructs

Consumer brand sabotage represents a novel construct that is distinct from other forms of negative consumer behavior that have previously been discussed in the literature, such as negative WOM (e.g., De Matos and Rossi 2008), customer retaliation (e.g., Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009), and consumer boycott (e.g., Klein, Smith, and John 2004). The key characteristic that distinguishes CBS from these related constructs is the type of aggression exerted by the consumer (i.e., hostile versus instrumental aggression): CBS involves hostile aggression, with the consumer having the conscious desire and dominant motive to harm the brand (see also Anderson and Bushman 2002). The consumer does not wish to (re)establish any relationship and is not interested in any compensation or apology from the brand—the bridges are burned. In contrast, in the case of instrumental aggression, the consumer behaves aggressively against the brand in order to achieve other objectives. Thus, aggression is exerted only as an instrument to achieve other goals, such as to restore equity or to vent negative emotions.

A first construct is negative WOM, which refers to negative informal communication by consumers to other consumers about their evaluations of goods and services (Zhang, Feick, and Mittal 2014). It has been shown that very dissatisfied customers use negative WOM as a form of venting their negative emotions to achieve a feeling of relief (De Matos and Rossi 2008). Also, prior research has argued that consumers engage in negative WOM to restore equity (Wetzer, Zeelenberg, and Pieters 2007).

Customer retaliation is a second construct that occurs when a customer feels he/she has been wronged by the company or brand and works to get even (Funches, Markley, and Davis 2009). This definition, along with literature on customer retaliation, shows the importance of equity theory as a foundation of the construct of revenge and retaliation (Funches, Markley, and Davis 2009; Grégoire, Laufer, and Tripp 2010). In other words, the goal of retaliation is to restore equity rather than to harm the brand per se (as is the case with CBS, whereby—in a punitive overreaction—the damage can go well beyond equity). Furthermore, customer retaliation against a firm is a response to a negative transaction in which the retaliator must have been an actual customer of the firm. In that respect, CBS is broader, because it also includes actions of noncustomers (e.g., noncustomers who disagree with communicated brand values).

A third construct is a consumer boycott, wherein consumers refrain from purchasing the brand in order to achieve certain objectives (e.g., Friedman 1985) such as restoring equity (e.g., making the brand change its behavior; Braunsberger and Buckler 2011) or venting negative emotions (e.g., expressing anger about a perceived inadequate behavior of the brand; John and Klein 2003). Furthermore, boycott behavior can be viewed as prosocial behavior, by which actions are intended to benefit one or more people other than oneself—behaviors such as helping, comforting, sharing, and cooperating (Klein, Smith, and John 2004).

This discussion of various forms of negative consumer behavior illustrates the unique motive structure that is a key distinguishing characteristic of CBS. In the case of negative WOM, customer retaliation, and consumer boycotts, the two motives of venting negative emotions and restoring equity prevail. These behaviors are clearly different from CBS, in which the dominant motive is to cause harm to a brand.

Not only the motives but also the types and levels of emotions and cognitions that precede CBS are unique. In line with aggression literature, we argue that CBS as a form of hostile aggression is more affective than instrumental aggression and, thus, is preceded by stronger negative emotions, such as anger and hatred (see also Anderson and Bushman 2002). With regard to negative cognitions, CBS and instrumental aggression are driven by different cognitive antecedents. Key cognitions associated with CBS are hostile thoughts, such as the wish or imagination to harm or punish the brand (see also Anderson and Bushman 2002), and a perceived threat to one's identity (see also Graham et al. 2013). In contrast, instrumental aggression is preceded by perceived betrayal (e.g., Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009) and perceived powerlessness (e.g., Grégoire, Laufer, and Tripp 2010).

Furthermore, CBS is different from other forms of negative consumer behavior on a behavioral level. Typically, CBS activities consist of conscious, well-planned behavior in which the consumer invests a high level of effort; it is not trivial to truly harm brands because the brand-related associations of other consumers are fairly stable and resilient (Keller 1993). In contrast, consumers who engage in activities of instrumental aggression (i.e., negative WOM, customer retaliation, consumer boycott) tend to invest a lower level of effort.

As a result of the different motive structures between CBS and instrumental aggression, and the corresponding behaviors, there are also differences with regard to damage. Because saboteurs tend to carefully plan and invest a high level of effort to deliberately impair the brand-related associations of other consumers, the potential damage from CBS can be extremely high. Other forms of negative consumer behavior, such as negative WOM or individual boycotts (in which consumers typically invest less effort), tend to be less harmful than CBS, as illustrated by a recent study in the context of consumer boycotts, which shows that boycott behavior launched by people using the Internet is ineffective in inflicting economic harm on the targeted firm (Koku 2012).

Finally, CBS is also distinct from related constructs (e.g., negative WOM) on a relationship level. In the case of CBS, the consumer does not wish to (re)establish any relationship or transaction with the brand (e.g., will never again purchase products of the brand) and also is not interested in any compensation or apology from the brand. With other forms of negative consumer behavior, the goal is to restore equity or simply vent negative emotions, while at the same time maintaining the relationship with the brand.

Conceptual Framework

Our conceptual framework aims at providing a better understanding of the factors and complex psychological mechanisms

that drive a consumer to engage in brand sabotage activities (see Figure 1). The process begins when the consumer is confronted with a brand stimulus that is either a product or service failure or a company behavior that is in conflict with the consumer's values. The consumer evaluates this stimulus in a primary appraisal process that involves an assessment of the significance of the stimulus for him/her as well as specific cognitions and emotions. The consumer then reassesses these cognitive and emotional responses, the brand-related stimulus, and the entire situation in a reappraisal process. As a result, the consumer might ponder the situation further (rumination) or decide to interact with the brand (e.g., complaining to the company). Subsequently, if the consumer is still not satisfied after reappraisal and possible interaction and rumination loops with the brand, the consumer decides how to respond: with CBS activities or with other forms of negative consumer behavior. Depending on the type of initial stimulus—a performance-based stimulus (e.g., brand failure) or a value-based stimulus (i.e., linked to the brand's values)—that is the starting point for the consumer's mental escalation toward CBS or instrumental aggression, we can distinguish two paths: a performance-related and a value-related escalation path.

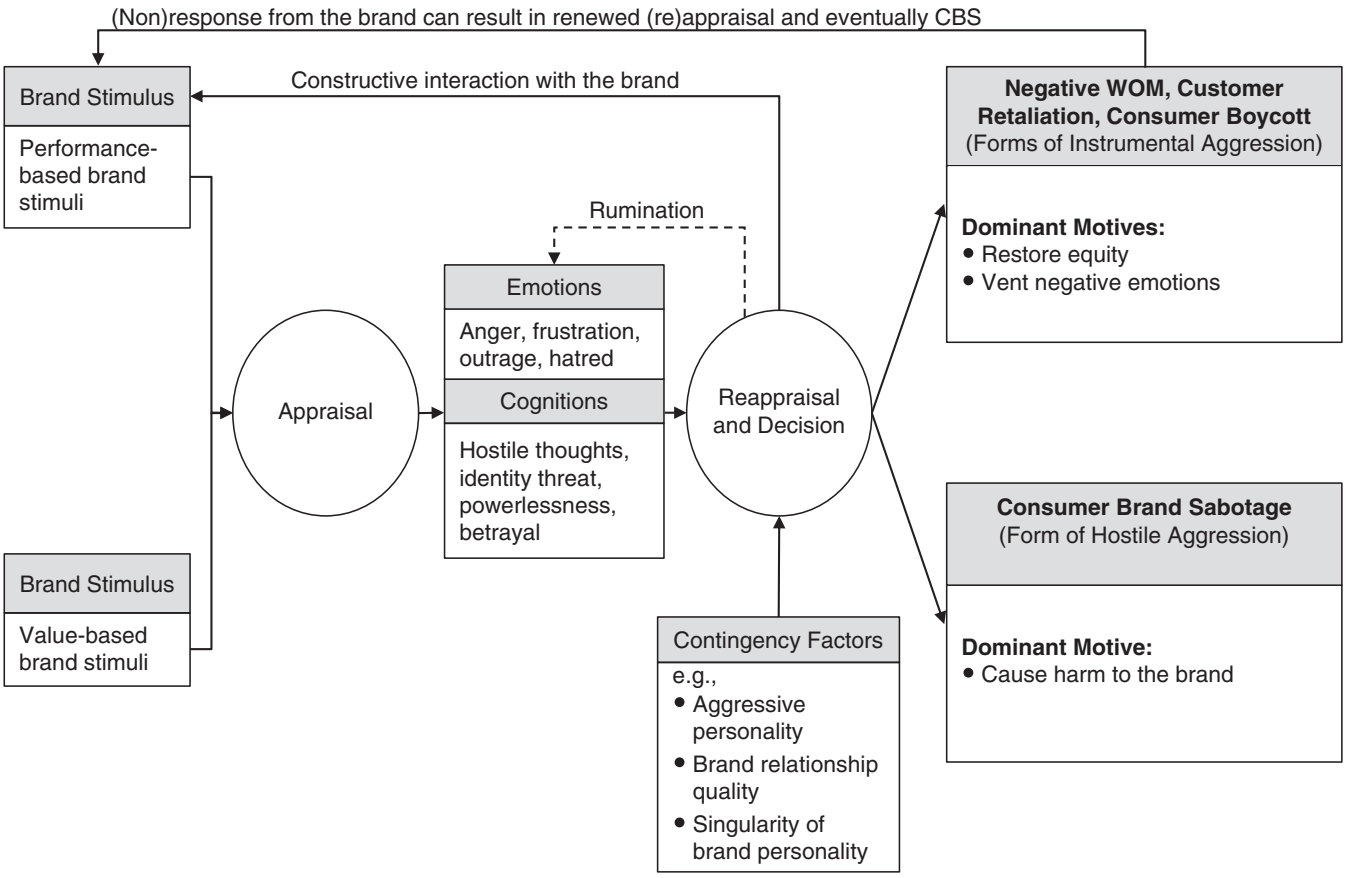
The key objective of our conceptual framework is to provide an understanding of these two escalation paths and to specifically explain the consumer's decision whether to engage in CBS or alternative behavior. This choice is driven by the consumer's mental escalation process (i.e., primary appraisal, emotions and cognitions, reappraisal, and rumination and interaction loops) and is also influenced by contingency factors such as individual consumer characteristics, brand attributes, and the specific consumer-brand relationship.

This framework has been developed based on theoretical considerations from the aggression and appraisal literature as well as on qualitative interviews with consumers who engaged in aggressive behavior against brands. In addition to these theoretical considerations and our qualitative interviews, we also present some initial empirical findings from two quantitative studies among consumers that concern CBS and its antecedents.

Theoretical Considerations

Because aggressive behavior plays a central role in our framework, we look to aggression theories from social psychology such as the General Aggression Model (GAM; Anderson and Bushman 2002) for guidance. We identify useful concepts and ideas from the aggression literature and adapt them in a unique way to a consumer–brand relationship context in order to facilitate theory development. The GAM

FIGURE 1
Conceptual Framework of Aggressive Consumer Behavior Toward Brands



postulates that aggression results from the mental processing of situational and personal input factors (e.g., insult by another individual). These input factors determine the internal state of the individual, characterized by cognitions and emotions. The overall situation is then evaluated in an appraisal and decision process, potentially resulting in aggression. Guided by this general person-to-person response process, we develop an understanding of a unique form of aggressive behavior in a consumer-brand context.

It is important to note that this perspective provides an important and unique contribution by extending previous aggression theories in several important ways. First, in the case of CBS, a saboteur (person) targets a brand (object). Thus, we are studying person–object relationships, in contrast to traditional aggression theories in social psychology, which focus on person-to-person aggression in the context of interpersonal relationships.

Second, in this person–object context, a saboteur needs to invest more cognitive effort to implement his/her aggression. This occurs because brands are more abstract than humans (even though consumers sometimes attribute anthropomorphous characteristics to brands). Thus, aggression in a consumer–brand context might not be as easy or straightforward as attacking another person (e.g., through face-to-face confrontation or by using violence against the other person).

Third, in a consumer–brand context, there is an initial power difference between the aggressor and the object of aggression. Unlike in interpersonal aggression, in which two opponents often are similarly strong, the aggressor (saboteur) in the context of brand sabotage is a consumer, who is generally much less powerful than a brand. This power gap can be bridged as the consumer empowers him- or herself by activating other consumers whose brand-related associations are impaired as a consequence of CBS, like David beating Goliath.

Fourth, the interaction process for CBS is different from that in an interpersonal context. Because the potential object of aggression in CBS is an object and not a person, the interactions between the consumer and the brand are often more abstract and less direct, and therefore less intuitive, which requires more interpretation and decoding by the consumer. Also, the response by the brand is usually not immediate and spontaneous, which allows more potential rumination and interaction loops. In contrast, the GAM takes a more immediate perspective and "focuses on the 'person in the situation,' called an *episode*, consisting of one cycle of an ongoing social interaction" (Anderson and Bushman 2002, p. 34; emphasis in original).

Fifth, our framework is more specific than the GAM with regard to the input variables because we differentiate between performance- and value-based brand stimuli. In an interpersonal setting, there could be many more factors that lead to aggression.

Finally, we take an external conflict perspective on values as a driver of aggression, according to which the object of aggression clashes with the aggressor's personal values (i.e., a saboteur attacks a brand if it conflicts with his/her values, such as morality or fairness). In contrast, traditional aggression theories adopt an internal congruence perspective on values: a potential aggressor is more likely to engage in aggression if he/she sees violence as an acceptable method of problem solving. Our external conflict perspective is important because consumers "internalize" brands to express their identity and become especially aggressive to value infringements by the brand because they want to protect their identity.

In addition to aggression theories, we also draw on appraisal theories to better understand the link between brand stimuli and the resulting emotions and cognitions (Arnold 1960; Roseman, Antoniou, and Jose 1996). Appraisal theories examine how emotions are elicited by stimuli, claiming that there is some cognition (i.e., appraisal) involved, prior to the elicitation of emotions, which can be conscious or unconscious (Moors 2009). Such an appraisal perspective is especially relevant to understanding the impact of brand stimuli on consumers' emotions and cognitions and the subsequent escalation process toward CBS.

Qualitative Interviews

We conducted a qualitative study among seven consumer brand saboteurs and five consumers who had engaged in negative WOM, boycott activities, or customer retaliation (one interview was with two individuals who together engaged in customer retaliation). The purpose of this study was to understand consumers' motivation for their behavior and the emotions and thoughts that led to it. We conducted semistructured interviews with consumers who in the past four years had engaged in the respective behaviors. In selecting brand saboteurs, we required all components of our definition of CBS to be met. We carefully studied consumers' behaviors (e.g., when they invested a large amount of effort in their actions) to infer from their behavior their motivation for the actions. For the interviews of consumers who had engaged in instrumental aggression, we relied on definitions of such behavior in the literature (e.g., for customer retaliation, Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux [2009]; for consumer boycott, Klein, Smith, and John [2004]; for negative WOM, Zhang, Feick, and Mittal [2014]).

To identify interview candidates, we searched social networking sites, video-sharing platforms, online forums, blogs, newspapers, magazines, and journals, and distributed flyers. When selecting interviewees, we attempted to maximize diversity with regard to the underlying brand-related stimuli, consumers' specific behaviors, and their sociodemographics (see Table W1.1 in the Web Appendix). The interviews were conducted over a three-month period and a later two-month period; each interview lasted between a half hour and an hour (M = 35 minutes; total = 7 hours). The interviews were divided into three sections. In the first section, consumers described what brand behavior and later interactions with the brand led to their behavior, as well as how they felt and what thoughts they had in this process. In the second section, consumers talked about their actions against the brands, including how they developed the idea to act in that way. The last section dealt with consumers' motivations and the objectives of their behavior. We interpreted the content of our audiotaped and

transcribed interviews through a hermeneutical approach, in that we applied an iterative process by shifting back and forth between the data and the literature on aggression and appraisal to provide a well-founded ground of evidence and reach a comprehensive conceptual framework (Adkins and Ozanne 2005; Thompson and Haytko 1997). In the first part of this process, we looked at the entire interview intratextually to gain a sense of the consumer's individual experience with the brand and his/her corresponding thoughts and emotions, resulting behavior, and motivation. In the second part, we analyzed the interviews intertextually to identify patterns of similarities and differences within these categories. In this iterative process, we challenged and refined the emerging framework with the data. Two of the authors independently analyzed the interviews. There were only minor differences between the two researchers' analyses, which could easily be resolved by discussion.

Preliminary Study 1

To examine the two paths of hostile versus instrumental aggression, we conducted a survey among 683 consumers (48.6% female, M_{age} = 36.4 years; for a detailed description of the study, see section W2 in the Web Appendix). Consumers from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland were recruited on the crowdsourcing platform Clickworker. They followed a link to an online questionnaire in which they were presented (in randomized order) with six different examples of negative consumer behavior (two CBS, two retaliation, and two negative WOM). For the selection of the CBS examples, we relied on our definition of CBS and insights from the qualitative study and described CBS activities that had actually taken place. For customer retaliation, we carefully selected specific examples from prior research and used the descriptions of those examples as provided in the corresponding studies (Funches, Markley, and Davis 2009; Huefner and Hunt 2000). For negative WOM, we selected real cases as described in our interviews and on the online review platform TripAdvisor (Mudhutter 2007).

Respondents were asked to indicate how they perceived the consumer's behavior in each example and to rate it on a seven-point Likert-scale (where 1 = "not at all," and 7 = "very much") for 15 variables that referred to the conceptualization of CBS and the components of our framework. As shown in detail in Table W2.1 in the Web Appendix, we measured four emotions (anger, frustration, outrage, and hatred), four cognitions (hostile thoughts, perceived betrayal, powerlessness, and identity threat), three motives (harming the brand, venting negative emotions, and restoring equity), rumination and interaction loops, consumers' unwillingness to (re)engage in a relationship with the brand, and the perceived damage caused to the brand.

Preliminary Study 2

In order to examine the two paths of brand stimuli (performance-based and value-based stimuli) that can lead to CBS, we conducted an experiment with a two factorial between-subject design with 289 participants (48.8% female; M_{age} = 38.7 years; for a detailed description of the experiment, see section W3 in the Web Appendix). We recruited consumers from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland on the platform Clickworker and presented them with either a performance-based (n = 144) or a value-based (n = 145) brand stimulus. We described an action of a (fictitious) clothing brand in two different ways: the performance-based stimulus was a severe performance failure with several failed interactions; the value-based stimulus was a statement by the brand's CEO that conflicts with most consumers' values as well as indicating unethical brand practices. We made sure that the amount of negative aspects (i.e., number of interaction failures and value conflicts) was the same for the performance-based and the value-based scenario. We based these two scenarios on the content of our interviews with brand saboteurs and conducted a pretest to ensure we manipulated only the intended factors (see section W3 in the Web Appendix).

After presenting participants with one of the two scenarios, we conducted a manipulation check for which we developed four items to measure to what degree the scenario was perceived as dealing with performance (α = .95) or values (α = .95), each with two items. The performance-based scenario was more strongly perceived as addressing performance (M = 4.94) than the value-based scenario (M = 3.01; $F(1, 287) = 91.85$, $p < .01$), and the value-based scenario was perceived as more strongly addressing values (M = 5.55) than the performance-based scenario (M = 3.93; $F(1, 280) = 78.90$, $p < .01$). There was no significant difference in the perceived credibility of the two scenarios ($M_{performance\text{-}based}$ = 4.33, $M_{value\text{-}based}$ = 4.00; $F(1, 287) = 2.46$, $p = .12$). We then assessed participants' emotions as follows: anger (α = .95) with a three-item scale of Gelbrich (2010); frustration (α = .85) with a different three-item scale of Gelbrich (2010); outrage (α = .93) with the five-item scale of Lindenmeier, Schleer, and Pricl (2012); and hatred (α = .85) with the two item-scale of Halperin, Canetti-Nisim, and Hirsch-Hoefler (2009). Cognitions were measured as follows: hostile thoughts (α = .86) with five items that we developed on the basis of our conceptual considerations; perceived identity threat (α = .77) with the three-item scale of Jetten, Postmes, and McAuliffe (2002); perceived powerlessness (α = .94) with the four-item scale of Grégoire, Laufer, and Tripp (2010); and perceived betrayal (α = .93) with the three-item scale of Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (2009). Rumination (α = .93) was assessed with the six-item scale of Wade et al. (2008). We then asked participants whether they would react to the scenario (making them think about a possible action) and to what degree they had the following motives: to cause harm to the brand, to restore equity, and to vent negative emotions. We also asked them to rank these motives to identify their dominant one.

Afterward, we asked participants whether they would continue their relationship with the brand (we developed two items based on our conceptual considerations; α = .78). We also assessed controls (prior experience with clothing, credibility of the scenario, and product involvement (α = .81) with the three-item scale of Chandrashekaran [2004]) and sociodemographic variables. Subsequently, we discuss our conceptual framework in more detail.

Brand-Related Stimuli

Certain brand behaviors or brand philosophies stimulate consumers' mental processes, which then lead to CBS or instrumental aggression. We categorize these brand-related stimuli into the categories of performance-based and value-based stimuli, which are the starting points for two different paths toward CBS. "Performance-based brand stimuli" refers to a brand's failure with regard to product and service quality. This includes defective products, inaccurate bills, late shipments, or product shortages (Copulsky 2011). It also comprises interaction failures, such as excessive wait times for customer service or unfriendly responses on the customer hotline. CBS in response to such performance-based brand stimuli is usually conducted by a customer (vs. a non-customer) because a customer has more touchpoints with the brand and his/her own brand experience.

Value-based brand stimuli are linked to the brand's values, which become visible to consumers through the brand's behavior in the market. These values include the brand's communicated philosophy and brand identity, as well as any demonstration by the brand of unsocial or unethical behavior (e.g., use of child labor in offshore factories). An example was a group of hackers (probably sympathizers of the North Korean government) calling themselves "Guardians of Peace," who attacked Sony Entertainment (even threatening to blow up movie theaters) because one of the firm's movies, *The Interview*, focused on an attempted assassination of North Korean leader Kim Jong-Un (Fritz, Yadron, and Schwartzel 2014). Value-based brand stimuli can cause not only the brand's customers but also non-customers to engage in CBS activities.

Appraisal

In the next phase of our conceptual framework, consumers perceive and evaluate brand stimuli through a mental process. A first step in this process is the primary appraisal of a stimulus, whereby a consumer makes an assessment of the significance and meaning of the brand stimulus for his/her personal situation, which then results in specific emotions and cognitions (Smith and Lazarus 1993). In accordance with appraisal theory, we argue that a high relevance of a brand stimulus to the consumer's personal goals and values results in stronger emotions (Moors 2009) and cognitions (Bushman 1998). Also, the congruence of the stimulus with a consumer's goals and values determines the valence of emotions (Moors 2009) and cognitions (DeWall et al. 2009). In other words, incongruence results in negative emotions and cognitions.

Furthermore, the consumer's negative evaluation of the fairness and morality (equity) of the brand's behavior also drives his/her emotions (e.g., anger) and cognitions (e.g., perceived betrayal) (see also Grégoire and Fisher 2008; Lindenmeier, Schleer, and Pricl 2012). As an example, a key reason why one of our interviewees finally decided to start a CBS campaign against a fashion brand was that he felt that the brand and its "arrogant CEO" acted against important societal values, and he accused the CEO of racism: "His quote is like the embodiment of what we don't like about CEOs.… He talks about how a lot of people don't belong in the clothes of his brand. So he talks repeatedly about going after the all-American kid, and when I look through all Americans I immediately feel that is sort of code language for 'white.' … I guess I was kinda shocked by it, because it really seems like a scripted language of a villain in a film rather than a position someone would actually hold" (Interview 3).

In addition, attribution theory can explain the consumer's evaluation of brand stimuli (e.g., Folkes 1984, 1988). Specifically, the consumer makes a causal inference for the occurrence of the stimulus by evaluating the brand's responsibility for this stimulus and whether the brand has control over it. If the consumer perceives the brand to be responsible for and in control of the negative stimulus, it is more likely that negative emotions and cognitions will be elicited (see also Roseman, Antoniou, and Jose 1996).

Emotions and Cognitions

As a result of the primary appraisal of the brand stimulus, a variety of interrelated emotions and cognitions can be elicited and activated variously across consumers and situations (Anderson and Bushman 2002). We identified these emotions and cognitions on the basis of considerations from aggression theories, the literature on negative consumer behavior, and our interviews.

First, in our context of aggressive consumer behavior, the key emotions have a negative valence and mostly a high level of arousal (see also Reisenzein 1994). We consider the following emotions to play an important role in our framework: frustration, anger, outrage, and hatred. According to the frustration–aggression hypothesis, frustration is a crucial antecedent of aggression (Dollard et al. 1939). A key notion behind this hypothesis is that frustration results from the interference of a stimulus or situation with the expected attainment of a desired goal. A person becomes frustrated if his/her goal is blocked or made unattainable. Frustration as a response to product and service failures has also been addressed in literature on customer retaliation and negative WOM (e.g., Gelbrich 2010), and most of our interviewees stated that a key emotional response was frustration, as illustrated by this quotation: "I cannot understand how a company can be that incompetent! Especially because I always thought my case was that simple and clear. That was just very frustrating!" (Interview 4).

Subsequent research further refines the basic frustration–aggression hypothesis. A prominent refinement was that anger was added as a mediator between frustration and aggression (Berkowitz 1989). General appraisal theories state that anger is usually caused by an external attribution (Roseman 1991); something or someone else is blamed for an aversive situation leading to anger. Thus, we postulate that anger occurs when the consumer blames a brand for blocking his/her goals. This prominent role of anger in our framework was also evidenced in our interviews, in which all consumers explicitly stated that they felt angry. One of our interviewees said, "It was this feeling of anger … that drove me. Sh——! This procedure drives me f——ing nuts!… I was so mad!" (Interview 10).

Outrage is another important emotion that predisposes consumers to aggressive behavior. Outrage is more complex than the basic emotion of anger and is often linked to the interests or welfare of other consumers (Lindenmeier, Schleer, and Pricl 2012). This emotion results from the appraisal that a brand behaves in a way that is offensive to decency or morality, especially if moral norms such as fairness, justice, and political correctness have been violated (see also Batson et al. 2007). Accordingly, we expect outrage to occur particularly in cases of a brand's behavior being incongruent with a consumer's values. As an example, one of our interviewees became really outraged with the perceived injustice of a large railway company. He described his feelings after reading that the CEO had said that on shorter routes during commuter traffic, it could be expected that passengers would stand for 20 minutes: "I am outraged that someone who sits on his office chair for the entire day and is driven around in a private car believes to have the right to say what can be reasonable for us who work eight or nine hours a day with—compared to his work—relatively hard work. It is impertinent! Especially because their [the carrier's] performance keeps decreasing" (Interview 11).

Hatred is another emotion that plays a key role in leading to consumers' aggressive behavior. In social psychology, hatred is a very powerful negative emotion and entails a desire to hurt, humiliate, or even kill someone (Halperin 2008; White 1996). In our interviews, hatred toward the brand was often found among brand saboteurs: "It was really unfair; I was so mad. Well, I maybe even felt hatred towards the employees of my supplier. I cannot hate them for the rest of my life. But the brand shall now bleed for it" (Interview 6).

With regard to the role of consumers' emotions in driving aggressive behavior, the aggression literature has indicated that hostile aggression is more affective than instrumental aggression and is driven by strong emotions such as anger (Anderson and Bushman 2002). This is in line with our findings from Study 1, which show that the levels of anger, frustration, outrage, and hatred were significantly higher for CBS than for instrumental aggression (IA in equations): anger ($M_{CBS} = 6.25$, $M_{IA} = 5.17$; $F(1, 1{,}347) = 214.81$, $p < .01$), frustration ($M_{CBS} = 5.84$, $M_{IA} = 5.49$; $F(1, 1{,}018) = 18.53$, $p < .01$), outrage ($M_{CBS} = 6.54$, $M_{IA} = 6.12$; $F(1, 1{,}024) = 41.69$, $p < .01$), and hatred ($M_{CBS} = 6.18$, $M_{IA} = 4.97$; $F(1, 1{,}057) = 242.80$, $p < .01$). These findings for anger and hatred were also supported by Study 2, in which we found that saboteurs reported significantly higher levels of anger ($M_{CBS} = 6.25$, $M_{IA} = 5.25$; $F(1, 26) = 18.59$, $p < .01$) and hatred ($M_{CBS} = 6.18$, $M_{IA} = 5.17$; $F(1, 259) = 6.78$, $p < .05$) than instrumental aggressors.

In terms of cognitions, we identified the following to be most critical: hostile thoughts, perceived identity threat, perceived powerlessness, and perceived betrayal. Hostile thoughts are aggressive concepts stored in consumers' long-term memory that can be activated by brand stimuli (Anderson and Bushman 2002). These thoughts include the idea of hurting/damaging someone or something, the wish or imagination to harm or punish someone, the impulse to attack or destroy something, and the urge to say something rude, inappropriate, or nasty to someone.

In our framework, hostile thoughts are activated as a result of the primary appraisal and are mentally linked to a brand. Our interviewees also reported such hostile thoughts: "I wanted to harm them. I said, 'You can delete us from your customer file. I never want to work with you anymore.' This really was one of my first thoughts after I got their letter" (Interview 6).

A perceived threat to an individual's identity is another cognition that forms an important source of aggressive behavior (Graham et al. 2013). Such a threat refers to actions or situations that challenge or diminish a person's sense of competence, dignity, or self-worth (Aquino and Douglas 2003). A consumer could perceive a threat to his/her self-identity when a brand made him/her feel unimportant or not taken seriously. This perceived threat enhances the likelihood that a consumer will engage in aggression. Several of our interviewees confirmed such a perceived threat to their identity as a driver of their aggressive behavior: "As a long-standing customer you are all of a sudden worthless. They didn't show any reaction, didn't care at all. It hit me really hard. It was as if they were saying, 'You are not interesting for us. We don't care whether you are our customer or not!'" (Interview 2).

A further important cognition in the context of aggression is perceived powerlessness, which refers to the consumer's belief that he/she cannot influence the situation to his/her advantage or that he/she cannot change the target's (i.e., the brand's) attitudes and behaviors (Grégoire, Laufer, and Tripp 2010), so that the only "escape" could be aggressive behavior. Such behavior can also emerge when a consumer perceives that his/her power has been reduced (e.g., Horwitz 1956). Such power-reduction situations are experienced as attacks, and individuals might counterattack to restore their power (Fagenson and Cooper 1987). This feeling of powerlessness is especially relevant in our consumer–brand context because the brand often has more resources and influence than an individual consumer. In our qualitative study, we found that interviewees often felt powerless: "It is just this feeling of powerlessness that drove me. Knowing who replaces this lovely place just pisses me off! More and more big companies eat and destroy the small ones. That just makes me feel powerless" (Interview 10).

Finally, perceived betrayal is another important cognition, which includes perceived rejection and relationship devaluation (Fitness 2001). It results from a customer's belief that a brand has intentionally violated what is normative in the context of their relationship. This is sometimes the case when customers believe that firms have behaved in an unfair way, lied to them, taken advantage of them, violated their trust, cheated, broken promises, or disclosed confidential information. The importance of perceived betrayal in our context was supported by our interviews: "I felt really betrayed. Since I was a small boy I was their customer. And now, they just presented us with the facts: 'That's what we are planning and that's what we are going to do. We don't care what you say!'" (Interview 11).

Regarding consumers' cognitions, hostile thoughts, such as the wish or imagination to harm or punish a brand, increase the likelihood of consumers choosing the hostile path (see

also Anderson and Bushman 2002). Furthermore, a perceived threat to one's identity has been found to play a key role in conflict escalation, leading to more severe aggression (Graham et al. 2013; Graham and Wells 2003), such as CBS. In line with these considerations, in Study 1, we found that hostile thoughts (M_{CBS} = 6.20, M_{IA} = 5.05; F(1, 1,037) = 206.69, $p < .01$) and perceived identity threat (M_{CBS} = 4.10, M_{IA} = 3.61; F(1, 1,324) = 18.74, $p < .01$) were more relevant for respondents who had engaged in CBS than for those who had engaged in instrumental aggression. The findings regarding hostile thoughts were supported by Study 2. We found that those respondents who chose CBS reported significantly more hostile thoughts (M = 4.94) than those who chose instrumental aggression (M = 3.41; F(1, 259) = 17.36, $p < .01$). In contrast, with regard to perceived betrayal and perceived powerlessness (which are related to restoring equity), prior research has found that these two cognitions play a key role in leading to customer retaliation (Grégoire, Laufer, and Tripp 2010; Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). In line with this research, in Study 1, we found that perceived betrayal (M_{CBS} = 5.00, M_{IA} = 5.60; F(1, 721) = 29.36, $p < .01$) and perceived powerlessness (M_{CBS} = 3.11, M_{IA} = 3.79; F(1, 1,324) = 41.03, $p < .01$) were more important for instrumental aggression than for CBS.

Reappraisal and Decision

In the next phase of our conceptual framework, the consumer interprets the brand-induced situation from an overall perspective. In other words, the consumer reevaluates the brand stimuli, primary appraisal, and resulting cognitions and emotions. There can also be repeated brand interaction and rumination loops, and finally, the consumer makes a decision about whether to engage in CBS or instrumental aggression, or not to act at all. This phase is also the key mental process of the GAM, determining the final action of the person and the type of aggressive behavior (Anderson and Bushman 2002). A crucial aspect of this integrative evaluation involves the consumer's reflection on how the situation is going to evolve according to the expected future behavior of the brand (Smith and Lazarus 1993). Here, the consumer makes an assessment of whether the situation, including the brand's behavior, will change in the consumer's favor (Lazarus 1991).

With regard to the choice between CBS and instrumental aggression, consumers who believe there is a chance that the brand's behavior will change for the better might choose the instrumental aggression rather than the CBS path (or might choose to interact with the brand again). This assertion is supported by the literature on consumer boycotts, in which it has been found that consumers are more likely to engage in boycotting behavior if they believe that it will influence the firm's behavior (Klein, Smith, and John 2004). If the consumer does not see any chance for such an improvement, he/she tends to be more willing to burn all bridges to the brand and engage in CBS.

These considerations were also supported by our interviews. Consumers who engaged in instrumental aggression believed that the brand's behavior could still improve: "I've hoped that through our protest actions they realize that they have to change something and that they do something about it" (Interview 11); "I wanted to put pressure on them such that they take care of the problem" (Interview 9). On the other hand, consumers who engaged in CBS did not expect the behavior of the brand to improve in the future: "I didn't attempt to contact them. I think there isn't any benefit to contacting them, because they don't really care about complaints unless they affect sort of the bottom line" (Interview 3); "We have really never had a similar situation. Never did we have to cope with something like this. So far, we have always found a solution. But this time, they really did not even leave us a chance" (Interview 6). Also, our findings from Study 1 confirmed that consumers who engaged in CBS were more likely to want never to become a customer of the brand again (M_{CBS} = 5.38, M_{IA} = 4.06; F(1, 1,438) = 185.67, $p < .01$).

A specific phenomenon linked to the reappraisal process in our consumer–brand context is rumination. Because a brand's response to a consumer's communication can take some time, the consumer has slack time, which can result in rumination. Here, the consumer repeatedly thinks about the initial negative brand stimuli, resulting negative cognitions and emotions, and prior (repeated) failed interactions with the brand, reflecting on their causes, meaning, and implications (Whitmer and Gotlib 2013). Rumination can worsen consumers' negative internal states by leading to more intense negative cognitions and emotions, which are then again reappraised. Thus, rumination can lead to a vicious cycle of intensifying negativity. Such an aggravation effect of rumination has also been found in the aggression literature: Bushman (2002) finds that angry individuals who engaged in rumination became even angrier and more aggressive compared with other groups that did not engage in rumination.

It can therefore be argued that the more rumination loops, the more negative the consumer's cognitions and emotions become (Whitmer and Gotlib 2013), thereby increasing the probability of the consumer engaging in CBS. In other words, a consumer will be more likely to sabotage a brand if he/she repetitively thinks about the negative situation and everything that went wrong, reflecting on the causes, meaning, and implications of the negative cognitions and emotions generated in the appraisal process. The relevance of rumination for CBS is supported by our findings from Study 1, in which we found that for consumers who engaged in CBS, the level of rumination prior to their hostile action was significantly higher than for consumers who engaged in instrumental aggression (M_{CBS} = 5.49, M_{IA} = 4.32; F(1, 1,040) = 134.31, $p < .01$).

A consumer's interpretation of a brand-induced situation during reappraisal is followed by a decision of how to react to the situation. In preparation for this decision, the consumer first elaborates on what action options he/she has for coping with the negative brand-induced situation. These include doing nothing (and cognitively redefining the situation as less important or less critical; Lazarus 1991), constructively interacting with the brand (e.g., complaining to the company), or engaging in instrumental aggression or CBS against the brand. In general, the consumer will select a specific action option if he/she sees that alternative as most likely to be

effective in improving the negative brand-induced situation (Smith and Lazarus 1993). For example, the consumer could decide not to attack the brand but to interact constructively with it (e.g., formal customer complaint) if he/she perceives the brand to be responsive to critique. This can be illustrated by one of our interviews, in which a consumer was dissatisfied with the quality of a shirt she bought from an online retailer. She first complained through e-mail because she had a positive image of the retailer's service orientation and believed that her problem could be solved with such a formal complaint: "I thought it can't be that my shirt is ruined after only wearing it once. So far, I have always had positive experiences with the brand. That's why I thought that writing a complaint would resolve the issue" (Interview 8).

With regard to the role of the number of failed interactions in driving aggressive behavior, we argue that multiple negative interactions with a brand (interaction loops) should drive consumers toward CBS because they will increase the negativity of resulting emotions and cognitions and create the impression that there is no chance for a constructive and positive solution (see also Graham and Wells 2003). This argument was supported in our interviews with brand saboteurs: "It has reoccurred again and again. Each time, after they realized their mistake, another unjustified bill arrived. This is impossible! Did they go completely mad? Every time, I stood again at the same spot and had to reinitiate complaining that the bill was unjustified. You could even talk of a tactic of attrition from them. Of course, after all that you can no longer have any positive attitude towards that brand!" (Interview 1); "I was not taken seriously by them. That's very clear. I contacted them so many times. If they had reacted or written to me earlier, I would not have gone that far" (Interview 7). Our results from Study 1 also support this notion: more failed interactions were reported for consumers who had engaged in CBS than for those who had engaged in instrumental aggression (M_{CBS} = 4.41, M_{IA} = 3.06; F(1, 758) = 107.80, $p < .01$).

As an alternative to such a constructive interaction, or as a result of failed interactions with the brand, a consumer can decide that the best action option is to act aggressively against the brand. In this case, he/she can choose between CBS and instrumental aggression. We argue that the choice of CBS versus instrumental aggressive behavior is determined by the motives consumers form as a result of the reappraisal. Consistent with aggression theory (e.g., Anderson and Bushman 2002), CBS is exerted by consumers with the dominant motive to harm the brand. Such an explicit objective to harm was always in evidence in our interviews with brand saboteurs: "[With my viral social media campaign against the brand,] I can do damage to the company. Of course, I could just have boycotted the company, but boycotting actually does not make a difference" (Interview 3). Thus, CBS is typically more harmful than instrumental aggression; this assertion was supported in Study 1, in which CBS activities were associated with significantly higher damage than activities of instrumental aggression (M_{CBS} = 6.02, M_{IA} = 3.68; F(1, 1,307) = 782.64, $p < .01$). Also, saboteurs perceive the brand as their enemy and do not wish to (re)establish any relationship with it: "I never ever want to work with them again!" (Interview 6); "I believe it just took too long. I had enough! If it had only occurred once, it would probably have been OK. But the entire story took about 1.5 years. Then, a lot needs to happen [before] you become a customer of that brand again. Even if they had a better and cheaper offer than others—I really don't care!" (Interview 1).

In contrast, instrumental aggression is not dominated by the objective to harm the brand (Anderson and Bushman 2002). Rather, consumers use aggression as a means to achieve other objectives. A first key motive of instrumental aggression is the restoration of equity, which is relevant for customers who feel they have been wronged by a company or brand and want to get even (Funches, Markley, and Davis 2009). One of our interviewees, for example, stated, "They presented us with a fait accompli and didn't ask for our opinion. By refusing to show the train ticket, we also wanted to annoy them" (Interview 11). Venting negative emotions is a second key motive of instrumental aggression and is important for very dissatisfied customers who want to achieve a feeling of relief (De Matos and Rossi 2008). In our interviews, this was supported: "I did not really want to harm them [the brand]. I wanted to vent my anger and also to put pressure on them that they react" (Interview 9).

Further support for this distinction was provided by Study 1. As illustrated in Table W2.1 in the Web Appendix, the motive to harm reached significantly higher values for respondents who engaged in CBS than for those who engaged in instrumental aggression (M_{CBS} = 6.34, M_{IA}= 4.61; F(1, 1,204) = 390.19; $p < .01$). Furthermore, the results show that for CBS, harming the brand was clearly the dominant motive ($M_{\text{harming the brand}}$ = 6.34, vs. $M_{\text{restoring equity}}$ = 6.07; t(441) = 4.40, $p < .01$ and $M_{\text{venting negative emotions}}$ = 6.18; t(441) = 2.59, $p < .05$). In contrast, for instrumental aggression (negative WOM and customer retaliation), the dominant motives were restoring equity ($M_{\text{restoring equity}}$ = 5.74, vs. $M_{\text{harming the brand}}$ = 4.61; t(883) = 22.55, $p < .01$) and venting negative emotions ($M_{\text{venting negative emotions}}$ = 5.59, vs. $M_{\text{harming the brand}}$ = 4.61; t(883) = 18.06, $p < .01$).

It is important to note that consumers who have chosen instrumental aggression can still decide to engage in CBS in a next step or escalation round, especially if they perceive the brand's response to their instrumental aggression as unsatisfactory. We expect such a two-step escalation to CBS with an initial focus on instrumental aggression to be more likely to occur in the case of performance-based brand stimuli. In the case of value-based brand stimuli, a direct escalation toward CBS (without prior instrumental aggression) is more likely.

In our Study 2, out of 261 respondents who were confronted with an initial brand-related stimulus and answered the respective question, 17 chose to engage in CBS (i.e., to harm the brand was their dominant motive), of which 13 had seen the value-based stimulus and 4 the performance-based stimulus. The other 244 respondents chose instrumental aggression (i.e., to restore equity or to vent negative emotions as their dominant motive). Of these, 114 had seen a value-based stimulus and 130 a performance-based stimulus. These findings could indicate that value-based brand stimuli lead more directly to CBS than performance-based brand stimuli. To further investigate this idea, we conducted a mediation

analysis using PROCESS model 4 (bootstrapping of 10,000 samples; Hayes 2013). The value- versus performance-based stimuli were dummy-coded as value-based = 0 and performance-based = 1. We found that the performance-based brand stimulus increased the motives of restoring equity and of venting negative emotions, which both in turn increased the motive of causing harm to a brand (restoring equity: $a_1b_1 = .1465$, 95% confidence interval [CI] = [.0202, .3035]; venting negative emotions: $a_2b_2 = .3087$, 95% CI = [.1138, .5269]). Independent of this mechanism, the performance-based (vs. value-based) stimulus had a negative effect on the motive to cause harm to a brand ($c' = -.7398$, 95% CI = [−1.1450, −.3345]). Thus, we found evidence that consumers who are confronted with a performance-based brand stimulus might first engage in instrumental aggression before (in a next escalation round) committing CBS. On the other hand, value-based brand stimuli could lead more directly to CBS (or could be mediated by other factors).

Contingency Factors

The choice of CBS versus instrumental aggression is also influenced by contingency factors referring to the consumer's personality, his/her relationship with the brand, and the brand itself. Following the literature on aggression as well as our qualitative study, we identified three specific contingency factors that affect this choice: aggressive consumer personality, consumer–brand relationship quality, and singularity of the brand personality.

People with an aggressive personality perceive more hostility and aggression in situations than people with a less aggressive personality (Anderson and Dill 2000). As a result, a consumer with an aggressive personality will be more likely to feel provoked by a brand and to respond with aggressive behavior. Furthermore, due to his/her heightened sensitivity to situational provocation, less provocation is needed to evoke aggressive behaviors in such a consumer (Marshall and Brown 2006). Also, an aggressive consumer will be more likely to turn a potential conflict situation into a hostile one (Anderson, Buckley, and Carnagey 2008).

The consumer–brand relationship quality represents another contingency factor that affects the choice of aggression path. In general, a high-quality relationship should buffer the negative effects of a product or service failure because the consumer is more tolerant with regard to brand transgressions (Hess, Ganesan, and Klein 2003; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran 1998), making CBS less probable. In contrast, consumers with a low-quality brand relationship do not have such tolerance and will more likely respond with CBS. However, it is also possible that consumers with high expectations of the brand would perceive a brand failure as betrayal (Thompson, Rindfleisch, and Arsel 2006), leading to a "love-becomes-hate" effect (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009) and thereby increasing the likelihood of CBS. This possibility is illustrated by the following quote of a brand saboteur: "We had a really good cooperation for a long time. These were great people. But, well, they have really let us down. I don't trust them anymore. Really, they betrayed me" (Interview 6).

Singularity of brand personality also forms an important contingency factor that influences the choice of aggression path. The focus and single-mindedness of a brand personality profile as intended by management determines the singularity of the brand's personality (Malär et al. 2012). In other words, a highly singular brand focuses on a single concept or idea and has high values on only one brand personality dimension (e.g., Harley-Davidson, which focuses on the personality dimension of ruggedness; Malär et al. 2012). Although singularity has been defined as important driver of brand performance, it can raise the likelihood that consumers will sabotage a brand. By focusing on one personality dimension, a brand might be perceived as clearer and less complex (Malär et al. 2012); however, a singular brand personality also makes any conflict with a consumer's personal values stronger and more apparent. For example, Abercrombie & Fitch's brand strategy was to target the cool, popular, and attractive kids, which led to a rather exciting brand personality (see Aaker 1997). Such a strong focus on excitement might have polarized consumers, resulting in some consumers' strong value conflicts with this positioning. Also, saboteurs could see such a positioning as a chance to demonstrate that the values some brands hold and communicate are strongly unethical in the saboteurs' eyes. The relevance of such a singularity for consumers is illustrated by the following quote of one of our brand saboteurs: "It's not that what [brand] does is so much worse than what everybody else does. It's that it is bad in such a perfect example" (Interview 3). For instrumental aggressors, the singularity of the brand personality will likely be less relevant because they primarily want to restore equity with the brand that has caused them harm in some way, or to vent their negative emotions about the brand.

Academic Implications

The chief objectives of our article are to improve our understanding of CBS and to stimulate the study of this underresearched phenomenon in marketing. In line with these objectives, we develop a conceptual framework of consumers' aggressive behavior toward brands and advance knowledge in this area in three major ways.

First, we introduce CBS as a relatively new construct to the academic literature. This concept reflects a phenomenon that can increasingly be observed in practice but that has not yet been investigated sufficiently in academic research. We conceptualize CBS as a hostile form of aggressive behavior with the dominant objective of harming a brand through the impairment of the brand-related associations of other consumers. We therefore distinguish CBS from previously studied concepts of negative consumer behavior that represent a more instrumental form of aggression (e.g., negative WOM), by which consumers attempt to achieve other goals, such as restoring equity or venting negative emotions. Overall, by introducing the concept of CBS to the literature, we highlight the need for a better understanding of this new and increasingly important phenomenon.

Second, we explain the inception of CBS among individual consumers from a mental-process perspective. Guided

by previous theory and research as well as qualitative interviews, we develop a novel and more comprehensive perspective on negative consumer behavior and the processes by which it forms. Our theoretical focus is in line with calls for a stronger theoretical foundation (Cheung and Thadani 2010) as well as for a more integrative explanatory approach (e.g., De Matos and Rossi 2008; Lovett, Peres, and Shachar 2013) made in prior research on other forms of negative consumer behavior. These suggestions have been made against the background that prior conceptual and empirical studies on instrumental aggression have tended to focus on fewer, more isolated antecedents (e.g., perceived betrayal). In contrast, in our integrative conceptual framework, we take a more comprehensive perspective, including not only relevant antecedents examined in prior research but also important additional antecedents that have not yet been addressed (i.e., perceived identity threat, hostile thoughts, hatred, and rumination). By highlighting the key mental processes, our framework provides a better understanding of when and why consumers choose the hostile or the instrumental path of aggression against brands. Also, by addressing the choice between CBS and instrumental aggression (i.e., considering several negative consumer behaviors simultaneously in one conceptual model), we integrate the rather fragmented literature on negative consumer behavior, which has generally examined one type of negative behavior at a time (e.g., studies on consumer boycotts or negative WOM).

Third, we complement and support our conceptual framework with qualitative interviews and two quantitative studies. Our interviews with brand saboteurs enable an internal perspective on the mental processes and motivation that lead to CBS (i.e., we interviewed saboteurs regarding their emotions, cognitions, and motives). In addition, our quantitative studies support our distinction between CBS (as a form of hostile aggression) and existing concepts of negative consumer behavior (instrumental aggression, such as negative WOM). We not only conceptually argue but we also empirically show that CBS is driven by the motive of harming a brand, whereas for instrumental aggression, other motives prevail (e.g., restoring equity). Furthermore, we provide empirical evidence that, in comparison with instrumental aggression, CBS is preceded by stronger negative emotions (especially outrage, anger, and hatred), more intense rumination, more failed interactions, and hostile thoughts and perceived identity threats (rather than perceived betrayal or powerlessness).

Agenda for Future Research

On a general level, research is needed to empirically test our conceptual framework of consumer aggression against brands. This could then lead to a new conceptual discussion and refinement of our framework. The following are just a few examples that should be of interest for future research. Research is needed to more specifically examine why consumers make the critical decision to harm a brand. We have identified key constructs and stages, but their roles in this decision need to be empirically examined in more detail. In particular, it is important to examine how certain brand-related stimuli and emotions and cognitions are more likely to drive a consumer toward CBS than toward instrumental aggression. It is also critical to understand the importance of rumination and failed interaction loops for a consumer's decision to engage in CBS, especially in comparison with the other drivers of CBS, such as emotions and cognitions. In this context, research is needed to better understand how many rumination and failed interaction loops it takes to drive consumers to engage in CBS. Also important is understanding which specific factors prompt a consumer to intensively ruminate and what indicators signal companies that a consumer has entered into a critical rumination process. These are only a few issues that arise directly from our conceptual framework, and there are clearly others related to each of the variables and stages, which provide promising research opportunities (because these issues have been discussed earlier in the article, they will not be repeated here). In addition, there are a number of additional avenues for future research that could broaden or even go beyond our framework. We now discuss these potential areas and provide specific research questions.

First, in our framework, we have identified and discussed a set of relevant contingency factors that influence consumers' choice of hostile versus instrumental aggression (aggressive personality, brand relationship quality, and singularity of brand personality), and the roles of these contingency factors need to be investigated. However, there are other contingency variables that merit attention as well. In particular, sociodemographic variables (e.g., age, gender, education) should influence a consumer's choice of aggression path. For example, literature on aggression has suggested that men show higher levels of aggression than women (Baron and Richardson 1994); therefore, in the current context, men should be more likely to engage in CBS. Also, psychographic variables, such as personality type and level of extroversion, could play a key role. Research in social psychology has shown that people with type A personalities are more prone to hostile aggression (Check and Dyck 1986) and therefore might be more likely to engage in CBS. Furthermore, the literature on employee sabotage has identified high extroversion as an important driver of sabotage (Harris and Ogbonna 2002).

Furthermore, there are also other potentially important contingency variables, such as brand equity, that are related to the brand. Prior research on antibranding has shown that more antibrand websites exist for brands with high brand equity than for brands with lower brand equity (Krishnamurthy and Kucuk 2009). Thus, high-equity brands could have a higher risk of being the target of CBS than low-equity brands. Furthermore, contingency variables regarding the consumer–brand relationship, such as brand attitude, could play an important role in consumers' choice of aggression path because a very negative brand attitude will favor hostile aggression. Taking all this together, future research needs to broaden the contingency perspective of our framework:

RQ_1: What are the roles of contingency factors related to the consumer (e.g., gender, type A personality), the brand (e.g., brand equity), and the consumer–brand relationship (e.g., brand attitude) in the consumer's choice of aggression path?

Future studies should also consider contingency factors outside of the consumer–brand dyad, including technological, sociocultural, and market-related developments. As only a few examples, new technologies such as the Internet, social media, and smart mobile devices empower consumers to implement CBS much more easily (Labrecque et al. 2013). Also, CBS is more likely to occur now due to sociocultural developments; specifically, consumer social activism has become more prominent in many countries, facilitating worldwide social antibrand movements (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan 2006). From a market perspective, competitive intensity could favor CBS because the greater availability of product and services from competitors could make a consumer less concerned about attacking a single brand. Thus, we propose the following research question:

RQ_2: What are the technological, sociocultural, and market-related factors that make a consumer more likely to engage in CBS?

Within our conceptual framework, we have discussed the mental escalation process focusing on the consumer–brand dyad. Further research could broaden this dyadic view to a network perspective and, thus, broaden our conceptual framework. For example, other consumers could interact with a potential saboteur, which might have an impact on his/her mental escalation process. There might also be different effects with regard to group dynamics. Negative feedback from other consumers could serve as a type of reinforcement for a potential saboteur's intention to pursue the hostile path toward CBS. On the other hand, venting anger can produce a positive improvement in an individual's psychological state (Bushman 2002) such that after such a cathartic interaction with other consumers, a potential brand saboteur will refrain from engaging in CBS. This leads us to the following research question:

RQ_3: How do interactions with other consumers affect a potential brand saboteur's choice of aggression path?

Although our conceptual framework focuses on consumers' mental escalation processes leading to CBS, future studies need to also provide a better understanding of the negative consequences of CBS. Needed is an examination of how other consumers perceive and evaluate the activities of brand saboteurs (who intend to impair the brand-related attitudes of those other consumers). The credibility of CBS activities plays a crucial role here: if CBS actions were perceived as highly credible, they might be more likely to change other consumers' attitudes in a negative way, and the consequences of CBS would thus be much more harmful. Therefore, we need to understand the drivers of credibility in the negative context of CBS. Prior research on the antecedents of credibility in a positive context has shown that source credibility is generally based on trustworthiness and expertness (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953). These findings could also apply to our CBS context. Brand saboteurs might be regarded as trustworthy because they are third-party sources and have little motivation to include false information about a brand (Chatterjee 2001). Research also needs to investigate the differences in the drivers of credibility depending on the valence of the context (e.g., positive WOM vs. CBS). In the context of online reviews, prior research has found that disclosing the identity of the reviewer more strongly increases the credibility of the negative than the positive reviews (Kusumasondjaja, Shanka, and Marchegiani 2012). Thus, consumers might base their evaluation of the expertise and trustworthiness of a saboteur on different or additional indicators, compared with their evaluation in a positive context. This leads us to the following question:

RQ_4: What drives the credibility of CBS activities among other consumers?

Furthermore, the negative consequences of CBS are also determined by the diffusion of information about CBS activities among other consumers. A key challenge here is to understand what drives the speed and breadth of diffusion of information about CBS activities, because a more intense diffusion will increase the brand damage from CBS. Further research on this issue could draw on psychological research that has shown that individuals share information with others more intensively if they perceive this information to be important (e.g., Steinel, Utz, and Koning 2010). Thus, we put forth the following research question:

RQ_5: What factors drive the intensity of diffusion of information about CBS activities among other consumers?

Our conceptual framework deals with the antecedents of and the process leading to CBS. Knowledge regarding these drivers of CBS makes it possible to monitor potential brand saboteurs so that they can be detected in an early phase of their mental process toward CBS (e.g., consumers who have already developed high levels of hostile cognitions and emotions and have engaged in negative interaction loops and intensive rumination). Such a recognition of likely saboteurs prior to their actual engagement in CBS activities would enable companies to prevent CBS by mollifying and reconciling those potential aggressors. Further research is needed to determine whether such a prevention approach can be an effective and also cost-efficient marketing strategy. Also reasonable would be an ex post perspective, whereby companies try to detect CBS immediately after it has occurred rather than preventing it (with the goal of limiting the damage to the brand). With both perspectives, research is needed to understand which specific CBS prevention and response tactics and activities are most suitable. This prompts the following research question:

RQ_6: When and how should companies respond to CBS: ex ante to prevent it, or only ex post, after it has occurred, to reduce its damage?

If a company chooses a CBS-prevention approach, it has two general implementation options, which need to be examined and evaluated in future studies. First, managers can try to de-escalate the situation by accommodating the potential saboteur and constructively reducing the level of stress by offering some form of redress. For example, in our interviews, we found that saboteurs often felt ignored, exploited, and fooled by the brand because of its supremacy, and, thus, they had the perception that their power had been

reduced. Restoring a consumer's perceived power after a negative interaction, by engaging in reconciliation activities or offering apologies, could therefore be a valuable strategy for resolving an aggressive conflict (Fagenson and Cooper 1987). Such a reconciliation strategy seems to be applicable in the case of performance-based brand stimuli, but it could be less adequate in the case of a value-based CBS escalation context.

Second, a company facing the threat of CBS could try to deter potential saboteurs from engaging in CBS activities by pointing out the negative consequences of such behavior to the saboteur. As an example, the company could signal its determination to take legal action against saboteurs (see Grégoire, Laufer, and Tripp 2010). However, such a deterrence strategy also has potential negative effects. Trying to deter a potential saboteur could backfire and even increase his/her determination to act aggressively against the brand (see also Gruca and Sudharshan 1995). And if the "bullying" of potential saboteurs became public, it could also cause substantial damage to the brand's image among other consumers. Future studies need to conceptually discuss and empirically evaluate these different CBS prevention options and also to examine how to best implement them. This idea leads us to the following research question:

RQ_7: Which CBS prevention approach should be taken by companies, and how should each approach be implemented? Should companies mollify potential brand saboteurs or, rather, actively deter them from engaging in CBS?

The future insights from research on the damage potential of CBS, prevention of CBS, and adequate response to CBS once it has occurred need to be expanded beyond our conceptual framework by investigating the implications for marketing organization and capabilities. Given the tremendous damage that can result from CBS, we need to examine which organizational and marketing resources are best suited to prevent and to adequately respond to CBS. We need to understand which organizational structures, processes, cultures, and capabilities are best suited to deal with CBS. As an example, to recognize potential saboteurs and also to detect CBS immediately after occurrence, a company's monitoring and market-sensing capabilities could play an important role (Day 1994). Also, once CBS has occurred, crisis management and communication capabilities could be relevant in order to reduce the negative impact of sabotage. This leads us to the following research question:

RQ_8: Which organizational structures and processes, cultures, and marketing capabilities enable firms to prevent CBS and to adequately respond to CBS once it has occurred?

Such a resource-based research perspective is also needed in a more specific area of marketing: companies might need to adapt their customer relationship management (CRM) strategies, systems, and processes to account for the new phenomenon of CBS. Prior CRM-related research has focused primarily on the opportunities and positive outcomes of customer–brand relationships. A key point of our conceptualization is that there is also a dark side of branding that needs to be taken into account in CRM. This point leads us to our final research question:

RQ_9: When and how should companies adapt their CRM strategies, systems, and processes to deal with the phenomenon of CBS?

Managerial Implications

Our study also provides important insights and recommendations for managers. On a conceptual knowledge level, our study provides managers with the key insight that CBS is not only a new and distinct form of negative consumer behavior but is also destructive, with a huge damage potential for brands, whereby even a seemingly weak consumer can attack a strong brand. Our framework also highlights that CBS is not a spontaneous action; rather, it results from a conscious mental process that often involves an escalation of repeated negative interactions with a brand. Thus, managers might have the opportunity to detect CBS before it occurs. In contrast, many other brand crisis phenomena (e.g., severe product failures, accidents; Pearson and Mitroff 1993) arise suddenly, without sufficient prior warning signs, such that managers can often only react to situations that have already damaged the brand.

Furthermore, it is important for managers to realize that brand saboteurs are different from instrumental aggressors, who often are only dissatisfied customers who want to restore equity or vent negative emotions. Instrumental aggressors are usually still interested in (re)establishing and improving their relationship with the brand and, therefore, tend to be more constructive and more open to a reconciliation with the brand. In contrast, brand saboteurs have a hostile mindset and have burned all bridges with the brand. In other words, they are in a kind of a personal war with the brand. Often, they will demonstrate excessively harmful behavior and invest significant effort and creativity into their activities. Saboteurs often confront managers with highly innovative and even unprecedented sabotage activities. Also, many saboteurs are ideology-inspired consumers and are therefore especially determined. Taking into consideration these different characteristics, managers should expect a much higher damage potential from CBS than from instrumental aggression. What makes matters worse is that the negative outcomes of CBS can arise very fast and, due to the potentially viral character of CBS, become destructive in a very short time.

Against that background, CBS requires special managerial attention, which brings us to a managerial action level. Given the potential severe consequences of CBS, there are two key questions that merit managerial attention: (1) How can companies detect CBS before its occurrence? and (2) How should companies respond immediately after CBS has occurred, so that the damage can be contained? Therefore, the insights from our study could change how marketing managers operate in the future, with regard to both preventing and responding to CBS.

For CBS prevention and response, there is a strategic and an operational level. At the strategic level of CBS prevention, a key contribution from our research is that, given the extreme damage potential of CBS and also the high

relevance of value-based brand stimuli, managers should consider more defensive branding strategies. Currently, brand managers differentiate and even polarize brand positioning strategies to focus on specific customer segments and to more effectively implement their intended brand personalities (e.g., Malär et al. 2012). Such a highly differentiated approach to brand positioning is risky in a networked marketing environment challenged by the threat of CBS. As a result, managers should consider more balanced brand positioning strategies that combine the focus on attractive customer segments with the defensive intention not to affront too many consumers who might even not be customers of the brand. In this context, a company should have a clear position and strategy regarding what its managers can publicly state about the brand and what specific values can be communicated. This was an important issue in one of our brand sabotage interviews, wherein a fashion brand CEO's public comments communicated values that so strongly conflicted with the interviewee's values that the saboteur decided to engage in CBS activities.

Concerning the strategic level of CBS response, managers need to understand that, given the huge damage potential of CBS, it is a strategic must to develop an explicit response strategy for how to deal with CBS once it has occurred (Copulsky 2011). Not only is the CBS attack public but the managerial response to it is as well. Therefore, managers need to define explicit and clear strategies for how to respond to CBS. Response strategies could include (1) appeasement, or apologizing to both the saboteur and the public (e.g., by writing a personal apology to the saboteur and also making a public one, such as in a press statement); (2) counterstatements that objectively address, for example, an initial performance failure for which the company was blamed by the saboteur (e.g., by making it clear that the alleged performance failure was due to external factors not controllable by the firm); or even (3) a counterattack that, for example, questions the honesty and objectiveness of the saboteur (e.g., claiming that the saboteur made false accusations).

On an operational level of CBS prevention and response, managers can improve their social media monitoring and CRM systems in such a way that they can effectively and quickly detect the imminent outbreak of sabotage (even at the individual consumer–brand relationship level). More specifically, companies can train their big-data algorithms to monitor social media. For example, Dell actively monitors social media with such algorithms in real time in their social media "war room." In the current context, these algorithms can focus on the appropriate CBS-detecting keywords (e.g., those that indicate strong hatred, frustration, hostile thoughts, or rumination concerning the brand that are expressed among individual consumers through social media). Ideally, such a CBS monitoring system could alert managers that a CBS attack was imminent (e.g., because an individual consumer showed an extremely high level of negative emotions after several failed interaction loops with the brand), which would then allow managers to try to prevent CBS by reconciling with potential saboteurs through de-escalation techniques. Companies can also adapt their CRM systems so that they do not only track transactional exchanges between the brand and its customers but also are able to monitor and detect negative emotions and cognitions toward the brand expressed by customers during their interactions with employees.

REFERENCES

Aaker, Jennifer L. (1997), "Dimensions of Brand Personality," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34 (August), 347–56.

Adkins, Natalie Ross and Julie L. Ozanne (2005), "The Low Literate Consumer," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 32 (1), 93–105.

Analoui, Farhad (1995), "Workplace Sabotage: Its Styles, Motives and Management," *Journal of Management Development*, 14 (7), 48–65.

Anderson, Craig A., Katherine E. Buckley, and Nicholas L. Carnagey (2008), "Creating Your Own Hostile Environment: A Laboratory Examination of Trait Aggressiveness and the Violence Escalation Cycle," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 34 (4), 462–73.

——— and Brad J. Bushman (2002), "Human Aggression," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 53 (1), 27–51.

——— and Karen E. Dill (2000), "Video Games and Aggressive Thoughts, Feelings, and Behavior in the Laboratory and in Life," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78 (4), 772–90.

Aquino, Karl and Scott Douglas (2003), "Identity Threat and Antisocial Behavior in Organizations: The Moderating Effects of Individual Differences, Aggressive Modeling, and Hierarchical Status," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 90 (1), 195–208.

Arnold, Magda B. (1960), *Emotion and Personality Psychological Aspects*, Vol. 1. New York: Columbia University Press.

Baron, Robert A. and Deborah R. Richardson (1994), *Human Aggression*. New York: Plenum Press.

Batson, C. Daniel, Christopher L. Kennedy, Lesley-Anne Nord, E.L. Stocks, D'Yani A. Fleming, Christian M. Marzette, et al. (2007), "Anger at Unfairness: Is It Moral Outrage?" *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 37 (6), 1272–85.

Berkowitz, Leonard (1989), "Frustration-Aggression Hypothesis: Examination and Reformulation," *Psychological Bulletin*, 106 (1), 59–73.

Braunsberger, Karin and Brian Buckler (2011), "What Motivates Consumers to Participate in Boycotts: Lessons from the Ongoing Canadian Seafood Boycott," *Journal of Business Research*, 64 (1), 96–102.

Bushman, Brad J. (1998), "Priming Effects of Media Violence on the Accessibility of Aggressive Constructs in Memory," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 24 (5), 537–45.

——— (2002), "Does Venting Anger Feed or Extinguish the Flame? Catharsis, Rumination, Distraction, Anger, and Aggressive Responding," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 28 (6), 724–31.

Chandrashekaran, Rajesh (2004), "The Influence of Redundant Comparison Prices and Other Price Presentation Formats on Consumers' Evaluations and Purchase Intentions," *Journal of Retailing*, 80 (1), 53–66.

Chatterjee, Patrali (2001), "Online Reviews: Do Consumers Use Them?" *Advances in Consumer Research*, 28 (1), 129–33.

Check, James V.P. and Dennis G. Dyck (1986), "Hostile Aggression and Type A Behavior," *Personality and Individual Differences*, 7 (6), 819–27.

Cheung, Christy M.K. and Dimple R. Thadani (2010), "The State of Electronic Word-of-Mouth Research: A Literature Analysis," PACIS 2010 Proceedings, Paper 151 [available at http://aisel.aisnet.org/pacis2010/151/].

Copulsky, Jonathan R. (2011), *Brand Resilience*: *Managing Risk and Recovery in a High-Speed World*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Day, George S. (1994), "The Capabilities of Market-Driven Organizations," *Journal of Marketing*, 58 (November), 37–52.

De Matos, Celso Augusto and Alberto Vargas Rossi Carlos (2008), "Word-of-Mouth Communications in Marketing: A Meta-Analytic Review of the Antecedents and Moderators," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36 (4), 578–96.

Denizet-Lewis, Benoit (2006), "The Man Behind Abercrombie & Fitch," *Salon*, (January 24), [available at http://www.salon.com/2006/01/24/jeffries/].

DeWall, C. Nathan, Jean M. Twenge, Seth A. Gitter, and Roy F. Baumeister (2009), "It's the Thought That Counts: The Role of Hostile Cognition in Shaping Aggressive Responses to Social Exclusion," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 96 (1), 45–59.

Dollard, John, Neal E. Miller, O.H. Mowrer, and Robert S. Sears (1939), *Frustration and Aggression*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

The Economist (2009), "Did Dave Carroll Lose United Airlines $180m?" (June 24), [available at http://www.economist.com/blogs/gulliver/2009/07/did_dave_carroll_cost_united_1].

Fagenson, Ellen A. and Joel Cooper (1987), "When Push Comes to Power: A Test of Power Restoration Theory's Explanation for Aggressive Conflict Escalation," *Basic and Applied Social Psychology*, 8 (4), 273–93.

Fishbein, Martin and Icek Ajzen (1975), *Belief, Attitude, Intention and Behavior: An Introduction to Theory and Research*. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley.

Fitness, Julie (2001), "Betrayal, Rejection, Revenge, and Forgiveness: An Interpersonal Script Approach," *Interpersonal Rejection*, Mark R. Leary, ed. New York: Oxford University Press, 73–104.

Flickr (2010), "BP Oil Spill Street Art Propaganda Campaign," Flickr group, (accessed March 13, 2014), [available at http://www.flickr.com/ /groups/bpoilspillstreetartcampaign].

Folkes, Valerie S. (1984), "Consumer Reactions to Product Failure: An Attributional Approach," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10 (4), 398–409.

——— (1988), "Recent Attribution Research in Consumer Behavior: A Review and New Directions," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14 (4), 548–65.

Friedman, Monroe (1985), "Consumer Boycotts in the United States, 1970–1980: Contemporary Events in Historical Perspective," *Journal of Consumer Affairs*, 19 (1), 96–117.

Fritz, Ben, Danny Yadron, and Erich Schwartzel (2014), "Sony to Let Theaters Decide Whether to Show 'The Interview' amid Threat," *Wall Street Journal*, (December 12).

Funches, Venessa, Melissa Markley, and Lenita Davis (2009), "Reprisal, Retribution and Requital: Investigating Customer Retaliation," *Journal of Business Research*, 62 (2), 231–38.

Gelbrich, Katja (2010), "Anger, Frustration, and Helplessness After Service Failure: Coping Strategies and Effective Informational Support," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38 (5), 567–85.

Graham, Kathryn, Sharon Bernards, D. Wayne, Michael Parks, Antonia Abbey, Richard B. Felson, et al. (2013), "Apparent Motives for Aggression in the Social Context of the Bar," *Psychology of Violence*, 3 (3), 218–32.

——— and Samantha Wells (2003), "'Somebody's Gonna Get Their Head Kicked in Tonight!' Aggression Among Young Males in Bars—A Question of Values?" *British Journal of Criminology*, 43 (3), 546–66.

Grégoire, Yany and Robert J. Fisher (2008), "Customer Betrayal and Retaliation: When Your Best Customers Become Your Worst Enemies," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36 (2), 247–61.

———, Daniel Laufer, and Thomas M. Tripp (2010), "A Comprehensive Model of Customer Direct and Indirect Revenge: Understanding the Effects of Perceived Greed and Customer Power," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38 (6), 738–58.

———, Thomas M. Tripp, and Renaud Legoux (2009), "When Customer Love Turns into Lasting Hate: The Effects of Relationship Strength and Time on Customer Revenge and Avoidance," *Journal of Marketing*, 73 (November), 18–32.

Gruca, Thomas S. and D. Sudharshan (1995), "A Framework for Entry Deterrence Strategy: The Competitive Environment, Choices, and Consequences," *Journal of Marketing*, 59 (October), 44–55.

Halperin, Eran (2008), "Group-Based Hatred in Intractable Conflict in Israel," *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, 52 (5), 713–36.

———, Daphna Canetti-Nisim, and Silvan Hirsch-Hoefler (2009), "The Central Role of Group-Based Hatred as an Emotional Antecedent of Political Intolerance: Evidence from Israel," *Political Psychology*, 30 (1), 93–123.

Harris, Lloyd C. and Emmanuel Ogbonna (2002), "Exploring Service Sabotage: The Antecedents, Types, and Consequences of Frontline, Deviant, Antiservice Behavior," *Journal of Service Research*, 4 (3), 163–83.

Hayes, Andrew F. (2013), *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*. New York: Guilford Press.

Hess, Ronald L., Shankar Ganesan, and Noreen M. Klein (2003), "Service Failure and Recovery: The Impact of Relationship Factors on Customer Satisfaction," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 31 (2), 127–45.

Hollenbeck, Candice R. and George M. Zinkhan (2006), "Consumer Activism on the Internet: The Role of Anti-Brand Communities," *Advances in Consumer Research*, 33 (1), 479–85.

Horwitz, Murray (1956), "Psychological Needs as a Function of Social Environments," *The State of the Social Sciences*, L.D. White, ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 162–83.

Hovland, Carl I., Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley (1953), *Communication and Persuasion; Psychological Studies of Opinion Change*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

Huefner, Jonathan C. and H. Keith Hunt (2000), "Consumer Retaliation as a Response to Dissatisfaction," *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 13, 61–82.

Jetten, Jolanda, Tom Postmes, and Brendan J. McAuliffe (2002), "'We're All Individuals': Group Norms of Individualism and Collectivism, Levels of Identification, and Identity Threat," *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 32 (2), 189–207.

John, Andrew and Jill Klein (2003), "The Boycott Puzzle: Consumer Motivations for Purchase Sacrifice," *Management Science*, 49 (9), 1196–209.

Karber, Greg (2013), "Abercrombie & Fitch Gets a Brand Readjustment: #FitchTheHomeless," video, (May 5), [available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O95DBxnXiSo].

Keller, Kevin Lane (1993), "Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity," *Journal of Marketing*, 57 (January), 1–22.

Klein, Jill Gabrielle, N. Craig Smith, and Andrew John (2004), "Why We Boycott: Consumer Motivations for Boycott Participation," *Journal of Marketing*, 68 (July), 92–109.

Koku, Paul Sergius (2012), "On the Effectiveness of Consumer Boycotts Organized Through the Internet: The Market Model," *Journal of Services Marketing*, 26 (1), 20–26.

Krishnamurthy, Sandeep and S. Umit Kucuk (2009), "Anti-Branding on the Internet," *Journal of Business Research*, 62 (11), 1119–26.

Kusumasondjaja, Sony, Tekle Shanka, and Christopher Marchegiani (2012), "Credibility of Online Reviews and Initial Trust: The Roles of Reviewer's Identity and Review Valence," *Journal of Vacation Marketing*, 18 (3), 185–95.

Labrecque, Lauren I., Jonas vor dem Esche, Charla Mathwick, Thomas P. Novak, and Charles F. Hofacker (2013), "Consumer Power: Evolution in the Digital Age," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 27 (4), 257–69.

Lazarus, Richard S. (1991), *Emotion and Adaptation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Lefevre, Eric (2001), *Brandenburg Division: Commandos of the Reich*. Paris: Histoire and Collections.

Lindenmeier, Jörg, Christoph Schleer, and Denise Pricl (2012), "Consumer Outrage: Emotional Reactions to Unethical Corporate Behavior," *Journal of Business Research*, 65 (9), 1364–73.

Lovett, Mitchell J., Renana Peres, and Ron Shachar (2013), "On Brands and Word of Mouth," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 50 (July), 427–44.

Malär, Lucia, Bettina Nyffenegger, Harley Krohmer, and Wayne D. Hoyer (2012), "Implementing an Intended Brand Personality: A Dyadic Perspective," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 40 (5), 728–44.

Marshall, Margaret A. and Jonathon D. Brown (2006), "Trait Aggressiveness and Situational Provocation: A Test of the Traits as Situational Sensitivities (TASS) Model," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 32 (8), 1100–13.

Moors, Agnes (2009), "Theories of Emotion Causation: A Review," *Cognition and Emotion*, 23 (4), 625–62.

Mudhutter (2007), "Avoid Like the Plague," TripAdvisor review of the Caprice Hotel, Whitley Bay, UK, (February 13), [available at http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190932-d626790-r6785812-Caprice_Hotel-Whitley_Bay_Tyne_and_Wear_England.html].

Pearson, Christine M. and Ian I. Mitroff (1993), "From Crisis Prone to Crisis Prepared: A Framework for Crisis Management," *Academy of Management Executive*, 7 (1), 48–59.

Reisenzein, Rainer (1994), "Pleasure-Arousal Theory and the Intensity of Emotions," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 67 (3), 525–39.

Roseman, Ira J. (1991), "Appraisal Determinants of Discrete Emotions," *Cognition and Emotion*, 5 (3), 161–200.

———, Ann Aliki Antoniou, and Paul E. Jose (1996), "Appraisal Determinants of Emotions: Constructing a More Accurate and Comprehensive Theory," *Cognition and Emotion*, 10 (3), 241–78.

Smith, Craig A. and Richard S. Lazarus (1993), "Appraisal Components, Core Relational Themes, and the Emotions," *Cognition and Emotion*, 7 (3/4), 233–69.

Steinel, Wolfgang, Sonja Utz, and Lukas Koning (2010), "The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly Thing to Do When Sharing Information: Revealing, Concealing, and Lying Depend on Social Motivation, Distribution, and Importance of Information," *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 113 (2), 85–96.

Tax, Stephen S., Stephen W. Brown, and Murali Chandrashekaran (1998), "Customer Evaluations of Service Complaint Experiences: Implications for Relationship Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 62 (April), 60–76.

Thompson, Craig J. and Diana L. Haytko (1997), "Speaking of Fashion: Consumers' Uses of Fashion Discourses and the Appropriation of Countervailing Cultural Meanings," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 24 (1), 15–42.

———, Aric Rindfleisch, and Zeynep Arsel (2006), "Emotional Branding and the Strategic Value of the Doppelgänger Brand Image," *Journal of Marketing*, 70 (January), 50–64.

Van Doorn, Jenny, Katherine N. Lemon, Vikas Mittal, Stephan Nass, Doreén Pick, Peter Pirner, et al. (2010), "Customer Engagement Behavior: Theoretical Foundations and Research Directions," *Journal of Service Research*, 13 (3), 253–66.

Wade, Nathaniel G., David L. Vogel, Kelly Yu-Hsin Liao, and Daniel B. Goldman (2008), "Measuring State-Specific Rumination: Development of the Rumination About an Interpersonal Offense Scale," *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, 55 (3), 419–26.

Wallace, Elaine and Leslie de Chernatony (2007), "Exploring Managers' Views About Brand Saboteurs," *Journal of Marketing Management*, 23 (1/2), 91–106.

Warner, Sam Bass (1941), "The Model Sabotage Prevention Act," *Harvard Law Review*, 54 (4), 602–31.

Wetzer, Inge M., Marcel Zeelenberg, and Rik Pieters (2007), "'Never Eat in That Restaurant, I Did!': Exploring Why People Engage in Negative Word-of-Mouth Communication," *Psychology and Marketing*, 24 (8), 661–80.

White, Ralph K. (1996), "Why the Serbs Fought: Motives and Misperceptions," *Peace and Conflict*, 2 (2), 109–28.

Whitmer, Anson J. and Ian H. Gotlib (2013), "An Attentional Scope Model of Rumination," *Psychological Bulletin*, 139 (5), 1036–61.

Zhang, Yinlong, Lawrence Feick, and Vikas Mittal (2014), "How Males and Females Differ in Their Likelihood of Transmitting Negative Word of Mouth," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40 (6), 1097–108.

When Hostile Consumers Wreak Havoc on Your Brand: The Phenomenon of Consumer Brand Sabotage

Andrea Kähr, Bettina Nyffenegger, Harley Krohmer, and Wayne D. Hoyer

Web Appendix

WEB APPENDIX W1: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON OUR QUALITATIVE INTERVIEWS

TABLE W1.1

SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE QUALITATIVE STUDY

Informant(s)	**Age**	**Sex**	**Education**	**Profession**	**Consumer Behavior**
Consumer brand sabotage					
1	44	Male	Apprenticeship	Head of Communication	*Sabotage:* Anti-brand campaign with satirical replacement of the promotional slogans
2	30	Female	University degree	Trainee public relations and marketing	*Sabotage:* Writing to customers of the brand on how mendacious the brand is, creating a poster about the mendaciousness of the brand and taking it to a demonstration
3	26	Male	University degree	Professional writer	*Sabotage:* Creating and uploading a video to YouTube that puts the brand in a bad light
4	47	Male	Matura (qualification for University entrance)	Investment management	*Sabotage:* Creating an anti-brand blog about the negative experiences with the brand
5	43	Male	University degree	Professional blogger	*Sabotage:* Disgracing the brand on his own professional blog
6	38	Male	Higher vocational training	CEO	*Sabotage:* Posting a letter about how wrong the brand behaved on Facebook and the firm's homepage and sending it to customers
7	77	Female	Higher vocational training	Retired	*Sabotage:* Publishing an article on the negative experiences with the brand in a newspaper
Instrumental aggression					
8	25	Female	University degree	Student of Business Administration	*Negative word-of-mouth:* Posting a negative comment about the company's service on Facebook
9	41	Male	Higher vocational training	Entrepreneur	*Negative word-of-mouth:* Posting a picture and a negative comment about the product on Facebook and Twitter
10	45	Male	Matura	Teacher	*Consumer boycott:* Call for boycott of that brand on Facebook
11	30 and 31	Male	Elementary school	Computer scientist (freelancer) and music and light engineer	*Customer retaliation*: Refusal to show ticket in a train in return for the perceived bad performance and service they receive as customers

WEB APPENDIX W2: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON STUDY 1

Additional Information on the Research Method

Prior to the main part of our survey, we conducted an instructional manipulation check (IMC) to convert satisficing participants into diligent participants (Oppenheimer, Meyvis, and Davidenko 2009). This is especially important, as the quality of the answers strongly depends on how precisely participants read our examples of aggressive consumer behavior. Participants had to follow the instructions, otherwise they had to redo the IMC until they answered it correctly. There were two bipolar seven-point scales with poles labelled – "no" - "yes" for the first scale and "very rarely" - "very often" for the second scale (scales that without a question do not make sense). Participants were then instructed not to mark any value in the first scale ("no" - "yes") and in the second scale ("very rarely" – "very often") to mark the midpoint of the scale (i.e., the fourth point). They were also informed that this task serves to avoid random clicking. If they completed the task successfully, they could continue to rate our examples. If not, they were presented with the same task again. These participants were at the same time informed that, unfortunately, they had not followed the instructions and that they had to read the instructions again and to complete the task.

After the IMC, we presented participants with the different examples that they should rate on overall 15 dimensions (see also Table W2.1). In order to reduce the length of the survey and to avoid respondents' fatigue, we split the 15 items in three subsets and participants were randomly assigned to evaluate one of these subsets of dimensions for each of the six examples. Before we showed participants the examples, we instructed them to read each example carefully and to answer questions based on the described behavior from their own personal perspective and independently of the prior task (i.e., independently of the IMC). We also mentioned that these were real examples that actually took place. After each example, we asked participants to indicate how they perceive the consumer's behavior (or thoughts or

feelings respectively) in the various rating scales (overall 15 dimensions rated on seven-point Likert-scales ranging from 1 = “not at all” to 7 = “very much”).

Examples of Study 1

Customer retaliation 1. A customer waited in line for almost six hours to have his credit checked, only for it to be rejected. He then saved 32,052 coins over two years to pay for his next purchases at the shop. The transaction required 11 shop assistants and lasted three hours. After the incident the customer said “I spent two years putting all the coins together, it was a lot of work, but I feel that I've got my satisfaction now“ (Funches, Markley, and Davis 2009, p. 232).

Customer retaliation 2. A customer purchased a power tool with knowledge regarding their lifetime unconditional guarantee which a sales person told him was displayed on all their tools. The tool broke 14 days after purchase and the customer went to return the tool. The salesperson then said the guarantee was on hand tools only, not power tools. However, they had 90-day guarantee on power tools and then she asked him for his receipt. The customer threw the receipt away earlier because of his prior knowledge of the guarantee. They wouldn't trade or refund his money. So he went and traded the broken tool for a new tool on his own and left the store (Huefner and Hunt 2000, p. 66).

Consumer brand sabotage 1. A customer of a coffee chain bought an espresso machine for $169 as a wedding present for a friend. Unfortunately, he discovered that it was broken. He called the coffee shop several times but his complaint could not be resolved to his satisfaction. Thereupon, he collected complaints from other customers through an advertisement in the Wall Street Journal (WSJ). Furthermore, he threatened the coffee chain by warning them to either apologize to all its customers on an entire page in the WSJ or he would take out two full pages publishing the complaints he had gathered. Because the coffee chain did not apologize, he spent $ 10,000 on such an ad, criticizing the coffee shop and publishing all customer

complaints. Several news programs on TV and in newspapers reported his story. Also, he took several interviews that were shown on television. In addition, he created an anti-brand page where he shared his story (Flinn 1995).

Consumer brand sabotage 2. A consumer was bothered by the business practices of a fashion brand which burns faulty clothing, rather than giving it to charity. In an interview, the CEO said that the company rather wants the "cool kids" as customers and that "a lot of people don't belong [in their clothes], and they can't belong." After the consumer read this, he created a negative video about the brand which he uploaded to YouTube. In the video, he pointed at the exclusionary business practices of the company and made fun of the CEO by showing a very unfavorable picture of him and comparing him with an ugly, arrogant, and brutal tyrant (who is not cool himself). In the video, he requested all people to donate clothes of the fashion brand to homeless people such that they wear the clothes and thereby change the brand to an "uncool" brand for the homeless. The video was viewed by eight million people. In addition, several news programs on television and in newspapers reported his story. Later, the CEO lost his position as chairman of the board and then left the company (Glazek 2013; Karber 2013).

Negative word-of-mouth 1. A customer bought his favorite bread from his usual shop for a Sunday brunch to which he had invited his friends. When he cut the bread, he found a big bug that was baked into the bread. He was strongly bothered as this happened at a brunch with his friends and after this incident, nobody felt like eating the bread anymore. Thereupon, he took a picture of the bug in the bread and posted it on Facebook and Twitter, also mentioning the brand name of the bread (thereby linking it to the company's Facebook page and Twitter profile; Interview 9).

Negative word-of-mouth 2. A hotel manager asked a group of friends for a cash deposit of £30 per person for any possible damages. At the check-out, the hotel manager stated that he

had found cigarette burns in one of the carpets in one of the rooms and that he was keeping everyone's deposits to pay for the damage. For the guests of the hotel it was clear that the cigarette burn was not caused by them. No one in their group was a smoker and it was clear that the cigarette burn had already been there for some time because dirt and fluff on the floor could be seen through the hole in the carpet. Thereupon, one of the group described the negative experience with the hotel in a negative comment on the reviewing platform TripAdvisor (Mudhutter 2007).

Additional Information on the Sample

In our sample, 27.8% of the participants had a University degree, 25.3% apprenticeship, 18% Matura, 17.6% higher vocational training, 3.8% compulsory education, 4.4% other education, and 2% of participants had no educational qualification. Of the 683 participants, 630 (92.24%) passed the IMC in the first attempt. 42 (6.15%) participants failed the IMC once, 5 (0.73%) twice, 3 (0.44%) three times, and also 3 (0.44%) four times.

TABLE W2.1

MEAN COMPARISONS CBS VERSUS INSTRUMENTAL AGGRESSION OF STUDY 1

Component of Mental Process	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference[a]	F-Value
Emotions and cognitions				
Anger			1.07**	F(1, 1,347) = 214.81
CBS	6.25	1.08		
IA	5.17	1.67		
Frustration			.35**	F(1, 1,018) = 18.53
CBS	5.84	1.43		
IA	5.49	1.53		
Outrage			.43**	F(1, 1,024) = 41.69
CBS	6.54	1.06		
IA	6.12	1.26		
Hatred			1.21**	F(1, 1,057) = 242.80
CBS	6.18	1.23		
IA	4.97	1.51		
Hostile thoughts			1.15**	F(1, 1,037) = 206.69
CBS	6.20	1.28		
IA	5.05	1.54		
Perceived identity threat			.49**	F(1, 1,324) = 18.74
CBS	4.10	2.00		
IA	3.61	1.90		
Perceived powerlessness			.68**	F(1, 1,324) = 41.03
CBS	3.11	1.85		
IA	3.79	1.82		
Perceived betrayal			.60**	F(1, 721) = 29.36
CBS	5.00	2.03		
IA	5.60	1.60		
Motives and other variables				
Objective to harm			1.73**	F(1, 1,204) = 390.19
CBS	6.34	1.28		
IA	4.61	1.87		
Restoring equity				
CBS	6.07	1.38		
IA	5.74	1.49		
Venting negative emotions				
CBS	6.18	1.15		
IA	5.59	1.61		
Rumination			1.18**	F(1, 1,040) = 134.31
CBS	5.49	1.63		
IA	4.32	1.96		
Interaction			1.36**	F(1, 758) = 107.80
CBS	4.41	2.37		
IA	3.06	1.98		
Unwillingness to (re)engage in relationship			1.32**	F(1, 1,438) = 185.67
CBS	5.38	1.71		
IA	4.06	1.75		
Caused damage to the brand			2.33**	F(1, 1,307) = 782.64
CBS	6.02	1.27		
IA	3.68	1.86		

** $p < .01$, [a]: Due to rounding mean differences may not correspond with differences between the means in this table.

WEB APPENDIX W3: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON STUDY 2

Scenarios as Brand Stimuli

Value-based brand stimulus. When reading the newspaper, you come across an article that describes an interview with the CEO of an established fashion brand for clothing. In this interview, the CEO mentions what customers he would like the brand to have: “In every school there are the cool and popular kids, and then there are the not-so-cool kids. Candidly, we go after the cool kids – attractive kids with a great attitude and a lot of friends. A lot of people don’t belong [in our clothes], and they can’t belong. Are we exclusionary? Absolutely.”

In this newspaper article, it is also mentioned that this is not just an empty statement by the CEO and that he actually implements it. There are no jeans and t-shirts in oversize – only for slim customers or children respectively. Furthermore, in their advertisements, there are only attractive and popular kids who even make fun of the less popular kids. Also, the clothes of the newest fashion collection that could not be sold in the current season are not donated to the poor (like many other fashion brands). Instead the company burns these clothes such that the brand will not be worn by poor people. The CEO even admits this policy publicly with the following argument: “We are no brand for the poor. They shouldn’t wear our clothes at all.” He concludes the interview with the statement: ”You know, poverty pisses me off!” Below this interview, a picture shows the quite unattractive CEO.

The journalist closes the article by reporting on the practices of the brand. According to investigations, the suppliers of the fashion brand manufacture the clothes with child labor in developing countries under almost inhuman working conditions (no toilet breaks, no daylight, and bad air due to chemicals to conserve the textiles). The fashion brand forces the suppliers to lower their prices and almost drives them to such a behavior. At the same time, the fashion brand publicly supports charity events for children in developing countries and pretends to be interested in those children’s well-being.

After being informed of these facts, assume you have written a letter to the CEO in which you asked him to express himself in a more friendly manner toward all children and to cease child labor. However, the CEO has replied personally to your letter with the cynical response: “You must have been such a fat and unpopular kid yourself. To you I probably wouldn’t have sold my clothes either.”

Performance-based brand stimulus. You have bought a very expensive shirt from an established fashion brand for a child in your family. When you washed it for the first time, the shirt already lost its color and a few buttons fell off as well. Also, the child got a rash from wearing the shirt because the brand uses chemicals to conserve the textiles. The child cried because of the rash and is also sad because the shirt doesn’t look nice anymore. Since you gave the shirt to the child as a present, he/she blames you and is angry and offended.

In response, you have called the company’s service hotline and complained. On the phone, you have been stalled and put off again and again. A refund of the purchase price has been rejected with explanation that you probably haven’t washed the shirt correctly.

You have called five times and every time, there was another person on the phone and you had to present your story each time. One employee even made fun of you and did not take you seriously. Another employee recommended that you buy another shirt. Yet another employee stated that this was impossible and that you must be lying. After several follow ups, you have received a replacement of inferior quality. The shirt is also too small and in another color which has made a further bad impression on the child.

After that, an excessively high bill for the replacement shirt arrived. When you refused to pay this bill, a debt collection agency was assigned and this resulted in a record in the debt collection register for you. After paying the bill, you have then written a letter and requested the cancellation of your record in the debt collection register. The company did not consider your request even though you have paid the unjustified bill.

Finally, you have arrived at the point where you cannot rent a desired apartment after a time-consuming application as the landlord does not want to rent to anybody who has a record in the debt collection register.

Additional Information on the Pretest

Sample of the pretest. We conducted a pretest with 63 participants (46% female, M_{age} = 40.0 years). We recruited consumers from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland on the platform Clickworker and presented them with either a performance-based (n = 29) or a value-based (n = 34) brand stimulus. In our sample, 38.1% of the participants had an apprenticeship, 23.8% University degree, 15.9% higher vocational training, 14.3% Matura, 6.3% compulsory education, and 1.6% of the participants had no educational qualification.

Quality assessment concerning the scenarios in the pretest. To assess whether the brand stimuli were perceived as dealing with performance or values respectively, we asked participants to rate the two items “The scenario mostly addresses values” and “The scenario mostly addresses the performance of the brand (of the company and its employees)” on a seven-point Likert-scale with 1 = “I totally disagree” and 7 = “I totally agree”. The performance-based scenario was more strongly perceived as addressing performance (M = 5.03) than the value-based scenario (M = 3.53, $F(1, 61) = 9.77$, $p < .01$) and the value-based scenario was more strongly perceived as addressing values (M = 5.09) than the performance-based scenario (M = 3.86, $F(1, 61) = 6.35$, $p < .05$).

To ensure that we did not manipulate any unintended factor, we also assessed the severity of the two scenarios by measuring dissatisfaction ($\alpha = .80$) with the three-item scale of Grégoire and Fisher (2008) and additionally with the item “The described scenario was” “very negative” (= 1) to “very positive” (= 7). Blame attribution ($\alpha = .91$) (i.e., blaming the brand for the negative scenario) was assessed with the three-item scale of Grégoire, Laufer, and Tripp (2010) and arousal ($\alpha = .82$) with the four-item scale of Mano and Oliver (1993).

Unless indicated otherwise, we measured all items on a seven-point Likert-scale ranging from 1 = “I totally disagree” to 7 = “I totally agree.” There was no significant difference between the performance-based and the value-based scenario with regard to dissatisfaction ($M_{performance\text{-}based}$ = 5.53, $M_{value\text{-}based}$ = 5.27, F(1, 61) = .44 , *p* = .51), whether it was perceived as “very negative” (= 1) to “very positive” (= 7) ($M_{performance\text{-}based}$ = 1.79, $M_{value\text{-}based}$ = 1.50, F(1, 52) = 1.20 , *p* = .28), blame attribution ($M_{performance\text{-}based}$ = 5.48, $M_{value\text{-}based}$ = 5.93, F(1, 51) = 1.43 , *p* = .24), and arousal ($M_{performance\text{-}based}$ = 5.03, $M_{value\text{-}based}$ = 4.93, F(1, 61) = .07, *p* = .79).

Additional Information on the Experiment

Sample of the experiment. In our sample, 35.6% of the participants had an apprenticeship, 35.3% University degree, 16.6% Matura, 8.0% higher vocational training, 3.5% compulsory education, and 1.0% of the participants had no educational qualification.

Measures for the experiment. For the measures of our manipulation check, we added two items to the measurement from the pretest “The scenario mostly deals with values” and “The scenarios mostly deals with the performance of the brand (the company and its employees)”. To measure hostile thoughts, we developed the following five items based on our conceptual considerations: “I would like to punish the brand (and its employees)”, “I have the impulse of damaging a store or building of the brand”, “I have the impulse to attack the brand (and its employees)”, “I have the urge to insult the brand (and its employees)”, “I have the urge to say something nasty to the brand (and its employees)”. Furthermore, to measure participants’ intention to terminate the relationship, we developed the two items “even if the brand (and its employees) apologized or offered me a refund, I would terminate my relationship with the brand and never purchase products of that brand again” and “In case the brand apologized or offered a refund, I would (again) become a loyal customer of that brand” which was reverse-coded.

TABLE W3.1

MEAN COMPARISONS OF STUDY 2

Measurement Construct	Mean	Standard Deviation	Mean Difference[a]	F-Value/ P-Value
Pretest				
Manipulation check				
Addresses performance			1.51**	F(1, 61) = 9.77
Performance-based	5.03	1.74		
Value-based	3.53	2.03		
Addresses values			1.23*	F(1, 61) = 6.35
Performance-based	3.86	1.75		
Value-based	5.09	2.07		
Severity of the scenarios				
Dissatisfaction			.25	F(1, 61) = .44 , *p* = .51
Performance-based	5.53	1.56		
Value-based	5.27	1.49		
Very negative – very positive			.29	F(1, 52) = 1.20 , *p* = .28
Performance-based	1.79	1.18		
Value-based	1.50	.90		
Appraisal				
Blame attribution			.45	F(1, 51) = 1.43 , *p* = .24
Performance-based	5.48	1.67		
Value-based	5.93	1.23		
Arousal			.09	F(1, 61) = .07, *p* = .79
Performance-based	5.03	1.43		
Value-based	4.93	1.27		
Main experiment				
Manipulation check				
Addresses performance			1.94**	F(1, 287) = 91.85
Performance-based	4.94	1.63		
Value-based	3.01	1.81		
Addresses values			1.62**	F(1, 280) = 78.90
Performance-based	3.93	1.66		
Value-based	5.55	1.42		
Perceived credibility of the scenario			.33	F(1, 287) = 2.46, *p* = .12
Performance-based	4.33	1.77		
Value-based	4.00	1.84		
Emotions and cognitions				
Anger			1.00**	F(1, 26) = 18.59
CBS	6.25	.85		
IA	5.25	1.71		
Hatred			1.01*	F(1, 259) = 6.78
CBS	6.18	1.29		
IA	5.17	1.56		
Hostile thoughts			1.53**	F(1, 259) = 17.36
CBS	4.94	1.66		
IA	3.41	1.45		

** $p < .01$, * $p < .05$ [a]: Due to rounding mean differences may not correspond with differences between the means in this table.

WEB APPENDIX W4: RESEARCH QUESTIONS

TABLE W4.1

OVERVIEW OF THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Research Questions	
RQ_1	What is the role of contingency factors related to the consumer (e.g., gender, type A personality), the brand (e.g., brand equity), and the consumer–brand relationship (e.g., brand attitude) in the consumer's choice of aggression path?
RQ_2	What are the technological, socio-cultural, and market-related factors that make a consumer more likely to engage in CBS?
RQ_3	How do interactions with other consumers affect the potential brand saboteur's choice of aggression path?
RQ_4	What drives the credibility of CBS activities among other consumers?
RQ_5	What factors drive the intensity of diffusion of information about CBS activities among other consumers?
RQ_6	When and how should companies respond to CBS: ex ante to prevent it, or only ex post, after it has occurred, to reduce its damage?
RQ_7	Which CBS prevention approach should be taken by companies, and how should each approach be implemented? Should companies mollify potential brand saboteurs or, rather, actively deter them from engaging in CBS?
RQ_8	Which organizational structures and processes, cultures, and marketing capabilities enable firms to prevent CBS and to adequately respond to CBS once it has occurred?
RQ_9	When and how should companies adapt their CRM strategies, systems, and processes to deal with the phenomenon of CBS?

WEB APPENDIX W5: *REFERENCES*

Flinn, John (1995), "Starbucks Got Him Steamed Now He Fights Coffee Chain," *The Baltimore Sun*, (June 05), [available at http://articles.baltimoresun.com/1995-06-05/features/1995156107_1_starbucks-espresso-apology].

Funches, Venessa, Melissa Markley, and Lenita Davis (2009), "Reprisal, Retribution and Requital: Investigating Customer Retaliation," *Journal of Business Research*, 62 (2), 231–38.

Glazek, Christopher (2013), "The Story Behind 'Fitch the Homeless,'" *The New Yorker*, (June 19), [available at http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-story-behind-fitch-the-homeless].

Grégoire, Yany and Robert J. Fisher (2008), "Customer Betrayal and Retaliation: When Your Best Customers Become Your Worst Enemies," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36 (2), 247–61.

———, Daniel Laufer, and Thomas M. Tripp (2010), "A Comprehensive Model of Customer Direct and Indirect Revenge: Understanding the Effects of Perceived Greed and Customer Power," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38 (6), 738–58.

Huefner, Jonathan C. and H. Keith Hunt (2000), "Consumer Retaliation as a Response to Dissatisfaction," *Journal of Consumer Satisfaction, Dissatisfaction and Complaining Behavior*, 13, 61–82.

Karber, Greg (2013), "Abercrombie & Fitch Gets a Brand Readjustment: #FitchTheHomeless," video, (May 5), [available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O95DBxnXiSo].

Mano, Haim and Richard L. Oliver (1993), "Assessing the Dimensionality and Structure of the Consumption Experience: Evaluation, Feeling, and Satisfaction," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20 (3), 451-66.

Mudhutter (2007), “Avoid Like the Plague,” TripAdvisor review of the Caprice Hotel, Whitley Bay, UK, (February 13), [available at http://www.tripadvisor.com/ShowUserReviews-g190932-d626790-r6785812-Caprice_Hotel-Whitley_Bay_Tyne_and_Wear_England.html#CHECK_RATES_CONT]

Oppenheimer, Daniel M., Tom Meyvis, and Nicolas Davidenko (2009), “Instructional Manipulation Checks: Detecting Satisficing to Increase Statistical Power,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 45 (4), 867–72.

Copyright of Journal of Marketing is the property of American Marketing Association and its content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

Manuscript II

When and Why Does Consumer Brand Sabotage Cause Damage among Other Consumers? [2]

Andrea Kähr [a] and Bettina Nyffenegger [a]

[a] University of Bern, Institute of Marketing and Management, Engehaldenstrasse 4, 3012 Bern

[2] It is intended to publish this manuscript in an international marketing journal in a modified version. It is based on a joint work with Bettina Nyffenegger.

When and Why Does Consumer Brand Sabotage

Cause Damage among Other Consumers?

Only recently, research has identified and conceptualized the new phenomenon of consumer brand sabotage as a form of hostile aggression where hostile consumers have the dominant motive of harming a brand. Despite its high damage potential, academic research has not yet examined whether and how CBS affects other consumers and damages the brand. This article addresses this research gap and examines the potential damage of CBS and the processes by which CBS affects other consumers' attitude toward the brand and subsequent behavior (i.e., purchase intention and negative word-of-mouth [NWOM]). Based on an online-experiment with 186 participants which were confronted with an actual CBS activity, this article shows that CBS can indeed damage the brand by decreasing consumers' attitude toward the brand and purchase intention and by increasing their intention to engage in NWOM. Moreover, indirect effects of CBS on consumers' attitude and subsequent behavior through consumers' cognitions (e.g., perceived betrayal) were significant for consumers with a high brand relationship quality but not for consumers with a low brand relationship quality. Thereby, this article provides additional evidence for a love-becomes-hate effect of the brand relationship quality in case of brand transgressions and derives important managerial implications.

Recently, researchers conceptualized the phenomenon of consumer brand sabotage (CBS) referring to a “deliberate behavior by customers or noncustomers who have the dominant objective of causing harm to a brand through the impairment of the brand-related associations of other consumers” (Kähr et al. 2016, p. 26). One of the best known examples of CBS resulted from the following statement of the former chief executive officer (CEO) of the fashion brand Abercrombie & Fitch (A&F): “Candidly, we go after the cool kids. We go after the attractive all-American kid with a great attitude and a lot of friends. A lot of people don’t belong [in our clothes], and they can’t belong. Are we exclusionary? Absolutely. Those companies that are in trouble are trying to target everybody: young, old, fat, skinny” (Denizet-Lewis 2006). To vent the outrage generated by this statement, the consumer Greg Karber created a viral sabotage video about A&F in which he asked consumers to donate their clothing of A&F to homeless people in order to reposition the brand as “the uncool brand for the homeless” (Karber 2013). He uploaded the video to YouTube where it was viewed by more than eight million people and several news programs on television and in newspapers reported the story (Glazek 2013). Later, the CEO lost his position as chairman of the board and left the company (Peterson 2014; Trefis Team 2014). However, to date, it is unknown what consequences CBS bears for the brand and how CBS activities affect other consumers who observe it. For example, in the case of the CBS video on A&F by Greg Karber, did his CBS video really damage the brand? Did it affect consumers’ attitude and subsequent behavior toward A&F? Or did these consumers just watch the video as mere entertainment, remaining unaffected by its negative description of the brand?

In their article, Kähr et al. (2016) examined the complex psychological mechanisms that lead consumers to sabotage a brand. Thereby, they studied the dyadic relationship between the brand and the brand saboteur as a hostile aggressor. However, whether and how

CBS affects other consumers who observe the CBS activity has not yet been examined by research. This paper gives further insights for understanding the consequences of CBS and the processes by which a CBS activity affects other consumers, enabling managers to intervene and take adequate measures to decrease a possible damage of CBS. Thereby, it focuses on three key questions: (1) Does a CBS activity affect other consumers' attitude toward a brand and their subsequent behavior, i.e., their purchase intention and intention to engage in negative word-of-mouth (NWOM)? (2) How are consumers affected by a CBS activity: i.e., which psychological processes and cognitions lead to the change in consumers' attitude toward the brand, purchase intention, and NWOM? (3) To what extent can a strong brand relationship of these consumers buffer the negative effects of a CBS activity?

In general, the focus of research has been on positive consumer behavior such as customer engagement, especially value co-creation as for example in personalized customer experiences and customer participation in the development of new products, and its positive consequences for companies (e.g., Prahalad and Ramaswamy 2004; Sashi 2012; van Doorn et al. 2010). In comparison, research on negative consumer behavior and its impact on other consumers and the involved company is rather scarce. In this context, existing studies have primarily examined NWOM and its consequences for companies' sales (e.g., Chang et al. 2015; Ye, Law, and Gu 2009). Far less research has addressed the damage of other forms of negative consumer behavior such as customer revenge (e.g., Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009) and consumer boycott behavior (e.g., Koku 2012), and, to the best of our knowledge, no study examined the consequences of CBS.

In better understanding the processes by which a CBS activity by a consumer brand saboteur affects other consumers, the role of consumers' cognitions such as perceived betrayal are highly relevant. In the context of brand transgressions, prior research has already reported that perceived betrayal which arises due to a violation of relational norms (Fitness

2001; Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009) acts as strong predictor of consumers' subsequent behavior such as revenge (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). At the same time, a violation of relational norms has been shown to decrease consumers' attitude toward the brand (Aggarwal 2004). However, to the best of our knowledge, research on the consequences of negative consumer behavior has not yet looked at the cognitions of other consumers who were not directly involved in the brand transgression but who observe such consumer behavior and how these cognitions affect their attitude toward the brand and subsequent behavior.

As brand saboteurs try to harm a brand by impairing the brand-related associations of other consumers, the brand relationship of these consumers represents a key aspect in the processes by which CBS affects these consumers. In the context of service failures, prior research has reported non-conclusive effects for the role of the brand relationship quality in attitude formation and subsequent behavior of consumers involved in the service failure. In general, a high-quality relationship should buffer the negative effects of a product or service failure as the consumer is more tolerant with regard to brand transgressions (Hess, Ganesan, and Klein 2003; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran 1998). However, recent research suggests that the contrary may also occur. Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (2009) reported that those consumers with a high brand relationship quality perceived a service failure as betrayal and, consequently, felt a stronger desire for revenge than consumers with a low brand relationship quality. In contrast to existent literature which examined the role of the brand relationship quality of the consumer directly involved in the service failure, in our setting, we focus on the role of the brand relationship quality of a non-involved consumer who observes a CBS activity resulting from a prior brand failure (e.g., service failure or brand behavior in conflict with the consumer brand saboteur's values).

This paper starts with the development of hypotheses related to the potential negative effects of a CBS activity on other consumers who observe it and the processes by which a

CBS activity affects these consumers. Subsequently, these hypotheses are tested with an online-experiment where 186 participants are confronted with an actual CBS activity. Finally, this paper closes with a discussion of the results and relevant implications for academic research and practice.

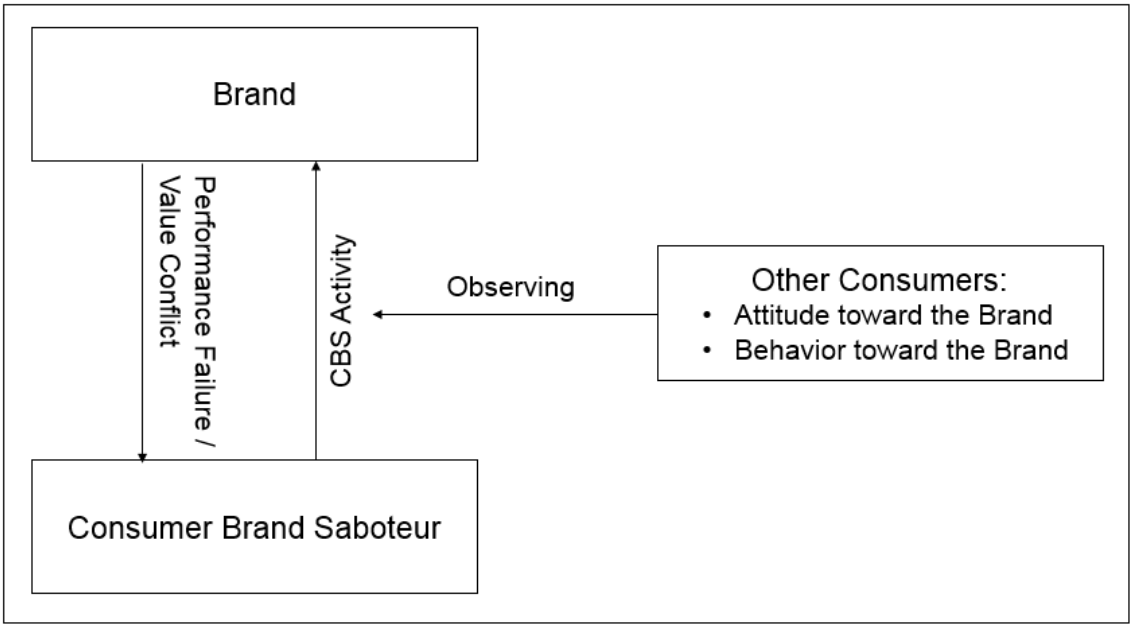
Conceptual Background

The Effect of Exposure to a CBS Activity on Consumers' Perception of and Behavior toward the Brand

In contrast to research on the impact of brand transgressions which studies the direct effect of brand transgressions on the customer involved (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Smith and Bolton 1998; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran 1998), this study examines how CBS as a possible result of a brand transgression affects other consumers. Thus, in our research setting, we are not looking at the dyad between the brand and the consumer involved (in our context the consumer brand saboteur) but at the consumer that observes a CBS activity and how this affects his or her attitude toward the brand and subsequent behavior (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Conceptual Model



In examining the effect of a CBS activity on other consumers' perception of and behavior toward the brand, we focus on key constructs that are highly relevant in the context of the damage of CBS: (1) consumers' attitude toward the brand because of the strong link between attitudes and individuals' subsequent behavior (Ajzen 2001) and (2) consumers' purchase intention which serves as proxy for their actual behavior, influencing companies' sales. Prior research reported that more and more consumers rely on other consumers' experiences with products and services to form their attitude and make purchase decisions (Bughin, Doogan, and Vetvik 2010; Sparks, So, and Bradley 2016). These findings can be explained by the higher trustworthiness attributed to consumer reviews on products, services, or brands by other consumers compared to the communication from brands or companies (Chiou and Cheng 2003; Dickinger 2011; Park, Lee, and Han 2007; Senecal and Nantel 2004). Another reason why consumers increasingly base their attitude toward the brand and purchase intention on other consumers' experience reports can be found in their function to reduce the risk in a buying situation. As products and especially services are difficult to evaluate prior to consumption, other customers' experience reports can serve as a substitute of consumers' own experiences and, thereby, reduce the risk in a buying decision (Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan 2008). Based on these findings on consumer reviews, we expect that a CBS activity should also be regarded as more trustworthy than company communication as the message is communicated by a consumer and not the company. Thus, the CBS activity could serve as a substitute for consumers' own experiences, influencing their attitude toward the brand and purchase intention.

Another highly relevant construct in the context of the damage of CBS is NWOM because it represents an efficient mechanism to spread the message of CBS further. It refers to negative "informal communications directed at other consumers about the ownership, usage, or characteristics of particular goods and services and/or their sellers" (Westbrook 1987, p.

261). Research on the motives for NWOM found that consumers engage in NWOM to vent their negative emotions associated with a negative consumption experience (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004). As such, a CBS activity can serve as a source for such negative emotions associated with a negative brand experience for other consumers. As conceptualized by Kähr et al. (2016), brand saboteurs have made a severely negative experience with the brand based on its performance (e.g., product failure) or based on its behavior that stands in conflict with their values (e.g., use of child labor in offshore factories). Consumers who observe the CBS activity may experience the same or similar negative emotions as the brand saboteur because the brand's behavior as described in the CBS activity might contradict what they would have expected of the brand. Consequently, they may feel the urge to talk about the CBS activity and the brand's behavior with others to vent their negative emotions and, thus, engage in NWOM.

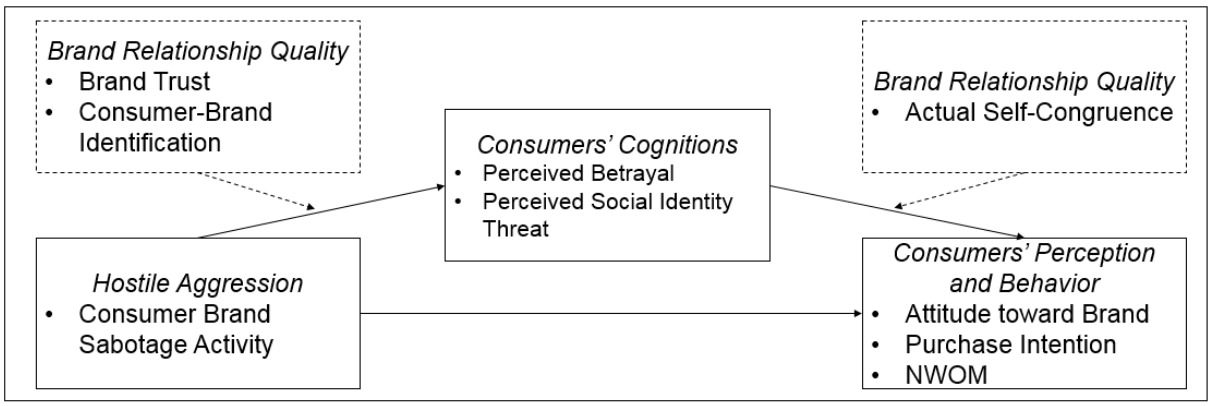
Instead of the negative emotions being triggered by unfulfilled expectations with regard to the brand's behavior, it is also possible that empathic reactions can cause the negative emotions of the consumers who observe the CBS activity. According to research in social psychology, empathy refers to "an affective state that stems from the apprehension of another's emotional state or condition, and that is congruent with it" (Eisenberg and Miller 1987, p. 91). Furthermore, recent empirical findings in neuroscience and social psychology state that empathy could be produced by an action representation which in turn triggers the emotional responses of empathic individuals which indicate that empathy arises automatically and nonconsciously (Carr et al. 2003; Chartrand and Bargh 1999). Thus, consumers who observe a CBS activity of another consumer may automatically and nonconsciously share his or her negative emotions through empathic reactions. Additionally, in their meta-analysis, Eisenberg and Miller (1987) reported that empathy leads to prosocial behavior such as helping others. In a marketing context, research on advertisements found that watching advertising dramas led to sympathy and empathy, affecting consumers' attitude toward the advertisement (Escalas

and Stern 2003). Thus, observing a CBS activity by another consumer may lead to empathic responses by other consumers, which may decrease their attitude toward the brand. Observing a CBS activity could also motivate them to engage in prosocial behavior such as protecting other consumers from the negative experience the saboteur made or helping the saboteur by sharing the content of the CBS activity with others, i.e., by engaging in NWOM. In this case, the negative effect of CBS does not just end with the consumer who has seen the CBS activity but it may spread further. Therefore, based on research on word-of-mouth as well as research on empathy from social psychology, we suggest (see Figure 2):

> **H_1**: Consumers who have been exposed to a CBS activity have (a) a more negative attitude toward the brand, (b) a lower purchase intention, and (c) a higher intention to talk negatively about the brand (compared to those who have not been exposed to a CBS activity).

FIGURE 2

Overall Conceptual Model



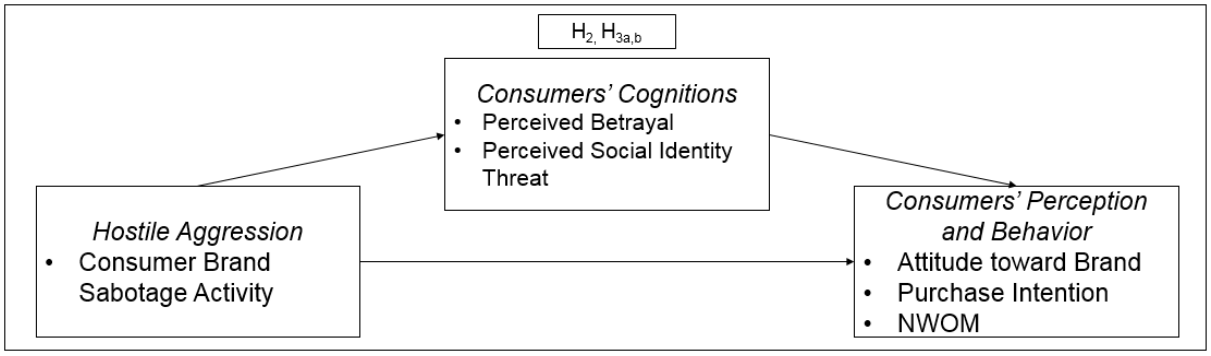
The Mediating Effect of Consumers' Perceived Betrayal and Social Identity Threat

Besides the question of whether or not consumers' are affected by observing a CBS activity, a second relevant question is how consumers are affected: i.e., which psychological processes and cognitions lead to the change in consumers' attitude toward the brand, purchase intention

and NWOM? Prior research on brand transgressions identified the cognition of perceived betrayal which arises due to a violation of relational norms (Fitness 2001; Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009) as strong predictor of consumers' subsequent behavior such as revenge (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). At the same time, a violation of relational norms has been shown to decrease consumers' attitude toward the brand (Aggarwal 2004). Consequently, consumers' perceived betrayal could be an interesting mechanism affecting consumers' subsequent attitude toward the brand after exposure to a CBS activity. On the other hand, prior research showed that consumers use brands to express who they are and to communicate their social identities (Belk 1988; Escalas and Bettman 2003; Tuškej, Golob, and Podnar 2013). In case their social identity is threatened (e.g., when the brand has a very negative public image and the brand can no longer be used to positively distinguish oneself from other out-groups), research in social psychology suggests that individuals try to leave or dissociate themselves from the group the social identity threat stemmed from (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Thus, consumers who experience a perceived social identity threat after exposure to a CBS activity may try to disengage with the brand by no longer purchasing the brand and by talking negatively about it. Therefore, in our context, we focus on the two key cognitions from social psychology, perceived betrayal and social identity threat, to examine the process by which CBS affects other consumers (see Figure 3).

FIGURE 3

Mediation Model



Perceived Betrayal. Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (2009, p. 21) defined betrayal as "a customer's belief that a company has intentionally violated what is normative in the context of their relationship." In their study, they found that customers with a high brand relationship quality perceived a transgression as a violation of the normative rules in a relationship and felt betrayed by the brand. Thereby, they examined the relationship between the customer who experienced the brand transgression and the brand that caused the transgression. In contrast, our study examines the effect of the consumer–brand relationship in the context where the consumer is only an observer of the brand transgression (here: the brand's behavior described in the CBS activity) and is not directly involved. In the context of interpersonal betrayal, Fitness (2001, p. 6) conceptualizes betrayal somewhat more open than Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (2009) as "any kind of relational transgression may be appraised by relationship partners as a betrayal, depending on the extent to which relational expectations and trust have been violated." Consequently, in the context of CBS, if the observing consumer perceives the brand's behavior (as criticized in the CBS activity) as a violation of one of his or her relational expectations or trust, he or she might feel betrayed, similarly to when he or she was directly involved in the brand transgression. Furthermore, prior research has not only shown that perceived betrayal leads to behavioral outcomes such as revenge (Fitness 2001; Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). Aggarwal (2004) also reported that a violation of relational norms, which represents the basis for betrayal, can decrease consumers' attitude toward the brand. Therefore, we suggest that an exposure to a CBS activity leads to perceived betrayal by consumers which in turn decreases their attitude toward the brand.

> **H_2**: The impact of CBS exposure on other consumers' attitude toward the brand is mediated by their perceived betrayal.

Perceived Social Identity Threat. Consumers use products or services to express who they are (Belk 1988; Tuškej, Golob, and Podnar 2013). According to Escalas and Bettman

(2003), consumers use products and brands to form self-images and to show these images to other consumers or to themselves. The expression of self-images to relevant others derives from social identity theory which states that a social identity consists of “those aspects of an individual’s self-image that derive from the social categories to which he perceives himself as belonging” (Tajfel and Turner 1986, p. 16). Such social categories or groups can involve gender, race, demographic categories, and membership in organizations (Bhattacharya, Rao, and Glynn 1995) or brands (Escalas and Bettman 2003; Lam et al. 2010; Stokburger-Sauer, Ratneshwar, and Sen 2012). As such, consumers can purchase and talk about their experiences with brands (i.e., engage in word-of-mouth) to express their belonging to this social category or group and, thereby, communicate their social identities.

Social identity theory postulates that individuals are strongly motivated toward contrasting their in-groups favorably with any outgroup (Tajfel and Turner 1979, 1986). Moreover, social identity theory states that individuals aspire a positive social identity which can be achieved by belonging to a group that is in a positive way distinctive from relevant out-groups (Scheepers and Ellemers 2005). As such, purchasing clothes from a brand like A&F which claims to be a brand for the young and cool kids may cause a consumer to feel belonging to A&F and, consequently, to the cool and young kids which in turn forms part of his or her social identity. When individuals can no longer distinguish their in-groups favorably from any outgroup, a state of social identity threat arises (Scheepers and Ellemers 2005). A CBS activity can put a brand in a severely bad light, jeopardizing the superiority of this social group (i.e., the brand) against other out-groups (other brands). As a result, a CBS activity may lead to a perceived social identity threat of the consumer who observes it. Such a perceived social identity threat is especially relevant for consumers’ purchase intention and NWOM. By purchasing products or brands and by talking about them, consumers express their belonging to a brand (see also Escalas and Bettman 2003) and, thereby, communicate their social identities

to others. Research in social psychology suggests that individuals who feel threatened in their social identity attempt to leave or detach themselves from the group in which they perceived the social identity threat (Tajfel and Turner 1986). In our context, consumers could leave the brand by stopping to purchase its products and, additionally, by talking negatively about it. Therefore, we suggest that observing a CBS activity may lead to a perceived social identity threat, decreasing the consumer's purchase intention and increasing his or her intention to engage in NWOM.

> **H3**: The impact of CBS exposure on other consumers' (a) purchase intention and (b) intention to talk negatively about the brand is mediated by their perceived social identity threat.

The Moderating Role of Brand Relationship Quality

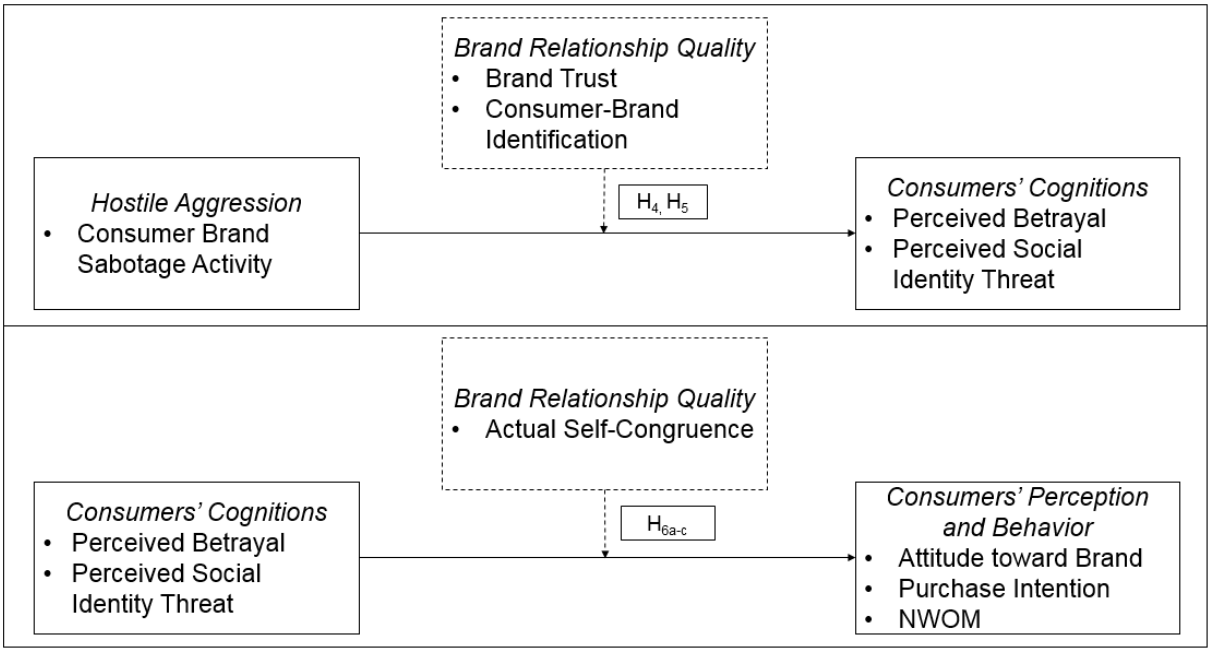
From a managerial perspective, it is not only important to understand the mechanisms by which CBS activities affect other consumers, but also to know which consumers are affected most. Will those customers that are loyal and trust the brand remain unaffected by the CBS activity? Prior research in the customer–brand transgression literature showed that the brand relationship of customers can have both a buffering and an amplifying effect on the impact of a brand transgression on the customer (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009; Hess, Ganesan, and Klein 2003; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran 1998). For example, Hess, Ganesan, and Klein (2003) reported that customers with higher expectations of relationship continuity also experienced greater satisfaction with the service performance after recovery. Similarly, Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran (1998) found evidence that prior positive experiences with the brand attenuated the effects of poor complaint handling. On the other hand, Grégoire and Fisher (2008) and Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (2009) discovered that a strong consumer–brand relationship can negatively affect consumers' behavioral intentions. In their research,

they reported that customers with a high level of brand relationship quality perceived a transgression as a violation of the normative rules in a relationship and felt stronger betrayed by the brand than consumers with a low level of brand relationship quality which in turn increased their desire for retaliation against the company.

To examine whether a strong consumer–brand relationship weakens or reinforces the effect of an exposure to a CBS activity on consumers' attitude toward the brand and subsequent behaviors, we subsequently discuss literature on the brand relationship quality more in detail (see Figure 4).

FIGURE 4

Moderation Models



Brand Relationship Quality. Brand relationship quality is generally conceptualized as higher-order construct comprising different dimensions such as satisfaction (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, and Gremler 2002; Nyffenegger et al. 2014), commitment (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, and Gremler 2002; Nyffenegger et al. 2014), trust (Grégoire, Tripp, and

Legoux 2009; Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, and Gremler 2002; Nyffenegger et al. 2014), passion (Nyffenegger et al. 2014), intimacy (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Nyffenegger et al. 2014), partner quality (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004) or social benefits (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009), and self-connection (Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004). Although the studies differ with regard to the number and type of dimensions used to conceptualize the brand relationship quality, most research agrees that satisfaction, commitment, and trust are key constructs of the relationship quality (e.g., Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Nyffenegger et al. 2014). In our context, consumers who are exposed to a CBS activity do not need to be actual customers of the brand but can also be potential customers who have not (yet) purchased products or services of the brand. Consequently, many dimensions such as (behavioral) commitment or satisfaction cannot be applied to our context because they require consumers to be actual customers of the brand. Therefore, in our context, we focus on three key constructs of relationship quality where consumers do not need to be actual customers of the brand: (1) consumers' trust in the brand, (2) consumers' identification with the brand, and (3) consumers' actual self-congruence with the brand with the latter two as forms of self-connection with the brand.

Brand Trust. Brand trust refers to "the willingness of the average consumer to rely on the ability of the brand to perform its stated function" (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001, p. 82) and allows consumers to make confident predictions about a relationship partner to meet his obligations (Nyffenegger et al. 2014). Thereby, trust consists of the two dimensions credibility and benevolence (Doney and Cannon 1997). Credibility refers to the expectancy of an individual that he or she can confide in the relationship partner's (written) word and benevolence to the relationship partner's genuine interest to behave in line with the other partner's well-being and mutual benefit. Therefore, brand trust has been identified as crucial predictor for brand loyalty as trust generates exchange relationships that are important and desired to be

maintained (Chaudhuri and Holbrook 2001). However, its intimate connection to relational expectations also makes trust essential for betrayal because the violation of these expectations or norms can lead to perceived betrayal (Fitness 2001; Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). This even holds true for consumers that are not customers of the brand but who have expectations how the relationship with the brand should work (e.g., about proper conduct in the relationship) (Fitness 2001). Therefore, in our setting, we suggest that those consumers who trust the brand most will be affected strongest by the exposure to a CBS activity in terms of their perceived betrayal. Thus, we hypothesize:

> **H_4**: The impact of CBS exposure on other consumers' perceived betrayal will be stronger for consumers with high trust in the brand than for those with low trust in the brand.

Consumer–Brand Identification. Lam et al. (2010, p. 235) define consumer–brand identification (CBI) as "a consumer's psychological state of perceiving, feeling, and valuing his or her belongingness with a brand." CBI has also been referred to as social identification because organizations, groups, and brands are seen as social objects (Kim, Han, and Park 2001) and brands that consumers identify themselves with help to express their social identity (Escalas and Bettman 2003). Therefore, in the context of social identity threats, we expect that only those consumers will perceive a social identity threat who have a high CBI. On the other hand, those consumers with low CBI should not perceive a social identity threat after observing a CBS activity. Thus, we suggest:

> **H_5**: The impact of CBS exposure on other consumers' perceived social identity threat will be stronger for consumers with a high CBI than for those with a low CBI.

Actual Self-Congruence. Malär et al. (2011, p. 36) defined consumers' actual self-congruence with the brand as "the consumer's perception of the fit between the actual self and the

brand's personality." Thereby, the self refers to the "totality of the individual's thoughts and feelings having reference to himself as an object" (Rosenberg 1979, p. 7) and is often conceptualized from a multidimensional perspective in that the self consists of the actual, ideal, social, and ideal social self (Sirgy 1982). The actual self is how the consumer perceives him- or herself (in contrast to the ideal self, which refers to how a consumer would like to perceive him- or herself; Sirgy 1982). According to prior research, self-congruence can reinforce consumers' responses to a brand's behavior in terms of their emotions, attitudes, and behavior (e.g., Aaker 1999; Grohmann 2009; Malär et al. 2011). For example, Grohmann (2009) found that consumers' affective, attitudinal, and behavioral responses related to the brand were positively affected by their self-congruence with respect to consumers' sex role identity and masculine and feminine brand personality. Similarly, Malär et al. (2011) reported a significant positive relationship between actual-self-congruence and emotional brand attachment. Therefore, in the context of perceived betrayal and social identity threat, we suggest that consumers' actual self-congruence with a brand has a reinforcing effect on the impact of consumers' cognitions (i.e., perceived betrayal and social identity threat) on consumers' attitude toward the brand, purchase intention, and intention for NWOM. Thus, we hypothesize:

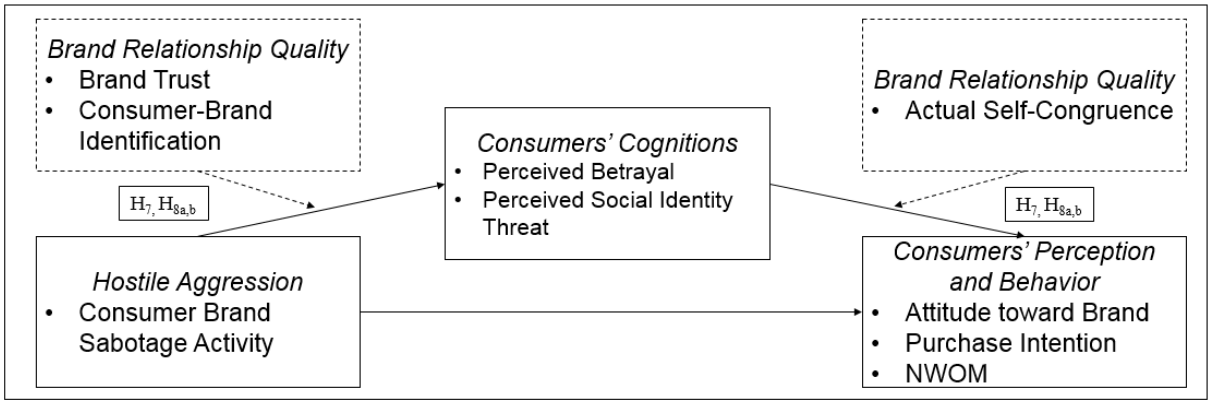
> **H_{6a}**: The impact of perceived betrayal on consumers' attitude toward the brand will be stronger for consumers with a high actual self-congruence than for those with a low actual self-congruence with the brand.
>
> **$H_{6b,c}$**: The impact of perceived social identity threat on other consumers' (b) purchase intention and (c) intention to talk negatively about the brand will be stronger for consumers with a high actual self-congruence than for those with a low actual self-congruence with the brand.

The Moderated Mediation Effects of Brand Relationship Quality with Perceived Betrayal and Social Identity Threat

Taking these moderating effects together with our hypothesized mediating effects, we suggest three moderated mediation effects where the consumers' brand relationship quality (e.g., brand trust) influences the indirect effects of an exposure to a CBS activity on consumers' attitude toward the brand and subsequent behavior via the mediators (e.g., perceived betrayal) (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5

Moderated Mediation Model



In line with literature in social psychology on interpersonal trust and betrayal (e.g., Fitness 2001) as well as recent research findings in marketing of a love-becomes-hate effect (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009), we suggest that those consumers with a high level of brand trust feel betrayed after exposure to a CBS activity, decreasing their attitude toward the brand. Those consumers with a low level of brand trust should feel less betrayed and, consequently, the effect of their perceived betrayal on their attitude toward the brand should be weaker. In addition, based on findings from prior research that self-congruence can reinforce consumers' responses to the brand with regard to their emotions, attitude, and behavior (e.g.,

Aaker 1999; Grohmann 2009; Malär et al. 2011), we suggest an enhancing effect of consumers' actual self-congruence with the brand on the effect of perceived betrayal on their attitude toward the brand. Thus, we hypothesize:

> **H_7**: Brand trust and consumers' actual-self congruence with the brand moderate the indirect effect of CBS exposure on their attitude toward the brand (through perceived betrayal). Specifically, perceived betrayal will mediate the indirect effect when brand trust and actual self-congruence are high but not when one or both are low.

As consumers who strongly identify with a brand can use this brand to express their social identity toward others (Escalas and Bettman 2003), we expect that only those consumers perceive a social identity threat who have a high CBI, decreasing their purchase intention and increasing their intention for NWOM. On the other hand, those low in CBI should perceive a lower level of social identity threat as this brand plays little part in their social identity. Consequently, the effect of a perceived social identity threat on consumers' purchase intention and NWOM should be weaker for those with low CBI than for those with high CBI. As in H_7, we also expect a reinforcing effect of consumers' actual self-congruence on the impact of perceived social identity threat on their purchase intention and intention for NWOM. Thus, we hypothesize:

> **H_8**: CBI and consumers' actual self-congruence with the brand moderate the indirect effect of CBS exposure on consumers' (a) purchase intention and (b) intention to talk negatively about the brand (through perceived social identity threat). Specifically, perceived social identity threat will mediate the indirect effect when CBI and actual self-congruence are high but not when one or both are low.

Method

We conducted an online experiment with a 2 (CBS vs. no CBS) x 2 (time) mixed-factorial design. The first factor was between subjects and the second within subject. Thereby, the no CBS condition served as control group. We recruited consumers from Austria, Germany, and Switzerland on the crowdsourcing platform Clickworker to participate in a study on consumer–brand relationships with two measurement times with an interval of two weeks in between. Unless indicated otherwise, we used seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = "completely disagree" to 7 = "completely agree" for all measures in this study.

Sample and Procedure

299 participants took part in the first study and 186 participated in the follow-up study (48.9% female, M_{age} = 30.55; 100 CBS, 86 no CBS). As we chose a CBS video in which the brand A&F was sabotaged, a brand that targets young people, we only allowed people aged 18 to 45 to participate in our experiment to enable actual self-congruence with the brand. On average, participants had a rather low brand awareness (M = 3.574, SD = 1.825), little brand experience (M = 1.914, SD = 1.432), and an average product involvement (M = 4.229, SD = 1.576). Applying a one-way independent analyses of variance (ANOVA), the profiles of initial participants at Time 1 and participants at Time 2 were compared to examine a possible response bias: gender, product involvement, brand experience, and brand awareness did not significantly differ but those who dropped out at Time 2 were significantly younger ($M_{\text{Time 1 without Time 2}}$ = 28.6, $SD_{\text{Time 1 without Time 2}}$ = 7.859) than those who completed both parts of the experiment (M = 30.6, SD = 7.193, F(1, 296) = 4.905, $p < .05$).

In the beginning of the two studies, participants had to indicate a linking variable based on their initials and their birth year in order to match their responses at both times as the

studies were completely anonymous. Subsequently, we measured their mood. At Time 1, participants were then asked about their brand awareness and given some general information about the brand A&F. Afterwards, we measured the moderators, mediators, dependent variables, control variables, and socio-demographics (i.e., age, gender, and education). At Time 2, we randomly assigned participants to either the CBS video, "Fitch the Homeless" by Greg Karber (Karber 2013), or a filler video, which contained a news report on Google's autonomous car (Computer Bild TV 2014). After the videos, we measured the manipulation check, mediators, dependent variables, and control variables.

Independent Variable

At Time 2, participants were randomly assigned to either the CBS condition or the control group (no CBS). In the CBS condition, participants watched the CBS video about A&F by Greg Karber as described in the introduction of this paper. To ensure that participants understood the message, German subtitles were displayed and also copied as a text below the video. In the control condition (no CBS), participants watched a filler video by Computer Bild TV which showed a news report on Google's autonomous car (Computer Bild TV 2014). It started with some information on the current state of the research and showed a consumer driving in an autonomous car for the first time. Both videos lasted 2.24 minutes. At Time 2, we asked participants, how credible the content of the videos was (see also Bonifield and Cole 2007). A one-way independent ANOVA showed that there was no significant difference between the credibility of the filler video (M = 5.198, SD = 1.446) and the CBS video (M = 4.880, SD = 1.506, $F(1, 184) = 2.135$, $p = .146$).

Pretest

To control that our filler video had no significant effect on consumers' mood, we conducted a pretest among 45 consumers (40% female, $M_{age} = 38.4$) where we recruited consumers from

Austria, Germany, and Switzerland on the platform Clickworker. To assure that the video did not affect mood, we measured mood with the two-item seven-point Likert scale (1 = “very bad” / ”very sad”), 7 = “very good” / ”very happy”) by Hansen and Wänke (e.g., “How do you feel at the moment?”; 2011) before (Cronbach’s α = .879) and after (Cronbach’s α = .888) exposure to the filler video. A paired-samples t-test showed that there was no significant difference between the mood before (M = 5.111, SE = .143) and after the video (M = 5.244, SE = .145, t(44) = –1.337, *p* = .188).

Manipulation Check

To make sure that participants perceived the video of Greg Karber as CBS, we asked them to indicate to what degree they felt that the producer of the video intended to harm A&F and to what degree the producer had the objective of harming A&F (Cronbach’s α = .979). With M = 4.590 (SD = 1.832), participants did perceive the video of Greg Karber as CBS.

Moderating, Mediating, Dependent, and Control Variables

Brand trust, CBI, and consumers’ actual self-congruence with the brand were measured as moderators and perceived betrayal and social identity threat as mediators. The moderators were measured only at Time 1 (pre-measure) and the mediators at Time 1 (pre-measure) and Time 2 (post-measure). Consumers’ attitude toward the brand, purchase intention, and intention for NWOM were measured at both times as dependent variables (pre- and post-measures).

Brand trust was measured with the four-item scale by Nyffenegger et al. (e.g., “I trust A&F,” Cronbach’s α = .945; 2014), CBI with the six-item scale from Kim, Han, and Park (e.g., “When I talk about this brand, I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they’,” Cronbach’s α = .916; 2001), actual self-congruence with the two-item scale by Malär et al. (e.g., “The personality of brand A&F is consistent with how I see myself (my actual self),” Cronbach’s α =

.933; 2011), perceived betrayal with a four-item scale adapted from Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (e.g., "When I think of A&F, I feel betrayed," Cronbach's $\alpha_{\text{Time 1}}$ = .943, $\alpha_{\text{Time 2}}$ = .966; 2009), perceived social identity threat with a three-item scale adapted from Jetten, Postmes, and McAuliffe (e.g., "When I think of A&F, I feel threatened," Cronbach's $\alpha_{\text{Time 1}}$ = .891, $\alpha_{\text{Time 2}}$ = .892; 2002), brand attitude with the five-item scale using a seven-point semantic differential (e.g., "unappealing" – "appealing," Cronbach's $\alpha_{\text{Time 1}}$ = .951, $\alpha_{\text{Time 2}}$ = .957) and purchase intention with the five-item scale again using a seven-point semantic differential both from Spears and Singh (e.g., "never" – "definitely," Cronbach's $\alpha_{\text{Time 1}}$ = .963, $\alpha_{\text{Time 2}}$ = .979; 2004), and NWOM with the three-item scale from Romani, Grappi, and Bagozzi (e.g., "I intend to say negative things about A&F to friends, relatives, and other people," Cronbach's $\alpha_{\text{Time 1}}$ = .954, $\alpha_{\text{Time 2}}$ = .966; 2012) (see Table B.1 in Appendix B for all items).

Because consumers' experience and knowledge of the brand and its products affect their attitude and behavior (see also Petty and Cacioppo 1986), we measured participants' product involvement, brand awareness, and brand experience as controls at Time 1. To ensure that our effects are not the result of recent contact with the brand, we asked participants' at Time 1 and 2 when they last came in contact with the brand. Also, we measured participants' mood at Time 1 and 2 because participants' transient mood state can affect their responses (Podsakoff et al. 2003). Finally, we requested our participants to indicate whether they had already seen the video as this might influence the videos' impact on our dependent variables.

We measured product involvement with the five-item scale of Malär et al. (e.g., "Because of my personal attitudes, I feel that clothes ought to be important to me," Cronbach's α = .967; 2011), brand awareness with the two-item scale together with the three-item scale for brand associations from Yoo and Donthu (e.g., "I can recognize A&F among other competing brands," Cronbach's α = .896; 2001) and combined the scales for brand experience and product usage / ownership from Yoo and Donthu (2001) to measure brand experience with a three-

item scale (e.g., “Have you ever bought A&F?,” Cronbach’s α = .946). Mood was again measured with the two-item scale from Hansen and Wänke (Cronbach’s $\alpha_{\text{Time 1}}$ = .881, $\alpha_{\text{Time 2}}$ = .946; 2011). Regarding their last contact with the brand, we asked participants at Time 1 to indicate when they last came in contact with A&F (1 = “less than a week,” 2 = “1-3 weeks,” 3 = “1-3 months,” 4 = “4-6 months,” 5 = “7-12 months,” 6 = “more than a year,” and 7 = “I have never come in contact with A&F prior to this study”). When they already came in contact with A&F, we asked them to indicate the valence of this last contact on three seven-point semantic differentials ranging from 1= “very negative” to 7 = “very positive,” 1 = “very unpleasant” to 7 = “very pleasant,” and 1 = “very bad” to 7 = “very good” (Cronbach’s $\alpha_{\text{Time 1}}$ = .973). At Time 2, we asked them to indicate how many times they have come in contact with A&F since our last survey (1 = “never,” 2 = “1-3 times,” 3 = “4-6 times,” 4 = “7-10 times,” and 5 = “more than 10 times”). To indicate the valence of their last contact, we used the same scale as at Time 1 (Cronbach’s $\alpha_{\text{Time 2}}$ = .982). At Time 2, we also asked them whether they had already seen the video: 2.3% had already seen the filler video and 6% the CBS video.

Results

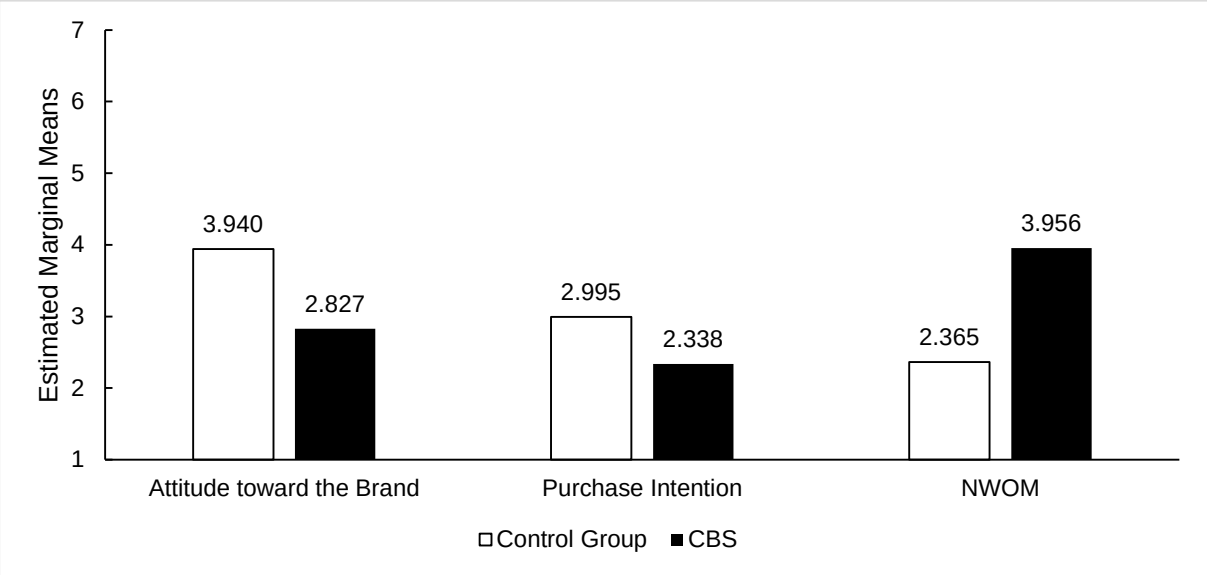
The Negative Effect of an Exposure to a CBS Activity on Consumers’ Perception of and Behavior toward the Brand – The Baseline Effect

To test the baseline effect of an exposure to a CBS activity on consumers’ attitude toward the brand, purchase intention, and intention for NWOM, we conducted a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with the dependent variables at Time 1 as well as our control variables as covariates. Using Roy’s largest root, there was a significant effect of CBS exposure on consumers’ attitude toward the brand, purchase intention, and intention for NWOM (Θ = .374, $F(3, 169) = 21.080$, $p < .001$) (see Figure 6 and Table B.2 in Appendix B). Those participants who watched the CBS video had a significantly lower attitude toward the brand (EMM = 2.827), purchase intention (EMM = 2.338), and a higher intention to talk negatively about

the brand (EMM = 3.956) than those who have seen the filler video ($EMM_{brand\ attitude}$ = 3.940, $EMM_{purchase\ intention}$ = 2.995, EMM_{NWOM} = 2.365). Among the control variables, brand experience had a significant effect on the dependent variables at Time 2. However, results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis. Thus, these results show that a CBS activity can indeed harm the brand by decreasing consumers' attitude toward the brand and purchase intention and by increasing consumers' intention to engage in NWOM about the brand, providing evidence for hypotheses $H_{1a\text{-}c}$.

FIGURE 6

Baseline Effect of the Exposure to a CBS Activity on Consumers' Attitude toward the Brand, Purchase Intention, and NWOM



The Mediating Effect of Consumers' Perceived Betrayal and Social Identity Threat

We conducted mediation analyses using ordinary least squares path analysis with PROCESS model 4 (bootstrapping of 10,000 samples; Hayes 2013) to examine the mechanism by which the CBS activity had an effect on our dependent variables.

Attitude toward the brand. We conducted a first mediation analysis with CBS as independent variable (0 = control group, 1 = CBS), attitude toward the brand at Time 2 as dependent variable and perceived betrayal at Time 2 as mediator with attitude toward the brand and

perceived betrayal at Time 1 as well as our control variables as covariates. We also included perceived social identity threat at Time 1 and 2 as covariates into our analysis as perceived betrayal and social identity threat showed a high correlation (r = .733, VIF = 2.160). However, the degree of discriminant validity based on the requirements of Fornell and Larcker (1981) was sufficient for these two constructs. According to them, discriminant validity is given if the average variance extracted (AVE) is higher than the squared correlations between the respective constructs. In our case, the AVE for perceived betrayal (AVE = .876) and social identity threat (AVE = .742) both exceeded the squared correlation of the two constructs (r^2 = .537). With said covariates included, we found a non-significant indirect effect (ab = –.039) where the bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval included zero (–.1265, .0208). When we excluded perceived social identity threat at Time 1 and 2 from the analysis, the indirect effect was significant (ab = –.303) where the bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) did not include zero (–.4938, –.1528). Thus, exposure to the CBS video increased consumers' perceived betrayal (a = 1.111), which in turn decreased their attitude toward the brand (b = –.273). Independent of consumers' perceived betrayal, the exposure to a CBS activity decreased their attitude toward the brand ($c' = -.811$, $p < .001$). Among the control variables, brand experience had a significant effect on brand attitude at Time 2. However, results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis (see Table B.3 in Appendix B). These results show that an exposure to a CBS activity increases consumers' perceived betrayal which in turn decreases their attitude toward the brand, providing some support for hypothesis H_2. However, this effect was only observed when perceived social identity threat was excluded from the analysis.

Purchase Intention. We conducted a further mediation analysis with CBS as independent variable, purchase intention at Time 2 as dependent variable and perceived social identity threat at Time 2 as mediator with purchase intention and perceived social identity threat at

Time 1, perceived betrayal at Time 1 and 2 as well as our control variables as covariates. As can be seen in Table B.4 in Appendix B, participants who watched the CBS video experienced a stronger social identity threat than those who watched the filler video (a = .443) and participants who perceived a stronger social identity threat reported a lower intention to purchase products of A&F (b = –.202). A bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect (ab = –.089) was entirely below zero (–.2002, –.0086). Independent of participants' perceived social identity threat, watching the CBS video decreased participants purchase intention at the 10% significance level (c′ = –.315, p = .095). Among the control variables, brand awareness had a significant effect on perceived social identity threat at Time 2 and brand experience and the last contact at Time 2 on purchase intention at Time 2. However, results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis.

NWOM. A further mediation analysis with CBS as independent variable, perceived social identity threat at Time 2 as mediator, and NWOM at Time 2 as dependent variable, again with perceived social identity threat and NWOM at Time 1, perceived betrayal at Time 1 and 2 as well as our control variables as covariates revealed similar results. Consumers who were exposed to the CBS video perceived a stronger social identity threat than those of the control group (a = .469) and consumers who perceived a stronger social identity threat reported a higher intention to talk negatively about A&F (b = .364). A bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect (ab = .171) was above zero (.0221, .4095). Independent of participants' perceived social identity threat, watching the CBS video increased consumers' intention for NWOM (c′ = .949, p < .001) (see Table B.5 in Appendix B). Among the control variables, none had a significant effect on consumers' intention for NWOM at Time 2 and the results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis.

These results indicate that consumers may indeed have used the brand to express their social identity and that watching the CBS video threatened their social identity which in turn

decreased their intention to purchase products of the brand and increased their intention to talk negatively about it, providing evidence for our hypotheses H_{3a} and H_{3b}.

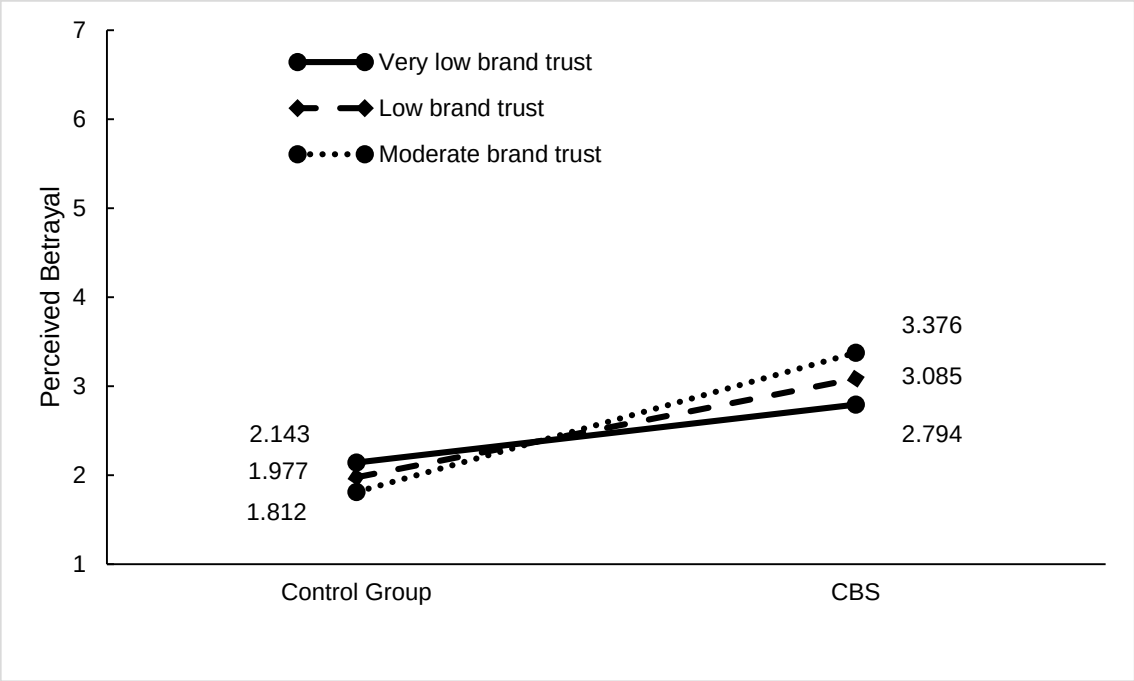
The Moderating Effect of the Brand Relationship Quality

We conducted moderation analyses using ordinary least squares path analysis with PROCESS model 1 (Hayes 2013), to probe (a) how the effects of an exposure to a CBS activity on consumers' perceived betrayal and social identity threat depend on brand trust and CBI and (b) how the effects of perceived betrayal and social identity threat on consumers' attitude toward the brand, purchase intention, and intention to talk negatively about the brand depend on their actual self-congruence with the brand.

Perceived Betrayal. A moderation analysis with CBS as independent variable (0 = control group, 1 = CBS), perceived betrayal at Time 2 as dependent variable and brand trust as moderator with perceived betrayal at Time 1 as well as our control variables as covariates revealed a marginally significant interaction effect ($b_3 = .304$, $t(171) = 1.901$, $p = .059$). By applying a spotlight analysis probing the moderation at the mean level of the moderator as well as one standard deviation above and below the mean, we found that the exposure to a CBS video compared to the control group increased consumers' perceived betrayal among those with "moderate" ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow Y)|M=4.496} = 1.565$, $p < .001$) and "low" trust in the brand ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow Y)|M=2.991} = 1.108$, $p < .001$) but only at the 6% significance level among those with very "low" brand trust ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow Y)|M=1.485} = .650$, $p = .059$; see Figure 7 and Table B.6 in Appendix B). Among the control variables, none had a significant effect on perceived betrayal at Time 2. Nevertheless, the interaction effect was significant at the 5% level ($p = .014$) when we excluded control variables. These results, although only significant at the 6% level, suggest that brand trust increases the effect of an exposure to a CBS activity on consumers' perceived betrayal, providing some evidence for hypothesis H_4.

FIGURE 7

The Moderating Effect of Brand Trust of the Impact of an Exposure to a CBS Activity on Perceived Betrayal



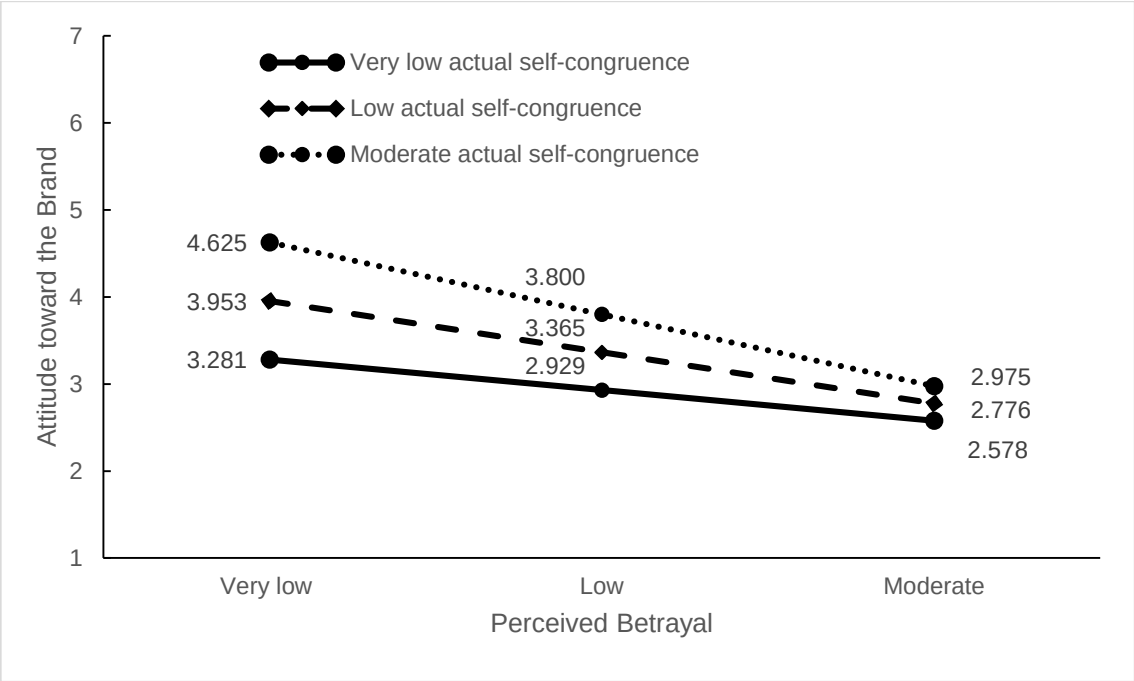
Perceived Social Identity Threat. A moderation analysis with CBS as independent variable, perceived social identity threat at Time 2 as dependent variable and CBI as moderator with perceived social identity threat at Time 1 as well as our control variables as covariates revealed a non-significant interaction effect ($b_3 = –.146$, $t(171) = –.608$, $p = .544$). Among the control variables, none had a significant effect on perceived social identity threat at Time 2 and results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis. These results show that CBI did not moderate the effect of an exposure to a CBS activity on perceived social identity threat, rejecting hypothesis H_5.

Attitude toward the brand. A moderation analysis with perceived betrayal at Time 2 as independent variable, brand attitude at Time 2 as dependent variable and actual self-congruence as moderator with brand attitude and perceived betrayal at Time 1 as well as our control variables as covariates revealed a significant interaction effect ($b_3 = –.099$, $t(170) = –2.275$, $p < .05$). A spotlight analysis showed that perceived betrayal had the strongest negative effect

on brand attitude among those with a "moderate" actual self-congruence ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow Y)|M=3.968}$ = –.505, $p < .001$) and a less strong effect among those with "low" ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow Y)|M=2.505}$ = –.360, $p <$ .001) and very "low" actual self-congruence ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow Y)|M=1.042}$ = –.215, $p < .01$; see Figure 8 and Table B.7 in Appendix B). Among the control variables, age significantly affected brand attitude at Time 2. However, results did not change whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis. As suggested in hypothesis H_{6a}, actual self-congruence reinforced the negative effect of perceived betrayal on consumers' brand attitude.

FIGURE 8

The Moderating Effect of Actual Self-Congruence on the Impact of Perceived Betrayal [3] on Brand Attitude



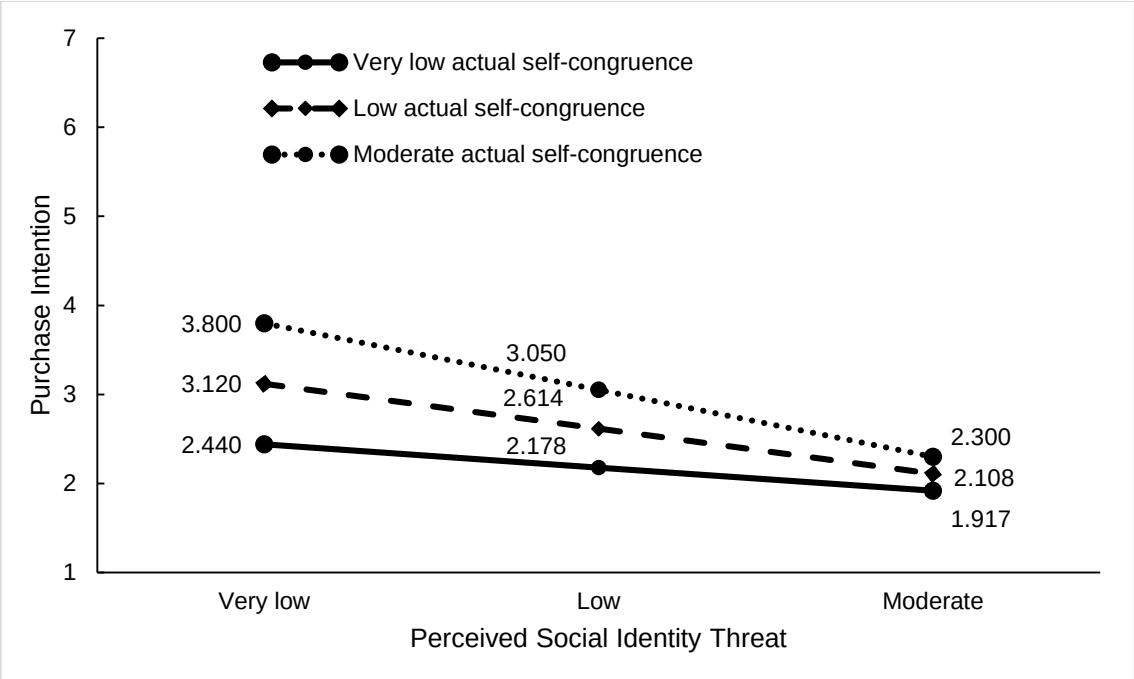
Purchase Intention. A further moderation analysis with perceived social identity threat at Time 2 as independent variable, purchase intention at Time 2 as dependent variable and actual self-congruence as moderator with perceived social identity threat and purchase intention at Time 1 as well as our control variables as covariates revealed a significant interaction effect

[3] Note.— Labels of perceived betrayal represent the mean level ("Low": M = 2.593) as well as one standard deviation above ("Moderate": M + 1SD = 4.227) and below ("Very low": M – 1SD = 0.958) the mean.

($b_3 = -.102$, $t(170) = -2.104$, $p < .05$). By applying a spotlight analysis, we found that consumers' purchase intention was strongest negatively affected by their perceived social identity threat among those with a "moderate" ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow Y)|M=3.968} = -.458$, $p < .001$) and "low" actual self-congruence ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow Y)|M=2.505} = -.309$, $p < .001$) and less strong among those with a very "low" actual self-congruence ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow Y)|M=1.042} = -.160$, $p < .05$) (see Figure 9 and Table B.8 in Appendix B). Among the control variables, none had a significant effect on purchase intention at Time 2 and results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis. As suggested in hypothesis H_{6b}, consumers' actual self-congruence reinforced the negative effect of their perceived social identity threat on their purchase intention.

FIGURE 9

The Moderating Effect of Actual Self-Congruence of the Impact of Perceived Social Identity Threat [4] on Purchase Intention



NWOM. We conducted a last moderation analysis with perceived social identity threat at Time 2 as independent variable, NWOM at Time 2 as dependent variable and actual self-

[4] Note.— Labels of perceived social identity threat represent the mean level ("Low": M = 2.961) as well as one standard deviation above ("Moderate": M + 1SD = 4.599) and below ("Very low": M – 1SD = 1.322) the mean.

congruence as moderator. Perceived social identity threat and NWOM at Time 1 as well as our control variables served as covariates. This analysis revealed that the effect of consumers' perceived social identity threat on their intention to talk negatively about the brand is not dependent on their actual self-congruence ($b_3 = .045$, $t(170) = .944$, $p = .346$). Among the control variables, none had a significant effect on consumers' intention for NWOM at Time 2. Also, results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis. As indicated by these results, actual self-congruence does not reinforce the effect of consumers' perceived social identity threat on their intention to engage in NWOM, rejecting hypothesis H_{6c}.

Conditional Mediation Analyses with Perceived Betrayal and Social Identity Threat as Mediators and Brand Relationship Quality as Moderator

We calculated conditional mediation analyses using ordinary least squares path analysis with PROCESS model 21 (bootstrapping of 10,000 samples; Hayes 2013) allowing for two different moderators to probe how the mediations of CBS exposure on our dependent variables via perceived betrayal and perceived social identity threat depend on the brand relationship quality (i.e., brand trust, CBI, and actual self-congruence).

Attitude toward the brand. A first conditional mediation analysis was conducted with CBS as independent (0 = control group, 1 = CBS), perceived betrayal at Time 2 as mediator, attitude toward the brand at Time 2 as dependent variable, and brand trust and actual self-congruence as moderators. Thereby, brand trust was included as moderator on the path from CBS exposure on perceived betrayal and actual self-congruence as moderator on the path from perceived betrayal on brand attitude. In our analysis, we included perceived betrayal and brand attitude at Time 1, perceived social identity threat at Time 1 and 2 and our control variables as

covariates. A spotlight analysis revealed that the exposure to the CBS video increased consumers' perceived betrayal only among those with "moderate" brand trust which in turn only decreased the attitude toward the brand of those consumers with "moderate" ($\theta_{(X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y)|M_{Brand\ Trust}=4.496,\ M_{Actual\ Self\text{-}Congruence}=3.968}$ = –.167, 95% CI = [–.3873, –.0107]) and "low" actual self-congruence ($\theta_{(X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y)|M_{Brand\ Trust}=4.496,\ M_{Actual\ Self\text{-}Congruence}=2.505}$ = –.106, 95% CI = [–.2566, –.0047]) but not among those with "very low" actual self-congruence ($\theta_{(X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y)|M_{Brand\ Trust}=4.496,\ M_{Actual\ Self\text{-}Congruence}=1.042}$ = –.046, 95% CI = [–.1687, .0343]) and neither among those with relatively "low" and "very low" trust. Independent of consumers' perceived betrayal, the exposure to the CBS video had a negative effect on their brand attitude ($c' = -.650$, $p < .001$) (see Table B.9 in Appendix B). Among the control variables, none had a significant effect on perceived betrayal or brand attitude at Time 2 and results did not change whether or not we included the control variables into our analysis.

These results provide evidence for hypothesis H_7 that those consumers with moderate brand trust felt betrayed after exposure to a CBS activity, decreasing their attitude toward the brand. Those consumers with low brand trust felt less betrayed and, consequently, the effect of their perceived betrayal on their attitude toward the brand was not significant. In addition, perceived betrayal only affected consumers' attitude toward the brand for those consumers with low to moderate actual self-congruence but not for those with very low actual self-congruence, demonstrating that actual self-congruence reinforced the effect of perceived betrayal on consumers' attitude toward the brand.

Purchase Intention. We conducted a second conditional mediation analysis using PROCESS model 21 with CBS as independent variable, perceived social identity threat at Time 2 as mediator, purchase intention at Time 2 as dependent variable, and CBI and actual self-congruence as moderators. CBI was included as moderator on the effect of CBS exposure

on perceived social identity threat and actual self-congruence as moderator on the effect of perceived social identity threat on purchase intention. Perceived social identity threat and purchase intention at Time 1, perceived betrayal at Time 1 and 2, and our control variables were included as covariates into our analysis. In line with the results of the simple moderation model, the results of this analysis showed again a non-significant interaction effect of CBS exposure and CBI on perceived social identity threat ($a_3 = -.139$, $t(168) = -.823$, $p = .412$). Among the control variables, whether consumers had contact between Time 1 and 2 had a significant effect on their purchase intention at Time 2. However, whether or not we included the control variables into our analysis did not change the results.

Consequently, we excluded CBI from our analysis and conducted another conditional mediation analysis using PROCESS model 14 (bootstrapping of 10,000 samples; Hayes 2013, 2015) which allows to probe how the mediation depends on only one moderator. In this model, CBS served as independent variable, perceived social identity threat at Time 2 as mediator, purchase intention at Time 2 as dependent variable, and actual self-congruence as moderator of perceived social identity threat on purchase intention. We again included perceived social identity threat and purchase intention at Time 1, perceived betrayal at Time 1 and 2, and our control variables as covariates into our analysis. The results of this analysis revealed a significant moderated mediation (index for moderated mediation = –.042) where the bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval was entirely below zero (–.1116, –.0020). The exposure to the CBS video increased consumers' perceived social identity threat (a = .443) which in turn decreased their purchase intention but only among those with a "moderate" ($\theta_{(X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y)|M=3.968} = -.160$, 95% CI = [–.3663, –.0265]) and "low" actual self-congruence ($\theta_{(X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y)|M=2.505} = -.098$, 95% CI = [–.2217, –.0133]) but not among those with a very "low" actual self-congruence ($\theta_{(X \rightarrow M \rightarrow Y)|M=1.042} = -.037$, 95% CI = [–.1259, .0416]). Among the control variables, brand experience had a significant effect on purchase intention at Time 2 (see

Table B.10 in Appendix B). However, results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis.

These results suggest partial evidence for hypothesis H_{8a} in that consumers' actual self-congruence reinforces the indirect effect of CBS exposure on consumers' purchase intentions via their perceived social identity threat but only among those with low to moderate actual self-congruence and not for those with very low actual self-congruence. However, counterintuitively, CBI does not moderate the effect of an exposure to a CBS activity on consumers' perceived social identity threat, indicating that consumers may perceive a social identity threat independent of their CBI level after exposure to a CBS activity.

NWOM. We conducted another conditional mediation analysis using PROCESS model 21 with CBS as independent variable, perceived social identity threat at Time 2 as mediator, NWOM as dependent variable at Time 2, and CBI and actual self-congruence as moderators. Thereby, CBI was included as moderator on the path of CBS exposure on perceived social identity threat and actual self-congruence on the path of perceived social identity threat on consumers' intention for NWOM. In this analysis, perceived social identity threat and NWOM at Time 1, perceived betrayal at Time 1 and 2 and our control variables served again as covariates. This analysis again revealed a non-significant interaction effect of CBS exposure and CBI on perceived social identity threat ($a_3 = -.131$, $t(168) = -.780$, $p = .436$). Among the control variables, brand awareness had a significant effect on consumers' perceived social identity threat at Time 2. However, whether or not we included the control variables into our analysis did not change the results.

Consequently, we again excluded CBI from our analysis and conducted a further conditional mediation analysis using PROCESS model 14 (bootstrapping of 10,000 samples; Hayes 2013, 2015). CBS served as independent variable, perceived social identity threat at

Time 2 as mediator, NWOM at Time 2 as dependent variable, and consumers' actual self-congruence as moderator of perceived social identity threat on NWOM. Perceived social identity threat and NWOM at Time 1, perceived betrayal at Time 1 and 2, and our control variables were included as covariates. The results of this analysis revealed a non-significant moderated mediation (index for moderated mediation = .013) where the bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval included zero (–.0331, .0709). Among the control variables, none had a significant effect on NWOM at Time 2 and the results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis.

Similar to the results from the simple moderation models, CBI and actual self-congruence did not significantly moderate the indirect effect of an exposure to a CBS activity on consumers' intention to engage in NWOM via perceived social identity threat, rejecting hypothesis H_{8b}.

Discussion

This study addresses the consequences of the novel phenomenon of CBS and examines whether and how a CBS activity of a consumer brand saboteur affects other consumers who observe the CBS activity. Thereby, the processes by which CBS as a form of hostile aggression affects other consumers and how these processes depend on the brand relationship quality of those consumers are studied. Our results show that a CBS activity harms the brand by decreasing consumers' attitude toward the brand and purchase intention and also by increasing their intention to engage in NWOM. More specifically, we show that this damage occurs via two different mechanisms: (1) an exposure to a CBS activity increases consumers' perceived betrayal, decreasing their attitude toward the brand and (2) an exposure to a CBS activity increases consumers' perceived social identity threat, decreasing consumers' purchase intention and increasing their intention to engage in NWOM. Furthermore, our results suggest

that these mechanisms depend on the brand relationship quality, i.e., consumers' brand trust and actual self-congruence.

Academic Implications and Further Research

Despite its high damage potential, research has not yet examined whether and how CBS affects other consumers who observe such hostile consumer activities. With our study, we show that CBS indeed influences other consumers' attitude and behavior toward the brand and, thereby, shed some light on the negative consequences of this under-researched phenomenon. Furthermore, we also show that the processes by which CBS affects other consumers include consumers' cognitions such as perceived betrayal. In the context of brand transgressions, prior research already showed that perceived betrayal strongly affects subsequent behavior such as revenge (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). However, to the best of our knowledge, research on the consequences of negative consumer behavior has not yet looked at the cognitions of other consumers who observe aggressive forms of consumer behavior and how they affect consumers' attitude toward the brand as well as their subsequent behavior. Thereby, our study makes an important contribution to the existing literature on negative consumer behavior (e.g., Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009; Klein, Smith, and John 2004; Zhang, Feick, and Mittal 2014) by identifying the drivers of consumers' responses to CBS behavior.

With our findings on consumers' cognitions, we also introduce consumers' perceived social identity threat as a new mechanism by which consumers are affected by negative information about a brand (here: by the CBS activity) to the marketing literature. This mechanism could also be interesting for further research on consumer boycott or NWOM because these behaviors also include self-expressiveness and self-enhancement (e.g., Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Klein, Smith, and John 2004) which are linked to the social identity (see also Escalas and Bettman 2003; Tajfel and Turner 1986).

However, the indirect effect of CBS exposure on consumers' attitude toward the brand through perceived betrayal was only significant when perceived social identity threat was excluded as covariate from the analysis. Thus, perceived betrayal may be a more important construct in the context of brand transgressions where the customer is directly involved in the brand's behavior such as in the setting of Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (2009). Observing negative brand behavior through a CBS activity may be too weak to trigger perceptions of betrayal. These findings may indicate that, in our study, consumers felt betrayed after observing a CBS activity through empathic reactions (e.g., Eisenberg and Miller 1987) rather than a perception of a violation of their own relational norms (e.g., Fitness 2001) which may activate perceptions of betrayal more strongly than empathy. A future study should empirically examine which of the two paths (i.e., empathic reactions or a violation of relational norms) leads to perceived betrayal after exposure to a CBS activity.

Yet, in our study, we also found that consumers' relationship with the brand affects the influence of a CBS activity on consumers' attitude toward the brand and subsequent behavior (i.e., purchase intention). More specifically, we could show that a CBS activity only increased other consumers' perceived betrayal among those with moderate brand trust and not among those with low or very low trust. Consumers' perceived betrayal, in turn, only decreased consumers' attitude toward the brand among those with moderate and low actual self- congruence but not among those with very low actual self-congruence. These results provide an alternative explanation for the non-significant findings of the simple mediation model with CBS affecting consumers' attitude toward the brand via perceived betrayal, when controlling for perceived social identity threat. Those consumers who had low to very low trust in the brand only perceived the brand's behavior as described in the CBS activity as a small or no violation of their relational norms or trust. Consequently, they felt less or not betrayed at all which

might have led to the non-significant results for the unconditional effect of CBS on brand attitude via perceived betrayal (when controlling for perceived social identity threat).

In addition, in our conditional mediation analysis, we also found that the exposure to a CBS activity increased consumers' perceived social identity threat, which in turn decreased consumers' purchase intention. However, this indirect effect was only observed for those consumers with moderate and low levels of actual self-congruence but not among those with very low actual self-congruence with the brand. With these findings, we contribute to the ongoing debate on the buffering (e.g., Hess, Ganesan, and Klein 2003; Tax, Brown, and Chandrashekaran 1998) versus love-becomes-hate effect, which discusses the role of the brand relationship quality on the impact of service failures on consumer behavior (e.g., Aaker, Fournier, and Brasel 2004; Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). Our findings support a love-becomes-hate effect and take up the explanation of Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux (2009) from their study on the interplay of brand transgressions and the brand relationship quality. They explain the opposing effects of brand relationship quality by the reciprocity norm. Consumers wish to harm the company that they feel has hurt them and they reduce their negative responses when the company shows signs of redemption. Therefore, in our case, consumers with a high relationship quality may have felt hurt because of the statement by A&F's CEO, as described by the brand saboteur, and showed more negative responses to the CBS activity than consumers with a low relationship quality. Yet, further research is needed to better understand the opposing effects of the brand relationship quality on consumers' attitude and subsequent behavior after exposure to negative information about the brand or a brand transgression. Also, prior research on these two schools of thoughts did not yet consider consumers' self-connection with the brand. By including consumers' actual self-congruence with the

brand into our analysis, we showed that consumers' actual self-congruence amplifies consumers' cognitive responses such as perceived betrayal. This could be a fruitful path for further analyses in the area of negative consumer behavior and its impact on other consumers.

Although we expected that CBI moderates the effect of CBS on consumers' perceived social identity threat, the results of our study proved otherwise as no significant moderation effects of CBI were found. Research on brand defensiveness by consumers has found that situational factors such as self-activation influences the effect of CBI on consumers' attitude toward the brand (Lisjak, Lee, and Gardner 2012). In our setting, it could be that consumers' social identities were not salient enough to allow their CBI to influence their perceived social identity threats. An alternative explanation for these non-significant moderation effects can be found in the overall very low levels of CBI among participants in our sample (M = 1.586, SD = .947, 75% percentile = 1.833). Presumably, there were too few people with a moderate to moderately high CBI to reveal any significant effects (3.2% had a mean of M ≥ 4, Max. = 5.5). In general, the levels of brand awareness (M = 3.574, SD = 1.825, Min. = 1, Max. = 7) and also of our measures for the brand relationship quality, i.e., brand trust (M = 2.991, SD = 1.505, Min. = 1, Max. = 7), CBI (M = 1.586, SD = .947, Min. = 1, Max. = 5.5), and actual self-congruence (M = 2.505, SD = 1.463, Min. = 1, Max. = 6.5) were very low. This might be because A&F is a US brand that is not very well-known in the German-speaking countries. However, this unfamiliarity in the German-speaking countries allowed us to test the impact of the CBS video as most consumers' have not seen it before our study. Nevertheless, a future study should replicate our study with a US sample where brand awareness and brand relationship quality measures should have higher levels and additionally measure consumers' self-activation to control for its effect on the moderating effect of CBI.

Furthermore, actual-self congruence did not significantly moderate the impact of perceived social identity threat on consumers' intention to engage in NWOM. Prior research on

self-congruence stated that self-congruence is contingent on personality factors such as self-esteem and public self-consciousness (Malär et al. 2011). In NWOM, consumers actively talk with other consumers about the brand and, thus, expose their connection with the brand to others. Therefore, personality factors such as public self-consciousness (e.g., Gould and Barak 1988) may have a stronger effect on consumers' intention to engage in NWOM than on their attitude toward the brand or purchase intention. Thus, a future study should include personality factors such as self-esteem and public self-consciousness into the analysis and examine whether the moderating effect of actual self-congruence depends on said personality factors.

In this paper, we already included three important moderators related to the consumer–brand relationship into our analysis. Yet, further research should also examine product- or brand-related factors. Clothes of the brand A&F could be regarded as hedonic products. In contrast, utilitarian products may reveal different results, especially as they serve less of a self-expressive purpose than hedonic products (Park and Moon 2003).

In our study, participants were only shown the CBS video without any subsequent response from the management. Although such a research design was needed to reveal whether and how CBS affects other consumers as a baseline, a future study should examine different responses by the management to the CBS activity. This could reveal highly relevant implications for managers on how to adequately react and respond to a CBS activity.

Managerial Implications

Our study helps managers to understand if, when and why a CBS activity harms other consumers. From our results managers can learn that a CBS activity can substantially harm the brand by decreasing consumers' attitude toward the brand and purchase intention. Furthermore, after exposure to a CBS activity, consumers also increasingly engage in NWOM about the brand. Thereby, the damage of a CBS activity is augmented through networking effects,

potentially affecting many more consumers than have initially observed the CBS activity. These findings are highly relevant for managers as they show that CBS indeed affects other consumers in a negative way. As such, a CBS activity does not only affect the dyad between the brand saboteur and the brand in a negative way but also other consumers who were not involved in the initial brand failure but who observed the CBS activity. Therefore, ideally, managers should try to de-escalate and prevent CBS from occurring to avoid a possible damage on other consumers' attitude and subsequent behavior. If such prevention attempts fail and CBS does occur, managers should respond to CBS in order to limit its damage on the brand. To prevent its damage from spreading further through NWOM, they should be well-prepared (e.g., by engaging in training based on a variety of different scenarios of CBS activities) and react within a short period of time.

Furthermore, our findings provide insights to managers which consumer segments are especially vulnerable to the negative effects of CBS activities by other consumer brand saboteurs. Our results point in the same direction as recent findings in the context of customer revenge (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009). Consumers with a high brand relationship quality are stronger negatively affected by a brand transgression (here: a CBS activity) in terms of their attitude and subsequent behavior than consumers with a low brand relationship quality. Therefore, based on our results, managers are advised to pay special attention to the prevention of CBS and to take adequate measures once CBS occurred such that its customers with a high brand relationship quality are as little affected as possible (see also suggestions from Kähr et al. 2016). Based on the principles of the reciprocity norm (e.g., Gouldner 1960), consumers with a high relationship quality should react more favorably to signs of redemption by a brand (e.g., a compensation or an apology) than consumers with a low relationship quality. Thus, once CBS occurred, managers should provide an accommodative response to the CBS activity to attenuate its negative effects. This response may not reconcile the brand saboteurs

as they “have a hostile mindset and have burned all bridges with the brand” (Kähr et al. 2016, p. 38), but it may mitigate the negative effects of CBS on other consumers’ attitude toward the brand and subsequent behavior, especially of those consumers with a high brand relationship quality.

References

Aaker, Jennifer (1999), “The Malleable Self: The Role of Self-Expression in Persuasion,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 36 (February), 45–57.

———, Susan Fournier, and S. Adam Brasel (2004), “When Good Brands Do Bad,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (1), 1–16.

Aggarwal, Pankaj (2004), “The Effects of Brand Relationship Norms on Consumer Attitudes and Behavior,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31 (1), 87–101.

Ajzen, Icek (2001), “Nature and Operation of Attitudes,” *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52 (1), 27–58.

Belk, Russell W. (1988), “Possessions and the Extended Self,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15 (2), 139–68.

Bhattacharya, C. B., Hayagreeva Rao, and Mary Ann Glynn (1995), “Understanding the Bond of Identification: An Investigation of Its Correlates among Art Museum Members,” *Journal of Marketing*, 59 (4), 46–57.

Bonifield, Carolyn and Catherine Cole (2010), “Affective Responses to Service Failure: Anger, Regret, and Retaliatory versus Conciliatory Responses,” *Marketing Letters*, 18 (1–2), 85–99.

Bughin, Jacques, Jonathan Doogan, and Ole Jørgen Vetvik (2010), “A New Way to Measure Word-of-Mouth Marketing,” *McKinsey Quarterly*, April, 113–16.

Carr, Laurie, Marco Iacoboni, Marie-Charlotte Dubeau, John C. Mazziotta, and Gian Luigi Lenzi (2003), “Neural Mechanisms of Empathy in Humans: A Relay from Neural Systems for Imitation to Limbic Areas,” *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 100 (9), 5497–502.

Chang, Hsin Hsin, Yao-Chuan Tsai, Kit Hong Wong, Jian Wei Wang, and Fang Ju Cho (2015), “The Effects of Response Strategies and Severity of Failure on Consumer Attribution with regard to Negative Word-of-Mouth,” *Decision Support Systems*, 71, 48–61.

Chartrand, Tanya L. and John A. Bargh (1999), “The Chameleon Effect: The Perception–Behavior Link and Social Interaction,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 76 (6), 893–910.

Chaudhuri, Arjun and Morris B. Holbrook (2001), “The Chain of Effects from Brand Trust and Brand Affect to Brand Performance: The Role of Brand Loyalty,” *Journal of Marketing*, 65 (2), 81–93.

Chiou, Jyh-Shen and Cathy Cheng (2003), “Should a Company Have Message Boards on its Web Sites?,” *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 17 (3), 50–61.

Computer Bild TV (2014), “Google zeigt autonomes Auto in der Stadt,” video, (April 29), [available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WBlN9fb7BC8].

Denizet-Lewis, Benoit (2006), “The Man behind Abercrombie & Fitch,” (January 24), [available at http://www.salon.com/2006/01/24/jeffries/].

Dickinger, Astrid (2011), “The Trustworthiness of Online Channels for Experience- and Goal-Directed Search Tasks,” *Journal of Travel Research*, 50 (4), 378–91.

Doney, Patricia M. and Joseph P. Cannon (1997), “An Examination of the Nature of Trust in Buyer-Seller Relationships,” *Journal of Marketing*, 61 (2), 35–51.

Eisenberg, Nancy and Paul A. Miller (1987), “The Relation of Empathy to Prosocial and Related Behaviors,” *Psychological Bulletin*, 10 (1), 91–119.

Escalas, Jennifer Edson and James R. Bettman (2003), “You Are What They Eat: The Influence of Reference Groups on Consumers’ Connections to Brands,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 13 (3), 339–48.

——— and Barbara B. Stern (2003), “Sympathy and Empathy: Emotional Responses to Advertising Dramas,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 (4), 566–78.

Fitness, Julie (2001), “Betrayal, Rejection, Revenge, and Forgiveness: An Interpersonal Script Approach,” in *Interpersonal Rejection*, M. R. Leary, ed., New York: Oxford University Press, USA, 73–104.

Fornell, Claes and David F. Larcker (1981), “Evaluating Structural Equation Models with Unobservable Variables and Measurement Error,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 18 (1), 39–50.

Glazek, Christopher (2013), “The Story Behind ‘Fitch the Homeless,’” *The New Yorker*, (June 19), [available at http://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/the-storybehind-fitch-the-homeless].

Gould, Stephen J. and Benny Barak (1988), “Public Self-Consciousness and Consumption Behavior,” *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 128 (3), 393–400.

Gouldner, Alvin W. (1960), “The Norm of Reciprocity: A Preliminary Statement,” *American Sociological Review*, 25 (2), 161–78.

Grégoire, Yany and Robert J. Fisher (2008), “Customer Betrayal and Retaliation: When Your Best Customers Become Your Worst Enemies,” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 36 (2), 247–61.

———, Thomas M. Tripp, and Renaud Legoux (2009), “When Customer Love Turns into Lasting Hate: The Effects of Relationship Strength and Time on Customer Revenge and Avoidance,” *Journal of Marketing*, 73 (6), 18–32.

Grohmann, Bianca (2009), “Gender Dimensions of Brand Personality,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 46 (1), 105–19.

Hansen, Jochim and Michaela Wänke (2011), “The Abstractness of Luxury,” *Journal of Economic Psychology*, 32 (5), 789–96.

Hayes, Andrew F. (2013), *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*, New York, NY: Guilford Press.

——— (2015), "An Index and Test of Linear Moderated Mediation," *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 50 (1), 1–22.

Hennig-Thurau, Thorsten, Kevin P. Gwinner, and Dwayne D. Gremler (2002), "Understanding Relationship Marketing Outcomes," *Journal of Service Research*, 4 (3), 230–47.

———, ———, Gianfranco Walsh, and Dwayne D. Gremler (2004), "Electronic Word-of-Mouth Via Consumer-Opinion Platforms: What Motivates Consumers to Articulate Themselves on the Internet?," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18 (1), 38–52.

Hess, Ronald L., Shankar Ganesan, and Noreen M. Klein (2003), "Service Failure and Recovery: The Impact of Relationship Factors on Customer Satisfaction," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 31 (2), 127–45.

Jetten, Jolanda, Tom Postmes, and Brendan J. McAuliffe (2002), "'We're All Individuals': Group Norms of Individualism and Collectivism, Levels of Identification and Identity Threat," *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 32 (2), 189–207.

Kähr, Andrea, Bettina Nyffenegger, Harley Krohmer, and Wayne D. Hoyer (2016), "When Hostile Consumers Wreak Havoc on Your Brand: The Phenomenon of Consumer Brand Sabotage," *Journal of Marketing*, 80 (3), 25–41.

Karber, Greg (2013), "Abercrombie & Fitch Gets a Brand Readjustment #FitchTheHomeless," video, (May 13), [available at https://youtu.be/O95DBxnXiSo].

Kim, Chung K., Dongchul Han, and Seung-Bae Park (2001), "The Effect of Brand Personality and Brand Identification on Brand Loyalty: Applying the Theory of Social Identification," *Japanese Psychological Research*, 43 (4), 195–206.

Klein, Jill Gabrielle, N. Craig Smith, and Andrew John (2004), "Why We Boycott: Consumer Motivations for Boycott Participation," *Journal of Marketing*, 68 (3), 92–109.

Koku, Paul Sergius (2012), “On the Effectiveness of Consumer Boycotts Organized Through the Internet: The Market Model,” *Journal of Services Marketing*, 26 (1), 20–26.

Lam, Son K., Michael Ahearne, Ye Hu, and Niels Schillewaert (2010), “Resistance to Brand Switching When a Radically New Brand Is Introduced: A Social Identity Theory Perspective,” *Journal of Marketing*, 74 (6), 128–46.

Lisjak, Monika, Angela Y. Lee, and Wendi L. Gardner (2012), “When a Threat to the Brand Is a Threat to the Self: The Importance of Brand Identification and Implicit Self-Esteem in Predicting Defensiveness,” *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 38 (9), 1120–32.

Litvin, Stephen W., Ronald E. Goldsmith, and Bing Pan (2008), “Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Hospitality and Tourism Management,” *Tourism Management*, 29 (3), 458–68.

Malär, Lucia, Harley Krohmer, Wayne D. Hoyer, and Bettina Nyffenegger (2011), “Emotional Brand Attachment and Brand Personality: The Relative Importance of the Actual and the Ideal Self,” *Journal of Marketing*, 75 (4), 35–52.

Nyffenegger, Bettina, Harley Krohmer, Wayne D. Hoyer, and Lucia Malär (2014), “Service Brand Relationship Quality Hot or Cold?,” *Journal of Service Research*, 18 (1), 90–106.

Park, Chan-Wook and Byeong-Joon Moon (2003), “The Relationship between Product Involvement and Product Knowledge: Moderating Roles of Product Type and Product Knowledge Type,” *Psychology and Marketing*, 20 (11), 977–97.

Park, Do-Hyung, Jumin Lee, and Ingoo Han (2007), “The Effect of On-Line Consumer Reviews on Consumer Purchasing Intention: The Moderating Role of Involvement,” *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 11 (4), 125–48.

Peterson, Hayley (2014), “Abercrombie CEO Is Out,” *Business Insider*, (December 9), [available at http://www.businessinsider.com/abercrombie-ceo-is-out-2014-12].

Petty, Richard E. and John T. Cacioppo (1986), “The Elaboration Likelihood Model of Persuasion,” in *Advances in Experimental Social Psychology*, L. Berkowitz, ed., New York: Academic Press, 123–205.

Podsakoff, Philip M., Scott B. MacKenzie, Jeong-Yeon Lee, and Nathan P. Podsakoff (2003), “Common Method Biases in Behavioral Research: A Critical Review of the Literature and Recommended Remedies,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88 (5), 879–903.

Prahalad, C. K. and Venkat Ramaswamy (2004), “Co-Creation Experiences: The Next Practice in Value Creation,” *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18 (3), 5–14.

Romani, Simona, Silvia Grappi, and Richard P. Bagozzi (2012), “Explaining Consumer Reactions to Corporate Social Responsibility: The Role of Gratitude and Altruistic Values,” *Journal of Business Ethics*, 114 (2), 193–206.

Rosenberg, Morris (1979), *Conceiving the Self*, New York: Basic Books.

Sashi, C. M. (2012), “Customer Engagement, Buyer-Seller Relationships, and Social Media,” *Management Decision*, 50 (2), 253–72.

Scheepers, Daan and Naomi Ellemers (2005), “When the Pressure Is Up: The Assessment of Social Identity Threat in Low and High Status Groups,” *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 41 (2), 192–200.

Senecal, Sylvain and Jacques Nantel (2004), “The Influence of Online Product Recommendations on Consumers’ Online Choices,” *Journal of Retailing*, 80 (2), 159–69.

Sirgy, M. Joseph (1982), “Self-Concept in Consumer Behavior: A Critical Review,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 9 (3), 287–300.

Smith, Amy K. and Ruth N. Bolton (1998), “An Experimental Investigation of Customer Reactions to Service Failure and Recovery Encounters: Paradox or Peril?,” *Journal of Service Research*, 1 (1), 65–81.

Sparks, Beverley A., Kevin Kam Fung So, and Graham L. Bradley (2016), "Responding to Negative Online Reviews: The Effects of Hotel Responses on Customer Inferences of Trust and Concern," *Tourism Management*, 53, 74–85.

Spears, Nancy and Surendra N. Singh (2004), "Measuring Attitude toward the Brand and Purchase Intentions," *Journal of Current Issues and Research in Advertising*, 26 (2), 53–66.

Stokburger-Sauer, Nicola, S. Ratneshwar, and Sankar Sen (2012), "Drivers of Consumer–Brand Identification," *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, Special Issue on Consumer Identities, 29 (4), 406–18.

Tajfel, Henri and John C. Turner (1979), "An Integrative Theory of Intergroup Conflict," in *The Social Psychology of Intergroup Relations*, W. G. Austin and S. Worchel, eds., Monetery, CA: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 33–47.

——— and ——— (1986), "Psychology of Intergroup Relations," in *The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior*, W. G. Austin and S. Worchel, eds., Chicago, IL: Nelson Hall, 7–24.

Tax, Stephen S., Stephen W. Brown, and Murali Chandrashekaran (1998), "Customer Evaluations of Service Complaint Experiences: Implications for Relationship Marketing," *Journal of Marketing*, 62 (2), 60–76.

Trefis Team (2014), "Abercrombie and Fitch's CEO Mike Jeffries to Step down immediately," Forbes, (accessed February 3, 2017), [available at http://www.forbes.com/sites/greatspeculations/2014/12/10/abercrombie-and-fitchs-ceo-mike-jeffries-to-step-down-immediately/].

Tuškej, Urška, Urša Golob, and Klement Podnar (2013), "The Role of Consumer–Brand Identification in Building Brand Relationships," *Journal of Business Research*, 66 (1), 53–59.

van Doorn, Jenny, Katherine N. Lemon, Vikas Mittal, Stephan Nass, Doreén Pick, Peter Pirner, and Peter C. Verhoef (2010), "Customer Engagement Behavior: Theoretical Foundations and Research Directions," *Journal of Service Research*, 13 (3), 253–66.

Westbrook, Robert A. (1987), "Product/Consumption-Based Affective Responses and Post-purchase Processes," Journal of Marketing Research, 24 (3), 258–70.

Ye, Qiang, Rob Law, and Bin Gu (2009), "The Impact of Online User Reviews on Hotel Room Sales," *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28 (1), 180–82.

Yoo, Boonghee and Naveen Donthu (2001), "Developing and Validating a Multidimensional Consumer-Based Brand Equity Scale," *Journal of Business Research*, 52 (1), 1–14.

Zhang, Yinlong, Lawrence Feick, and Vikas Mittal (2014), "How Males and Females Differ in Their Likelihood of Transmitting Negative Word of Mouth," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 40 (6), 1097–108.

APPENDIX A

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON THE PRETEST AND THE EXPERIMENT

Additional Information on the Sample of the Pretest

In our sample, 33.3% of the participants had a University degree, 28.9% an apprenticeship, 17.8% Matura (qualification for University entrance), 11.1% higher vocational training, 2.2% compulsory education, 2.2% of the participants had no educational qualification, 4.4% indicated "other," and none had a PhD.

Additional Information on the Sample of the Main Experiment

In our sample, 34.4% of the participants had a University degree, 19.4% an apprenticeship, 17.7% higher vocational training, 17.2% Matura, 4.3% compulsory education, 1.1% had a PhD, 1.1 % of the participants had no educational qualification, and 4.8% indicated "other."

Additional Information on the Study Design of the Main Experiment

To control that participants watched our videos, the button to continue to the next question appeared at the end of the videos. We also asked a control question at the end of the survey about the content of the videos to ensure that participants watched it. If they watched the video, the questions were easy to answer with a 25% chance to take the correct guess. For our CBS video, they had to indicate which of the following statements was correct: (1) The speaker / producer of the video mentions a quote of A&F's CEO, in which the CEO says that he only wants the cool kids to wear his clothes and that there are people who don't belong in his clothes. (2) The speaker / producer of the video mentions a quote of A&F's CEO, in which the CEO says that all kids can wear his clothes and that he does not want to exclude anyone. (3) The speaker / producer of the video wants to help A&F to increase their revenue. (4) The speaker / producer of the video asks the audience of the video to wear their clothes they bought from A&F more often. 2.78% of participants answered this question incorrectly (i.e.,

values other than (1)). For our filler video, participants had to indicate which of the following statements was correct: (1) The second speaker in the video would never drive an autonomous car. (2) The second speaker in the video does not mind having no control over his vehicle. (3) The second speaker in the video drives an autonomous car in the video. (4) The second speaker in the video does not talk about autonomous cars in the video. 10.19% answered this question incorrectly (i.e., values other than (3)).

Additional Information on the Analysis of the Results of the Main Experiment

In our analysis, we excluded the valence of the last contact consumers had with A&F at Time 1 and 2 as covariates because 37.1% (n = 69) of the participants never came in contact with A&F before this experiment and, consequently, did not answer our question about the valence of the last contact at Time 1. At Time 2, even 73.1% (n = 136) did not come in contact with A&F between our surveys at Time 1 and 2. Consequently, there would have been a substantial amount of missing data if we included the valence of consumers' last contact with A&F at Time 1 and 2 as covariates into our analysis. Also, so far, PROCESS has no sophisticated missing data handling routines. It uses listwise deletion for cases missing on any variable in the model. This would have reduced our sample size by far too much for the analysis required to test our hypotheses. However, to make sure that the valence of the last contacts did not act as confound (e.g., they could be the true mediators and our measured mediators only correlated with said true mediators), we looked at the correlations between contact valence at Time 1 and 2 and perceived betrayal ($r_{\text{Time 1}} = .103$, $r_{\text{Time 2}} = -.095$) and perceived social identity threat ($r_{\text{Time 1}} = -.058$, $r_{\text{Time 2}} = -.157$) which were non-significant (*ps* > .268).

APPENDIX B

TABLE B.1

CONSTRUCTS INDICATORS, MEASUREMENT ITEMS, AND SCALE RELIABILITIES

Measure	**Items**	**Time 1 (α)**	**Time 2 (α)**
Moderators:			
Trust [a]		.945	
	I trust A&F.		
	I rely on A&F.		
	A&F is an honest brand.		
	A&F is safe.		
Consumer-Brand Identification [a]		.916	
	A&F's successes are my successes.		
	I am interested in what others think about A&F.		
	When someone praises A&F, it feels like a personal compliment.		
	When I talk about A&F, I usually say "we" rather than "they."		
	If a story in the media criticized A&F, I would feel embarrassed.		
	When someone criticizes A&F, it feels like a personal insult.		
Actual Self-Congruence [a]		.933	
	The personality of A&F is consistent with how I see myself (my actual self).		
	The personality of A&F is a mirror image of me (my actual self).		
Mediators:			
Perceived Betrayal [a]		.943	.966
	When I think of A&F, I feel…		
	…betrayed (two items in German).		
	…as if A&F broke the promise made to me.		
	…that A&F has let me down in a moment of need.		
Perceived Social Identity Threat [a]		.891	.892
	When I think of A&F, I feel…		
	…uncomfortable.		
	…threatened.		
	…attacked personally.		

[a] measured with a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = "completely disagree", 7 = "completely agree", [b] measured by a seven-point semantic differential scale, [c] 1 = "very sad", 7 = "very happy", [d] 1 = "very bad", 7 = "very good", [e] (r) indicates reversed scoring, [f] measured with a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = "never", 7 = "very often", [g] measured with a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = "none", 7 = "many"

TABLE B.1 (Continuing)

CONSTRUCTS INDICATORS, MEASUREMENT ITEMS, AND SCALE RELIABILITIES

Measure	**Items**	**Time 1 (α)**	**Time 2 (α)**
Dependent variables:			
Attitude toward the Brand [b]		.951	.957
	unappealing – appealing		
	bad – good		
	unpleasant – pleasant		
	unfavorable – favorable		
	unlikable – likable		
NWOM [a]		.954	.966
	I intend to say negative things about A&F to friends, relatives, and other people.		
	I intend to recommend to my friends, relatives, and other people that they not buy products of A&F.		
	I intend to discredit A&F with my friends, relatives, or other people.		
Purchase Intention [b]		.963	.979
	never – definitely		
	definitely do not intend to buy – definitely intend		
	very low – very high purchase interest		
	definitely not buy it – definitely buy it		
	probably not – probably buy it		
Control Variables:			
Mood [b]		.881	.946
	How do you feel at the moment? [c]		
	How is your mood right now? [d]		
Product Involvement [a]		.967	
	Because of my personal attitudes, I feel that clothes ought to be important to me.		
	Because of my personal values, I feel that clothes ought to be important to me.		
	Clothes are very important to me personally.		
	Compared with other products, clothes are important to me.		
	I'm interested in clothes.		

[a] measured with a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = "completely disagree", 7 = "completely agree", [b] measured by a seven-point semantic differential scale, [c] 1 = "very sad", 7 = "very happy", [d] 1 = "very bad", 7 = "very good", [e] (r) indicates reversed scoring, [f] measured with a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = "never", 7 = "very often", [g] measured with a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = "none", 7 = "many"

TABLE B.1 (Continuing)

CONSTRUCTS INDICATORS, MEASUREMENT ITEMS, AND SCALE RELIABILITIES

Measure	**Items**	**Time 1 (α)**	**Time 2 (α)**
Brand Awareness [a]		.896	
	I can recognize A&F among other competing brands.		
	I am aware of A&F.		
	Some characteristics of A&F come to my mind quickly.		
	I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of A&F.		
	I have difficulty in imagining A&F in my mind. (r) [e]		
Brand Experience		.946	
	Have you ever bought clothes of A&F? [f]		
	How many clothes do you currently own of A&F? [g]		
	How often do you currently wear clothes of A&F? [f]		
Contact Valence [b]		.973	.982
	The last contact with A&F was…		
	very negative – very positive		
	very unpleasant – very pleasant		
	very bad – very good		

[a] measured with a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = "completely disagree", 7 = "completely agree", [b] measured by a seven-point semantic differential scale, [c] 1 = "very sad", 7 = "very happy", [d] 1 = "very bad", 7 = "very good", [e] (r) indicates reversed scoring, [f] measured with a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = "never", 7 = "very often", [g] measured with a seven-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = "none", 7 = "many"

TABLE B.2

ESTIMATED MARGINAL MEANS, STANDARD ERRORS, ROY'S LARGEST ROOT, F- AND P-VALUES FOR THE MANCOVA MODEL

	Attitude toward the Brand T2		**Purchase Intention T2**		**NWOM T2**						
Measures	**EMM**	**Standard Error**	**EMM**	**Standard Error**	**EMM**	**Standard Error**	**Θ**	**df1**	**df2**	**F**	**Sig.**
Baseline Effect of CBS											
Condition							.374	3	169	21.080	.000
Control Group	3.940	.118	2.995	.129	2.365	.171					
CBS	2.827	.109	2.338	.120	3.956	.158					
Attitude toward the Brand T1							*.198*	*3*	*169*	*11.151*	*.000*
Purchase Intention T1							*.057*	*3*	*169*	*3.205*	*.025*
NWOM T1							*.150*	*3*	*169*	*8.460*	*.000*
Product Involvement							*.013*	*3*	*169*	*.710*	*.547*
Brand Experience							*.082*	*3*	*169*	*4.602*	*.004*
Brand Awareness							*.020*	*3*	*169*	*1.153*	*.329*
Last Contact T1							*.007*	*3*	*169*	*.375*	*.771*
Last Contact T2							*.017*	*3*	*169*	*.959*	*.413*
Mood T1							*.011*	*3*	*169*	*.610*	*.609*
Mood T2							*.006*	*3*	*169*	*.317*	*.813*
Knowledge of Video							*.017*	*3*	*169*	*.949*	*.418*
Gender							*.044*	*3*	*169*	*2.477*	*.063*
Age							*.014*	*3*	*169*	*.814*	*.488*

Note.— Covariates are in italics.

TABLE B.3

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE PERCEIVED BETRAYAL AND BRAND ATTITUDE SIMPLE MEDIATOR MODEL

		Consequent						
		Perceived Betrayal T2 (M)				Attitude toward the Brand T2 (Y)		
Antecedent		Coeff.	SE	*p*		Coeff.	SE	*p*
CBS (X)	a	1.111	.230	.000	c'	–.811	.174	.000
Perceived Betrayal T2 (M)		—	—	—	b	–.273	.058	.000
Constant	i_1	–1.364	2.220	.540	i_2	1.201	1.988	.547
Perceived Betrayal T1	f_1	*.357*	*.116*	*.002*	g_1	*.094*	*.097*	*.338*
Attitude toward the Brand T1	f_2	*.108*	*.102*	*.288*	g_2	*.615*	*.070*	*.000*
Product Involvement	f_5	*–.010*	*.091*	*.911*	g_5	*.004*	*.061*	*.954*
Brand Experience	f_6	*.073*	*.122*	*.552*	g_6	*.194*	*.079*	*.015*
Brand Awareness	f_7	*.009*	*.091*	*.918*	g_7	*–.001*	*.061*	*.988*
Last Contact T1	f_8	*.074*	*.084*	*.382*	g_8	*.029*	*.050*	*.571*
Last Contact T2	f_9	*.489*	*.325*	*.134*	g_9	*.113*	*.181*	*.534*
Mood T1	f_{10}	*–.149*	*.124*	*.232*	g_{10}	*–.028*	*.086*	*.745*
Mood T2	f_{11}	*.035*	*.129*	*.784*	g_{11}	*–.018*	*.082*	*.830*
Knowledge of Video	f_{12}	*1.017*	*.750*	*.177*	g_{12}	*–.300*	*.733*	*.683*
Gender	f_{13}	*–.509*	*.259*	*.051*	g_{13}	*.067*	*.162*	*.681*
Age	f_{14}	*.011*	*.018*	*.525*	g_{14}	*.019*	*.011*	*.076*
		$R^2 = .223$				$R^2 = .610$		
		$F(13, 172) = 4.012$, $p < .001$				$F(14, 171) = 28.492$, $p < .001$		

Note.— Regression Coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator (see Hayes and Cai 2007; Long and Ervin 2000). Covariates are in italics.

TABLE B.4

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE PERCEIVED SOCIAL IDENTITY THREAT AND PURCHASE INTENTION SIMPLE MEDIATOR MODEL

		Consequent						
		Perceived Social Identity Threat T2 (M)				Purchase Intention T2 (Y)		
Antecedent		Coeff.	SE	*p*		Coeff.	SE	*p*
CBS (X)	a	.443	.193	.023	c'	–.315	.188	.095
Perceived Social Identity Threat T2 (M)		—	—	—	b	–.202	.082	.014
Constant	i_1	2.021	1.462	.169	i_2	2.090	1.955	.287
Perceived Social Identity Threat T1	f_1	.237	.112	.036	g_1	*–.087*	*.090*	*.334*
Purchase Intention T1	f_2	–.104	.070	.143	g_2	*.352*	*.085*	*.000*
Perceived Betrayal T1	f_3	–.040	.113	.725	g_3	*.121*	*.086*	*.162*
Perceived Betrayal T2	f_4	.668	.063	.000	g_4	*–.093*	*.078*	*.233*
Product Involvement	f_5	–.048	.058	.411	g_5	*–.019*	*.069*	*.787*
Brand Experience	f_6	.001	.075	.995	g_6	*.368*	*.105*	*.001*
Brand Awareness	f_7	–.125	.063	.047	g_7	*.016*	*.073*	*.823*
Last Contact T1	f_8	.006	.053	.913	g_8	*.048*	*.058*	*.408*
Last Contact T2	f_9	–.001	.175	.996	g_9	*.435*	*.204*	*.035*
Mood T1	f_{10}	.014	.098	.889	g_{10}	*–.032*	*.095*	*.740*
Mood T2	f_{11}	–.003	.087	.975	g_{11}	*–.039*	*.093*	*.675*
Knowledge of Video	f_{12}	.133	.413	.748	g_{12}	*–.322*	*.673*	*.634*
Gender	f_{13}	–.169	.176	.339	g_{13}	*–.360*	*.191*	*.062*
Age	f_{14}	–.018	.011	.112	g_{14}	*.009*	*.013*	*.519*
		$R^2 = .650$				$R^2 = .543$		
		$F(15, 170) = 23.714$, $p < .001$				$F(16, 169) = 18.344$, $p < .001$		

Note.— Regression Coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator. Covariates are in italics.

TABLE B.5

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE PERCEIVED SOCIAL IDENTITY THREAT AND NEGATIVE WORD-OF-MOUTH SIMPLE MEDIATOR MODEL

		Consequent						
		Perceived Social Identity Threat T2 (M)				NWOM T2 (Y)		
Antecedent		Coeff.	SE	*p*		Coeff.	SE	*p*
CBS (X)	a	.469	.191	.015	c'	.949	.252	.000
Perceived Social Identity Threat T2 (M)		—	—	—	b	.364	.134	.007
Constant	i_1	1.288	1.348	.341	i_2	1.068	2.272	.639
Perceived Social Identity Threat T1	f_1	*.213*	*.121*	*.079*	g_1	*–.054*	*.117*	*.643*
Negative Word-of-Mouth T1	f_2	*.113*	*.067*	*.095*	g_2	*.355*	*.100*	*.001*
Perceived Betrayal T1	f_3	*–.047*	*.113*	*.679*	g_3	*.000*	*.110*	*.997*
Perceived Betrayal T2	f_4	*.634*	*.061*	*.000*	g_4	*.174*	*.124*	*.163*
Product Involvement	f_5	*–.054*	*.057*	*.349*	g_5	*.134*	*.083*	*.109*
Brand Experience	f_6	*–.040*	*.062*	*.515*	g_6	*–.073*	*.093*	*.429*
Brand Awareness	f_7	*–.124*	*.059*	*.038*	g_7	*–.087*	*.097*	*.375*
Last Contact T1	f_8	*.012*	*.052*	*.818*	g_8	*–.114*	*.084*	*.178*
Last Contact T2	f_9	*–.016*	*.172*	*.926*	g_9	*–.192*	*.296*	*.517*
Mood T1	f_{10}	*.004*	*.098*	*.966*	g_{10}	*.183*	*.151*	*.227*
Mood T2	f_{11}	*.000*	*.086*	*.999*	g_{11}	*–.049*	*.159*	*.759*
Knowledge of Video	f_{12}	*.276*	*.379*	*.468*	g_{12}	*.150*	*.666*	*.822*
Gender	f_{13}	*–.147*	*.176*	*.405*	g_{13}	*–.123*	*.219*	*.574*
Age	f_{14}	*–.017*	*.011*	*.141*	g_{14}	*–.015*	*.017*	*.360*
		$R^2 = .653$				$R^2 = .513$		
		$F(15, 170) = 23.466$, $p < .001$				$F(16, 169) = 11.718$, $p < .001$		

Note.—Regression Coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator. Covariates are in italics.

TABLE B.6

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE BRAND TRUST AND PERCEIVED BETRAYAL SIMPLE MODERATION MODEL

		Coeff.	SE	*t*	*p*
Intercept	i_1	–.266	2.271	–.117	.907
CBS (X)	b_1	.199	.541	.368	.714
Brand Trust (M)	b_2	–.110	.119	–.927	.356
X x M	b_3	.304	.160	1.901	.059
Perceived Betrayal T1	g_1	*.336*	*.105*	*3.209*	*.002*
Product Involvement	g_2	*.005*	*.092*	*.053*	*.958*
Brand Experience	g_3	*.087*	*.116*	*.749*	*.455*
Brand Awareness	g_4	*–.022*	*.095*	*–.231*	*.818*
Last Contact T1	g_5	*.057*	*.083*	*.687*	*.493*
Last Contact T2	g_6	*.415*	*.326*	*1.274*	*.204*
Mood T1	g_7	*–.147*	*.124*	*–1.182*	*.239*
Mood T2	g_8	*.030*	*.133*	*.228*	*.820*
Knowledge of Video	g_9	*.949*	*.760*	*1.248*	*.214*
Gender	g_{10}	*–.439*	*.258*	*–1.699*	*.091*
Age	g_{11}	*.010*	*.018*	*.586*	*.559*
				$R^2 = .236$	
				$F(14, 171) = 4.029$, $p < .001$	

Note.— Regression Coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator. Covariates are in italics.

TABLE B.7

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE ACTUAL SELF-CONGRUENCE AND ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BRAND SIMPLE MODERATION MODEL

		Coeff.	SE	*t*	*p*
Intercept	i_1	.222	2.078	.107	.915
Perceived Betrayal (X)	b_1	–.112	.107	–1.049	.296
Actual Self-Congruence (M)	b_2	.555	.149	3.720	.000
X x M	b_3	–.099	.044	–2.275	.024
Perceived Betrayal T1	g_1	*.096*	*.094*	*1.014*	*.312*
Attitude toward the Brand T1	g_2	*.516*	*.088*	*5.828*	*.000*
Product Involvement	g_3	*–.058*	*.068*	*–.852*	*.396*
Brand Experience	g_4	*.057*	*.084*	*.677*	*.499*
Brand Awareness	g_5	*.056*	*.067*	*.834*	*.406*
Last Contact T1	g_6	*.029*	*.053*	*.546*	*.586*
Last Contact T2	g_7	*.110*	*.183*	*.601*	*.548*
Mood T1	g_8	*–.098*	*.086*	*–1.140*	*.256*
Mood T2	g_9	*.064*	*.085*	*.746*	*.457*
Knowledge of Video	g_{10}	*–.286*	*.705*	*–.406*	*.685*
Gender	g_{11}	*–.028*	*.175*	*–.158*	*.875*
Age	g_{12}	*.025*	*.011*	*2.230*	*.027*
				$R^2 = .607$	
				$F(15, 170) = 28.942$, $p < .001$	

Note.— Regression Coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator. Covariates are in italics.

TABLE B.8

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE ACTUAL SELF-CONGRUENCE AND PURCHASE INTENTION SIMPLE MODERATION MODEL

		Coeff.	SE	*t*	*p*
Intercept	i_1	1.527	1.964	.778	.438
Perceived Social Identity Threat (X)	b_1	–.053	.118	–.451	.652
Actual Self-Congruence (M)	b_2	.600	.178	3.374	.001
X x M	b_3	–.102	.048	–2.104	.037
Perceived Social Identity Threat T1	g_1	*–.003*	*.078*	*–.040*	*.968*
Purchase Intention T1	g_2	*.275*	*.078*	*3.521*	*.001*
Product Involvement	g_3	*–.086*	*.063*	*–1.361*	*.175*
Brand Experience	g_4	*.193*	*.101*	*1.917*	*.057*
Brand Awareness	g_5	*.077*	*.074*	*1.040*	*.300*
Last Contact T1	g_6	*.055*	*.060*	*.919*	*.360*
Last Contact T2	g_7	*.399*	*.205*	*1.947*	*.053*
Mood T1	g_8	*–.040*	*.088*	*–.453*	*.651*
Mood T2	g_9	*–.031*	*.091*	*–.335*	*.738*
Knowledge of Video	g_{10}	*–.572*	*.656*	*–.872*	*.385*
Gender	g_{11}	*–.311*	*.195*	*–1.597*	*.112*
Age	g_{12}	*.010*	*.013*	*.823*	*.412*
				$R^2 = .580$	
				$F(15, 170) = 19.285$, $p < .001$	

Note.— Regression Coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator. Covariates are in italics.

TABLE B.9

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE PERCEIVED BETRAYAL AND BRAND ATTITUDE MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL

		Consequent						
		Perceived Betrayal T2 (M)				Attitude toward the Brand T2 (Y)		
Antecedent		Coeff.	SE	*p*		Coeff.	SE	*p*
CBS (X)	a_1	–.379	.367	.302	c'	–.650	.160	.000
Perceived Betrayal T2 (M)		—	—	—	b_1	–.007	.099	.944
Brand Trust (W)	a_2	–.075	.093	.420		—	—	—
X x W	a_3	.199	.110	.072		—	—	—
Actual Self-Congruence (V)		—	—	—	b_2	.458	.111	.000
M x V		—	—	—	b_3	–.080	.029	.006
Constant	i_1	–2.199	1.402	.119	i_2	.496	1.268	.696
Perceived Betrayal T1	f_1	*.159*	*.081*	*.051*	g_1	*.042*	*.075*	*.574*
Attitude toward the Brand T1	f_2	*.230*	*.081*	*.005*	g_2	*.540*	*.073*	*.000*
Perceived Social Identity Threat T1	f_3	*–.025*	*.081*	*.755*	g_3	*.109*	*.075*	*.145*
Perceived Social Identity Threat T2	f_4	*.746*	*.057*	*.000*	g_4	*–.124*	*.074*	*.096*
Product Involvement	f_5	*.045*	*.058*	*.440*	g_5	*–.036*	*.053*	*.498*
Brand Experience	f_6	*–.010*	*.081*	*.906*	g_6	*.086*	*.078*	*.275*
Brand Awareness	f_7	*.091*	*.066*	*.172*	g_7	*.035*	*.060*	*.563*
Last Contact T1	f_8	*.019*	*.054*	*.722*	g_8	*.050*	*.049*	*.307*
Last Contact T2	f_9	*.150*	*.182*	*.412*	g_9	*.082*	*.165*	*.619*
Mood T1	f_{10}	*–.070*	*.087*	*.421*	g_{10}	*–.040*	*.080*	*.620*
Mood T2	f_{11}	*–.014*	*.079*	*.857*	g_{11}	*.005*	*.073*	*.941*
Knowledge of Video	f_{12}	*.359*	*.409*	*.381*	g_{12}	*–.347*	*.380*	*.362*
Gender	f_{13}	*–.068*	*.172*	*.694*	g_{13}	*.082*	*.156*	*.598*
Age	f_{14}	*.016*	*.011*	*.150*	g_{14}	*.019*	*.011*	*.071*
		$R^2 = .632$				$R^2 = .657$		
		$F(17, 168) = 19.995$, $p < .001$				$F(18, 167) = 17.782$, $p < .001$		

Note.— Regression Coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator. Covariates are in italics.

TABLE B.10

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE PERCEIVED SOCIAL IDENTITY THREAT AND PURCHASE INTENTION MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL

		Consequent						
		Perceived Social Identity Threat T2 (M)				Purchase Intention T2 (Y)		
Antecedent		Coeff.	SE	*p*		Coeff.	SE	*p*
CBS (X)	a	.443	.193	.023	c'	–.276	.177	.120
Perceived Social Identity Threat T2 (M)		—	—	—	b_1	.015	.126	.905
Actual Self-Congruence (V)		—	—	—	b_2	.584	.187	.002
M x V		—	—	—	b_3	–.095	.054	.081
Constant	i_1	2.021	1.462	.169	i_2	1.138	2.138	.595
Perceived Social Identity Threat T1	f_1	.237	.112	.036	g_1	–.077	.105	.464
Purchase Intention T1	f_2	–.104	.070	.143	g_2	.290	.081	.001
Perceived Betrayal T1	f_3	–.040	.113	.725	g_3	.134	.095	.158
Perceived Betrayal T2	f_4	.668	.063	.000	g_4	–.078	.072	.286
Product Involvement	f_5	–.048	.058	.411	g_5	–.069	.065	.291
Brand Experience	f_6	.001	.075	.995	g_6	.197	.100	.051
Brand Awareness	f_7	–.125	.063	.047	g_7	.088	.075	.240
Last Contact T1	f_8	.006	.053	.913	g_8	.072	.061	.242
Last Contact T2	f_9	–.001	.175	.996	g_9	.425	.203	.038
Mood T1	f_{10}	.014	.098	.889	g_{10}	–.050	.088	.566
Mood T2	f_{11}	–.003	.087	.975	g_{11}	–.038	.090	.672
Knowledge of Video	f_{12}	.133	.413	.748	g_{12}	–.500	.711	.483
Gender	f_{13}	–.169	.176	.339	g_{13}	–.299	.195	.126
Age	f_{14}	–.018	.011	.112	g_{14}	.012	.013	.327
		$R^2 = .650$				$R^2 = .594$		
		$F(15, 170) = 23.714$, $p < .001$				$F(18, 176) = 19.858$, $p < .001$		

Note.— Regression Coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator. Covariates are in italics.

References

Hayes, Andrew F. and Li Cai (2007), "Using Heteroskedasticity-Consistent Standard Error Estimators in OLS Regression: An Introduction and Software Implementation," *Behavior Research Methods*, 39 (4), 709–22.

Long, J. Scott and Laurie H. Ervin (2000), "Using Heteroscedasticity Consistent Standard Errors in the Linear Regression Model," *The American Statistician*, 54 (3), 217–24.

Manuscript III

The Effectiveness of a Defensive versus Accommodative Response Strategy to Negative Electronic Word-of-Mouth: The Role of Message Credibility [5]

Andrea Kähr [a], Marco Casanova [a], and Patrick Heri [a]

[a] University of Bern, Institute of Marketing and Management, Engehaldenstrasse 4, 3012 Bern

[5] An earlier version of this paper has been successfully submitted and presented at the European Marketing Conference (EMAC 2016). It is intended to publish this manuscript in an international marketing journal in a modified version. It is based on a joint work with Marco Casanova and Patrick Heri.

The Effectiveness of a Defensive versus Accommodative Response Strategy to Negative Electronic Word-of-Mouth: The Role of Message Credibility

As consumers increasingly rely on electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM) to form their purchase decisions, negative reviews on virtual opinion platforms can significantly diminish companies' sales. Prior research has already empirically examined these adverse effects of negative eWOM. However, how organizational response strategies to negative eWOM influence other consumers' attitudinal and behavioral responses has not been investigated in depth so far. In the anonymity of the Internet, credibility of eWOM plays a crucial role in the processing of web-based information. Based on attribution and impression formation theory, this study examines how different organizational response strategies to negative eWOM influence other consumers' brand evaluation (i.e., attitude toward the brand and perceived service quality) and purchase intention depending on the credibility of negative eWOM. This study shows that the credibility of negative eWOM moderates the effect of an organizational response (defensive vs. accommodative) on other consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention. Findings suggest that when credibility of the negative eWOM is low, companies should react with a defensive rather than an accommodative response.

Recently, on the review platform TripAdvisor, a very dissatisfied customer shared a highly negative review of a hotel in London with other consumers: *"This shouldnt even be rated 1 star!! Should be minus 1!!! I dont know where to begin! Firstly we opened curtains and wads of dust fell everywhere. Room was stuffy so asked for fan but that just blew DUST everywhere! Toilets were broken and there was RAT DROPPINGS in the wardrobe. (…) There were CRAWLIEA everywhere we looked. We didnt take anything out of our suitcase. (…) Please DO NOT VISIT if you do not want to come home with crawlies. We thought to take some pics of the aftermath before we left. This experience has left us traumatised. What was supposed to be a nice trip to london turned out to be hell on the first nyt!!!"* (Naz 2016, emphasis in original). Such negative online reviews have rapidly grown into a major challenge for many companies. There is a growing number of virtual opinion platforms such as TripAdvisor, Booking.com, and Amazon.com where customers not only share their positive but also their negative experiences with products and services with other potential customers. Such negative online reviews, online recommendations, or online opinions are often referred to as negative electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM; Serra Cantallops and Salvi 2014), which is defined as "negative statement made by potential, actual, or former customers about a product or company, which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via the Internet" (Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004, p. 39).

Existing research has reported that negative (e)WOM such as the example in the beginning of this article can keep potential customers from buying the respective product or service, decreasing companies' sales (Chang et al. 2015; Ye, Law, and Gu 2009). Consumers interpret (e)WOM information provided by existing customers as a signal of product or service quality of the company and rely on other consumers' experiences with products and services to form their own attitudes and make purchase decisions (e.g., Sparks, So, and Bradley 2016;

Ye, Law, and Gu 2009). According to a study by McKinsey, 20 – 50% of all purchasing decisions are primarily influenced by (e)WOM (Bughin, Doogan, and Vetvik 2010). Due to its easy access and speed (time at which reviews to new products or services are available), eWOM has a much broader reach than traditional WOM (Sun et al. 2006). As such, the potential negative effects of negative eWOM on other consumers' purchase decision and companies' sales can be much more dramatic than those of traditional WOM. Therefore, by engaging in negative eWOM about a company or brand, consumers can cause a decrease in companies' sales and, thereby, harm the company or brand. Thus, recent research has also denoted negative (e)WOM as instrumental aggression wherein consumers intend to harm the company or brand in order to vent their negative emotions or to restore equity (Kähr et al. 2016).

Consequently, due to its negative effects on companies or brands, there has been an increasing research interest in negative eWOM (e.g., Chang et al. 2015; Lee and Cranage 2012; Serra Cantallops and Salvi 2014). So far, the focus mostly lay on the antecedents (e.g., Sun et al. 2006), especially the motivation to generate eWOM (e.g., Hennig-Thurau et al. 2004; Serra Cantallops and Salvi 2014), and its immediate outcomes such as a decline in companies' sales (e.g., Chang et al. 2015; Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006; Ye, Law, and Gu 2009). Only few studies examined how potential customers incorporate eWOM and whether and how companies should respond to negative eWOM (e.g., Chang et al. 2015; Lee and Cranage 2012; Sparks, So, and Bradley 2016). However, by responding adequately to negative eWOM, companies can regain customer trust and decrease their concerns (Sparks, So, and Bradley 2016). Furthermore, due to the broad reach of eWOM, responding to negative eWOM is not only important to regain the dissatisfied customer's trust but also to convince potential customers who encounter negative eWOM of the quality of the evaluated company.

Prior research has already established that the adequacy of organizational responses to negative critique depends on certain factors such as the severity of the service failure (Chang

et al. 2015), the company's culpability (Kim et al. 2004), and the consensus for positive and negative eWOM (Lee and Cranage 2012). However, despite its strong influence on whether and how information is adopted (Cheung et al. 2009) – prior research has even denoted it as one of the most important factors influencing the processing of web-based information (Metzger 2007) – the credibility of eWOM has not yet been addressed in research on response strategies to eWOM. According to literature on credibility and information adoption, consumers believe and accept eWOM they regard as credible, influencing their subsequent behavior (Cheung, Sia, and Kuan 2012; Sussman and Siegal 2003; Wathen and Burkell 2002). On the other hand, they evaluate eWOM with low credibility as less persuasive (e.g., Jain and Posavac 2001) and, thus, its influence on their attitude and subsequent behavior is weaker. Therefore, based on its credibility, companies can decide on whether and how to respond to negative eWOM depending on the degree to which consumers have adopted its message.

Against this background, we first examine how negative eWOM affects other consumers' perceptions of and behavior toward the brand, i.e., their perceived service quality, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention and to what degree an organizational response to it can mitigate its potential adverse effects on consumers. By drawing on impression formation and attribution theory, we then investigate which response strategy is adequate depending on the credibility of the negative eWOM. Based on a large-scale online experiment where we confront consumers with positive and negative online reviews, we subsequently report empirical findings on the effects of negative eWOM on other consumers and how organizational responses can buffer these effects depending on the credibility of the negative eWOM. Thereby, this study contributes to the literature on the response effectiveness to negative eWOM as well as to impression formation and attribution theory and derives important implications for further research and managerial practice.

Conceptual Foundation and Hypotheses

The Effect of Negative eWOM on Consumers' Perception of and Behavior toward the Brand

In the last years, eWOM information has gained a prominent role in influencing customers' attitude and purchase decision, especially for service products (e.g., Sparks, So, and Bradley 2016; Ye, Law, and Gu 2009). According to Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan (2008), (e)WOM reflects the most important information source when consumers make a purchase decision. Generally, (e)WOM is perceived as a trustworthy source of information and consumers value (e)WOM stronger than company communication (Chiou and Cheng 2003; Dickinger 2011; Park, Lee, and Han 2007; Senecal and Nantel 2004). In addition to the high trustworthiness of eWOM, it reduces consumers' search time and risks in a buying decision (Dickinger 2011; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003; Kim, Mattila, and Baloglu 2011). Compared to other sources such as magazines or television, eWOM is easily and usually freely accessible which decreases search costs (Klein 1998; Papathanassis and Knolle 2011; Xiang and Gretzel 2010). Furthermore, due to the intangibility of services and the difficulty of their evaluation prior to consumption, experience reports of other customers about a service can serve as a substitute of consumers' own experiences, thereby reducing the risk in the buying decision (Litvin, Goldsmith, and Pan 2008).

The impact of eWOM on other consumers' purchase intention and companies' sales has increasingly gained attention in recent research (e.g., Chang et al. 2015; Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006; Serra Cantallops and Salvi 2014; Ye, Law, and Gu 2009). For example, prior research has shown that positive eWOM increased sales, whereas the opposite was true for negative eWOM (Chevalier and Mayzlin 2006). However, there is rarely only positive or only negative eWOM about a product or service available. Mostly, consumers are confronted with a proportion of positive and negative eWOM. According to Heider (1958) who founded the

attribution theory, individuals are naïve scientists who try to find explanations for the behavior of others (e.g., why does a consumer engage in negative eWOM?). Thereby, attribution refers to the inference of the reason why a behavior occurred (Kelley and Michela 1980). In a service context, attribution theory predicts that the perceived cause of a service failure influences how a consumer responds (Folkes 1984). Thereby, it is not necessarily the knowledge that the product or service failed that predicts the behavior, but rather why it failed. In Heider's (1958) attribution theory, he distinguishes between internal and external attribution of cause. Internal attribution refers to a cause for the behavior that is due to the individual, his or her personality, or opinion and external attribution is due to the environment or situation. In our context of negative and positive eWOM, a consumer may wonder whether the negative eWOM is really due to a service failure (external attribution) or due to the person who reviewed the product or service (internal attribution) (see also Gelbrich 2010).

An important construct that influences this attribution process is consensus. In the context of eWOM, consensus refers to the extent to which consumers agree on the performance of a product or service (Doh and Hwang 2008). High consensus among consumers who review a product or service implies that their reviews share the same valence, i.e., positive or negative (Lee and Cranage 2012). According to Kelley's covariation model from attribution theory in social psychology (1967), consensus influences the attribution of cause, especially whether it is attributed internally or externally. A high consensus thereby leads to an external attribution (it is not due to the consumer who reviewed the product or service because all or most people agree, therefore, the failure must have been due to the company's behavior) and a low consensus to an internal attribution (the opinion of the reviewer is not in line with others, therefore, it must be due to personal characteristics). In case of only few negative and a majority of positive eWOM, consensus for the negative eWOM would be low and, consequently, the causes for the negative eWOM would be attributed internally. In contrast, if there was a

majority of negative and only few positive eWOM, the causes for the negative eWOM would be attributed externally (see also Folkes and Kotsos 1986). Prior research has found that when the cause is attributed to the brand (here: company), brand evaluations decreased whereas when the cause was attributed to the communicator (here: author of the negative eWOM), brand evaluations increased (Laczniak, DeCarlo, and Ramaswami 2001).

Furthermore, existing research on impression formation theory has provided empirical evidence for a negativity effect, i.e., that negative information is stronger weighted than positive information in the formation of overall evaluations (e.g., Ahluwalia 2002). A widely accepted explanation for this effect lays in the perceived diagnosticity of information (Herr, Kardes, and Kim 1991). If a piece of information allows the consumer to assign a product to one particular cognitive category, it is seen as diagnostic. In contrast, information that allows for an assignment to multiple categories is ambiguous or nondiagnostic. Whereas positive information allows a categorization to high-, average-, and low-quality products (especially if it is only moderately positive), negative information is seen as more diagnostic because it allows categorizing a product or service to lower quality products (Skowronski and Carlston 1987). Consequently, we assume that with a minority of negative and a majority of moderately positive eWOM, the moderately positive eWOM is perceived as nondiagnostic and discounted. Therefore, the consensus for the negative eWOM should increase and lead to an external attribution of the blame, decreasing the brand evaluations (here: attitude toward the brand and perceived service quality) as well as subsequent purchase intentions of other consumers. Therefore, we suggest:

> **H_1:** A minority of negative eWOM in combination with a majority of moderately positive eWOM negatively affects a company's performance by decreasing consumers' (a) perceived service quality, (b) attitude toward the brand, and (c) purchase intention compared to only moderately positive eWOM.

Effectiveness of Organizational Responses

Due to the adverse effects of negative eWOM on other consumers' brand evaluation and purchasing behavior, the knowledge of whether and how to respond to negative eWOM is critical for companies. When looking at responses in a buyer-seller context, such responses have typically been examined in case of service failures followed by recovery efforts such as apologies, refunds, or free products or services (Keller 1993; Kelley, Hoffman, and Davis 1993). Thereby, the recovery efforts target the immediate customer who experienced the service failure. However, in the context of eWOM, response strategies should not only focus on the dissatisfied customer (i.e., the author of the negative eWOM) but also on the general public because eWOM is usually accessible for everyone (Klein 1998; Xiang and Gretzel 2010) and may have an effect on their brand evaluation and purchase intention. Correspondingly, research on the response effectiveness of eWOM is often based on responses from crisis communication management (Chang et al. 2015; Lee and Song 2010), which refers to the symbolic resources managers invest to protect or repair the organizational image (Coombs 1998). Response strategies in crisis communication typically distinguish between accommodative and defensive response strategies (Coombs 1998, 2007; Marcus and Goodman 1991). With accommodative responses, organizations admit the existence of a problem, accept responsibility, or take measures to improve the situation (Marcus and Goodman 1991). In contrast, defensive responses deny the existence of a problem or try to deny responsibility (Coombs 1998).

Prior research on negative eWOM has shown that companies should respond in any case (accommodative or defensive) to negative eWOM and regard their response as an opportunity to provide (prepurchase) signals about their quality to other consumers (Sandes and Urdan 2013; Sparks, So, and Bradley 2016). The underlying logic here may be found in the information asymmetry between the seller and the buyer. The seller is aware of the product or

service quality whereas the buyer often cannot fully judge its quality, especially in case of service goods (Boulding and Kirmani 1993). An organizational response to eWOM conveys further information about the company, its staff, and their customer treatment, reducing the information asymmetry (Slater and Rouner 1996). Thus, by providing a response to negative eWOM, the company increases the quality perceptions of other consumers and may reduce the severity of the negative eWOM, weakening the negativity effect. Thereby, the company's response creates a stronger consensus for the moderately positive eWOM, leading to an internal blame attribution of the problems described in the negative eWOM. Therefore, by providing a response, the company should decrease the effect of the negative eWOM on consumers' brand evaluation. Thus, we hypothesize:

> **H_2**: A response to negative eWOM by the company (accommodative or defensive) has a positive effect on consumers' (a) perceived service quality and (b) attitude toward the brand compared to no response by the company.

A widely accepted relation in research on the consequences of attitude formation is that attitudes influence behavior (Ajzen 2001; Ajzen and Fishbein 1977; Fazio, Powell, and Williams 1989). As a behavioral measure, consumers' purchase intention can be regarded as a proxy for their actual behavior that has an impact on companies' sales. Thus, we assume that consumers' brand evaluation influence their subsequent purchase intention and suggest:

> **H_3**: A response to negative eWOM by the company (accommodative or defensive) has a positive effect on consumers' perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand compared to no response by the company which in turn increases consumers' purchase intention.

The Moderating Role of Message Credibility

Although we expect an organizational response to have a positive effect on consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention compared to no response, this effect may differ depending on which response strategy is chosen. An accommodative response is usually used to regain a favorable impression of the organization and to mitigate the severity of a problem (Lee and Cranage 2012). However, by accepting that a problem has occurred (as claimed in negative eWOM), an accommodative response may increase the consensus for the negative eWOM. Consequently, an accommodative response may favor an external attribution of the problems mentioned in the negative eWOM. On the other hand, a defensive response has been shown to be negatively related to firm reputation (Chang et al. 2015). However, by denying that there is a problem, a defensive response decreases the consensus for the negative eWOM and may increase the consensus for the moderately positive eWOM. Thereby, a defensive response may favor an internal attribution of the problems proclaimed in the negative eWOM. In this case, a defensive response may lead to more positive outcomes (i.e., a higher brand evaluation and purchase intention) than an accommodative response. Indeed, prior research observed that in case of weak consensus for negative (e)WOM, a defensive response may be more effective to lessen organizational blame than an accommodative response (Lee and Cranage 2012).

However, which response strategy is adequate in a given situation may not only depend on the valence and proportion of eWOM but also on other factors such as the credibility of eWOM. Credibility has previously been defined as "believability or the characteristic that makes people believe and trust someone or something" (Cheung, Sia, and Kuan 2012, p. 619). Accordingly, prior research on information adoption reported that consumers adopt information they regard as credible, influencing their subsequent behavior (Cheung, Sia, and Kuan 2012; Sussman and Siegal 2003; Wathen and Burkell 2002). By contrast, they evaluate infor-

mation they see as little credible as less persuasive, having less of an influence on their subsequent behavior (e.g., Ajzen, Brown, and Rosenthal 1996, Jain and Posavac 2001). As such, the credibility of eWOM cannot only influence consumers' brand evaluation but also their subsequent behavior.

With regard to the credibility of eWOM, the credibility of its messages is based on an interaction of source credibility, message characteristics (e.g., message quality), and receiver characteristics (e.g., product experience) (Cheung, Sia, and Kuan 2012; Wathen and Burkell 2002). Thereby, source credibility comprises the two sub-dimensions expertness which refers to "the extent to which a communicator is perceived to be a source of valid assertions" and trustworthiness which has previously been defined as "the degree of confidence in the communicator's intent to communicate the assertions he considers most valid" (Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953, p. 21). Due to the anonymous environment of the Internet, source credibility of eWOM is often difficult to judge (Metzger 2007) and authenticity of eWOM doubtful (Chang et al. 2015). Such concerns regarding the (source) credibility of eWOM have increased with opinion spamming where fake reviews are written in order to promote some entities (e.g., products or services) or to damage the reputation of competitors (Mukherjee, Liu, and Glance 2012). With only few clues about expertness and trustworthiness of the source of eWOM available, message characteristics such as the message quality (e.g., argument strength, writing style) deliver important clues about the author of the message and, therefore, influence the source and message credibility (Luo et al. 2013).

With regard to the impact of eWOM credibility, source credibility has been shown to influence the weighting of contradictory information (e.g., when positive and negative information is available) (Rosenbaum and Levin 1968). More specifically, information from a source with high credibility is weighted stronger than information of a source with low credibility. Furthermore, information of low credibility is also regarded as less persuasive (Jain and

Posavac 2001). As such, credibility may affect the negativity and, consequently, the consensus effect. Based on these prior research findings, we can assume that when negative eWOM is of low credibility, (moderately) positive eWOM may be seen as more persuasive, decreasing the negativity effect (Skowronski and Carlston 1987). In this case, the consensus for the moderately positive eWOM is higher and, therefore, the blame for the experience as described in the negative eWOM with low credibility should be internally attributed, weakening its negative effect on other consumers. On the other hand, for negative eWOM with high credibility, the negativity effect persists and, consequently, the moderately positive eWOM is again perceived as nondiagnostic and, therefore, discounted. As a consequence, the blame for the negative eWOM with high credibility should be attributed externally.

Consequently, for negative eWOM with low credibility, the company may use a defensive response that denies the existence of the problem because the blame for the negative experience proclaimed in the negative eWOM is attributed internally. Therefore, consumers' brand evaluation should not decrease as a result of the negative eWOM commented with a defensive response (see also DeCarlo et al. 2007; Laczniak, DeCarlo, and Ramaswami 2001). In contrast, an accommodative response that admits the existence of a problem or accepts responsibility might increase the persuasiveness of and the consensus for the negative eWOM with low credibility, making an external attribution more probable. Consequently, consumers' brand evaluation should be less favorable with an accommodative response to negative eWOM with low credibility than a defensive response.

On the other hand, when the credibility of the negative eWOM is high, its blame should be attributed externally. In this case, a defensive organizational response which denies the existence of the problem or denies its responsibility may fail to decrease the consensus for the negative eWOM to favor an internal attribution due to the negativity effect. Then again, an accommodative response where the company admits the existence of the problem or accepts

responsibility increases the consensus for the negative eWOM and supports an external attribution. Therefore, whether an accommodative or a defensive response is chosen should not affect consumers' brand evaluation because the blame should be externally attributed in both cases. Thus, we suggest:

> **H_4**: A defensive (vs. accommodative) organizational response to negative eWOM increases consumers' (a) perceived service quality and (b) attitude toward the brand when credibility of the negative eWOM is low but not when it is high.

As individuals' attitude influence their subsequent behavior (Ajzen 2001; Ajzen and Fishbein 1977; Fazio, Powell, and Williams 1989), we again assume that in our context consumers' brand evaluation will affect their purchase intention. More specifically, we hypothesize:

> **H_5**: A defensive (vs. accommodative) organizational response to negative eWOM increases consumers' (a) perceived service quality and (b) attitude toward the brand when credibility of the negative eWOM is low but not when it is high and consumers' perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand in turn increase their purchase intention.

Method

To test the proposed hypotheses, we conducted an online experiment with a 3 (organizational response to a negative review: accommodative, defensive, or no response) × 2 (message credibility of the negative review: high vs. low) between-subjects design. We also included a control group with no negative review (and also no organizational response). Participants were recruited through different channels, i.e., social networks, Google Adwords, and an e-mail newsletter. As our experiment was based on fictitious online reviews of a virtual opinion platform on hotel accommodation (with ratings from 1 star = "insufficient" to 5 stars = "outstand-

ing" and a comment section), this sampling procedure assured that only Internet savvy customers participated in our experiment. Unless indicated otherwise, we used seven-point Likert scales ranging from 1 = "completely disagree" to 7 = "completely agree" for all measures in this study.

Participants and Stimuli

Eight hundred participants (40.9% female; M_{age} = 37) from Switzerland, Germany, and Austria completed the online experiment. The participant sample was involved in hotel accommodation (product involvement: M = 5.054, SD = 1.357, high self-reported product category purchase experience). Participants were randomly assigned to one of seven scenarios with each of them containing three sections. The first section contained some general information about a fictitious hotel named *Hotel Zentrum*. Besides the hotel description, section one contained two moderately positive reviews of the hotel, one 3-star and one 4-star review. To the control group, only this basic scenario was shown. In section 2, we manipulated the credibility of the negative review by adding a negative 1-star review with high or low credibility to the two positive reviews of the basic scenario. In the comment section of the negative review, both source and message characteristics were varied to manipulate message credibility (Wathen and Burkell 2002). To affect source credibility, we manipulated both trustworthiness through a rating of the reviewer by other users (high: 4.6 / 5; low: 2.1 / 5) and expertness by showing how many reviews the author had already written (high: 15; low: 2) (see also Hovland, Janis, and Kelley 1953). With regard to message characteristics, the highly credible review was well written and well structured. In contrast, the little credible review featured a basic language with several spelling mistakes and some vulgar expressions. To eliminate content-related effects such as the influence of argument quality on information processing (e.g., Cheung, Sia, and Kuan 2012; Sussman and Siegal 2003), in both reviews the same points were criticized. Finally, in section 3, we manipulated the organizational response to the negative review by

either showing an accommodative, defensive, or no response. To ensure that responses only differed in terms of being accommodative or defensive, we provided the same arguments for the negative experience described in the negative review. Based on the conceptualization of Marcus and Goodman (1991) and Coombs (1998, 2007), the accommodative response provided an apology and expressed concern for the customer. In addition, it acknowledged responsibility, explained the experienced service failure, and described measures to improve service in the future. On the other hand, the defensive response denied the existence of a problem and responsibility thereof and described the experience from the hotel's point of view (see also Chang et al. 2015) (see Appendix A for the scenarios).

Pretest

To ensure that the negative review differed in terms of credibility and the responses with regard to being accommodative versus defensive, we conducted a pretest among 75 of our students in business administration. Each student was presented with a negative review of low or high credibility and an accommodative or defensive response. The accommodative response should be stronger perceived as being an apology than a denial but both responses should not differ in terms of credibility. The negative review and organizational responses were then revised according to the students' feedback in order to fit the desired manipulation.

Measures

In our main experiment, after participants read the scenarios, they first had to respond to the manipulation checks. We measured the credibility of the negative review with the item "the information in this review is credible" and the perceived difference between the accommodative and defensive response with the item "the hotel has apologized." After the measures for the manipulation checks, participants had to state their perceived service quality with the

three-item scale of Taylor and Baker (e.g., “Overall, I consider the hotel’s services to be excellent,” Cronbach’s α = .745; 1994), their attitude toward the brand with a five-item seven-point semantic differential scale adapted from Menon, Jewell, and Unnava (e.g., “bad / good”, Cronbach’s α = .940; 1999), and their purchase intention with a three-item scale adapted from Baker and Churchill (e.g., “Would you book this hotel if it was suggested to you by a travel agency?,” Cronbach’s α = .858; 1977) ranging from 1 = “definitely not” to 7 = “yes, definitely.”

Subsequently, we measured control variables to account for other factors that may have an impact on participants’ perceived service quality, attitude toward the brand, and purchase intention, besides our independent and moderating variables. As consumers’ cognitive state at the time of evaluation (see Metzger 2007) as well as reviewer characteristics (Wathen and Burkell 2002) affect their assessment of the message presentation and content, we measured participants’ product involvement with the three-item scale from Chandrashekaran (e.g., “I am particularly interested in hotel accommodation,” Cronbach’s α = .794; 2004) and their product category purchase experience with the item “How often do you book a hotel accommodation?” adapted from Yoo and Donthu (2001) on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = “never” to 5 = “very often.” Also, we measured the personal importance of a user review, for which we developed four items (e.g., “I do not buy important and expensive products without reading user reviews first,” Cronbach’s α = .872). In addition, we assessed consumers’ quality consciousness which is defined as “orientation characterized by the degree to which a consumer searches for the best quality in products” (Shim and Gehrt 1996, p. 314) with the four-item scale from Shim and Gehrt (e.g., “Getting very good quality is very important to me,” Cronbach’s α = .875; 1996) and price consciousness which is defined as a “consumer’s reluctance to pay for the distinguishing features of a product if the price difference for these features is too large” (Sinha and Batra 1999, p. 238) with the four-item scale from Sinha and Batra (e.g.,

"I tend to book the lowest-priced hotel that fits my needs," Cronbach's α = .837; 1999). Finally, we asked participants to indicate their gender, age, and education (see Table B.1 in Appendix B for all items of this study). As prior research has shown that product-related features such as brand or price (e.g., Metzger 2007; Sinha and Batra 1999) and situational factors (e.g., date of the review; Sparks, So, and Bradley 2016) may also have an effect on participants' evaluation of products, we omitted such product-related and situational information or used a fictitious brand name respectively in our experiment.

Results

Manipulation Checks

We conducted one-way independent analyses of variance to test if the experimental factors varied as intended. Subjects in the highly credible review condition reported significantly higher scores on the measured credibility item (M = 4.411, SE = .083) than in the condition with low credibility (M = 2.804, SE = .076, F(1, 674) = 205.364, $p < .001$). The score on the apology response measure was significantly higher for the accommodative response (M = 5.748, SE = .102) than for the defensive response (M = 3.248, SE = .124, F(1, 400) = 241.181, $p < .001$). Also, the two responses did not significantly differ in credibility ($M_{accom-modative}$ = 4.589, $SE_{accommodative}$ = .103, $M_{defensive}$ = 4.822, $SE_{defensive}$ = .098, F(1, 420) = 2.681, p = .102).

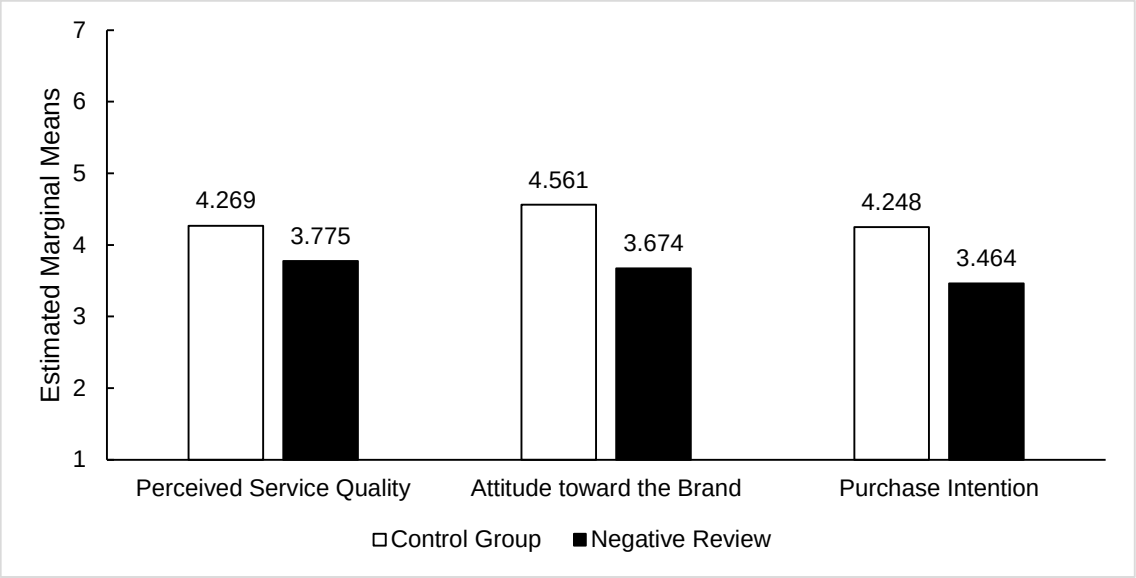
The Effect of Negative eWOM on Consumers' Perception of and Behavior toward the Brand – The Baseline Effect

We conducted a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA) with the control variables as covariates to test the baseline effect of the negative review (without an organizational re-sponse) against the control group on consumers' perceived service quality, attitude toward the

brand, and purchase intention. Using Pillai-Bartlett's trace statistic, we found a significant effect of the negative review on the dependent variables (V = .118, F(3, 363) = 16.264, $p <$ .001) (see Table B.2 in the Appendix B). Those participants who were exposed to the negative review (without a response by the company) reported significantly lower levels of perceived service quality (EMM = 3.775), brand attitude (EMM = 3.674), and purchase intention (EMM = 3.464) than those who were not exposed to a negative review (i.e., the control group) ($EMM_{perceived\ service\ quality}$ = 4.269, $EMM_{brand\ attitude}$ = 4.561, $EMM_{purchase\ intention}$ = 4.248; see Figure 1). Among the control variables, quality and price consciousness had a significant effect on the dependent variables. However, results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis. Thus, despite the low consensus for negative eWOM, it had a negative effect on consumers' perceived service quality, their attitude toward the brand, and their purchase intention, providing evidence for hypotheses $H_{1a\text{-}c}$.

FIGURE 1

The Baseline Effect of a Negative Review on Consumers' Perceived Service Quality, Attitude toward the Brand, and Purchase Intention



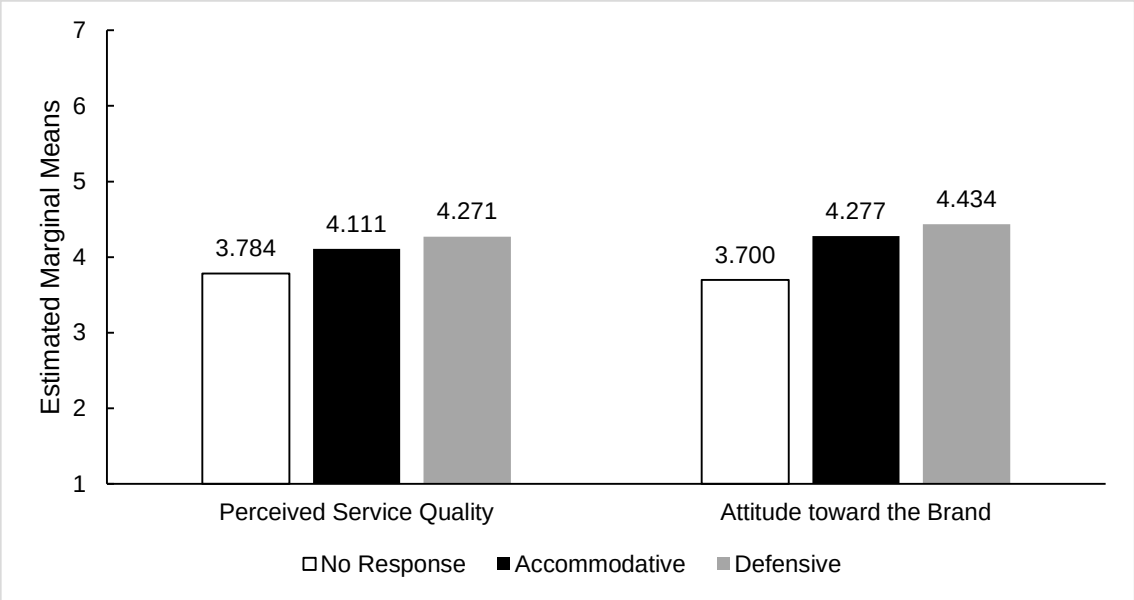
Effectiveness of Organizational Responses to Negative eWOM

We conducted another MANCOVA with the control variables as covariates to test the effect of

an organizational response on perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand compared to no organizational response. Using Pillai-Bartlett's trace statistic, we found a significant effect of the organizational responses on our dependent variables (V = .065, F(4, 1,336) = 11.227, $p < .001$) (see Table B.2 in Appendix B). A simple contrast analysis with the "no response"-condition as reference category revealed that participants' perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand differed significantly for those who received an accommodative or defensive response compared to those who received no response (*p*s < .01). For consumers' perceived service quality, both an accommodative (EMM = 4.111) and a defensive response (EMM = 4.271) generated significantly higher scores than no organizational response (EMM = 3.784). A repeated contrast analysis revealed no significant difference between the accommodative and the defensive response strategies on perceived service quality ($p = .144$). The same pattern was found for participants' attitude toward the brand ($EMM_{accommodative} = 4.277$; $EMM_{defensive} = 4.434$; $EMM_{no\ response} = 3.700$; difference between accommodative and defensive response: $p = .201$) (see Figure 2). Among the control variables, price consciousness, review importance, and age had a significant effect on consumers' perceived service quality and brand attitude. However, results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis. These results show that an organizational response (accommodative or defensive) to negative eWOM leads to a higher perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand of consumers compared to no organizational response, providing evidence for hypotheses H_{2a} and H_{2b}.

FIGURE 2

The Effect of an Organizational Response on Consumers' Perceived Service Quality and Attitude toward the Brand



A mediation analysis using ordinary least squares path analysis with PROCESS model 4 (bootstrapping of 10,000 samples; Hayes 2013) was conducted to examine whether the effect of an organizational response on purchase intention was mediated by consumers' perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand. As the organizational response variable was multicategorical, two dummy variables were coded using indicator codes (X_1: no response = 0, accommodative = 1, defensive = 0; X_2: no response = 0, accommodative = 0, defensive = 1). The control variables were included as covariates into the analysis. As can be seen in Table B.3 in Appendix B, relative to no response by the company, an accommodative (a_1 = .327) and a defensive response (a_3 = .487) increased consumers' perceived service quality and consumers who perceived a higher service quality reported a higher purchase intention (b_1 = .406). A bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval (CI) for the indirect effect of the accommodative response relative to no response (a_1b_1 = .133) was entirely above zero (.0443, .2435). The same result was found for the defensive response (a_3b_1 = .198, 95% CI = [.0972, .3252]). Similarly, relative to no response by the company, an accommodative (a_2 = .577) and a defensive response

(a_4 = .733) increased consumers' attitude toward the brand and consumers who had a more positive attitude toward the brand reported a higher purchase intention (b_2 = .607). A bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence interval for the indirect effect of the accommodative response relative to no response (a_2b_2 = .350) was again entirely above zero (.1961, .5317). The same result was found for the defensive response (a_4b_2 = .445, 95% CI = [.2849, .6232]). Counterintuitively, independent of participants' perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand, receiving an accommodative response relative to no response decreased participants purchase intention ($c_1' = -.321$, $p < .01$) and the same results were found for a defensive response ($c_2' = -.254$, $p < .01$). Among the control variables, price consciousness had a significant effect on consumers' perceived service quality, review importance, price consciousness, and age on their attitude toward the brand, and product involvement on their purchase intention. However, results did not change, whether or not we included the control variables into the analysis. Thus, our results show that an organizational response (accommodative or defensive) versus no response increases consumers' perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand which in turn increase consumers' purchase intention, providing evidence for hypothesis H_3.

The Moderating Effect of Message Credibility on the Effectiveness of a Defensive versus Accommodative Organizational Response Strategy

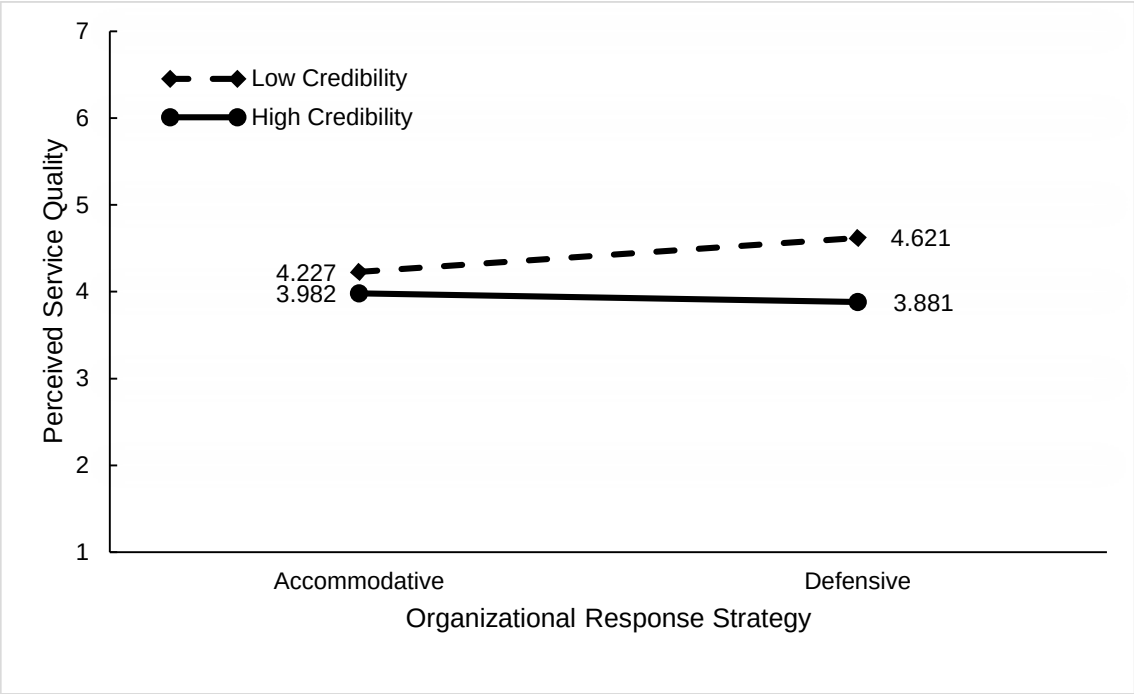
We conducted moderation analyses using ordinary least squares path analysis with PROCESS model 1 (Hayes 2013) to probe how the response by the company (0 = accommodative, 1 = defensive) affects consumers' perceived service quality and their attitude toward the brand depending on the credibility of the negative review (0 = low credibility, 1 = high credibility), including control variables as covariates.

Perceived service quality. We found a significant interaction effect of organizational responses with the credibility of the review on consumers' perceived service quality (b_3 = –

.494, SE = .217, t(421) = – 2.277, $p < .05$) (see Table B.4 in Appendix B). A spotlight analysis which probes the moderation at the two levels of the moderator (i.e., 0 = low credibility and 1 = high credibility) revealed that a defensive (vs. accommodative) organizational response only increased those consumers' perceived service quality who were shown the review of low credibility ($\theta_{(X \rightarrow Y)|M = 0} = .394$, $p < .01$) but not those who were shown the review of high credibility ($\theta_{(X \rightarrow Y)|M = 1} = -.100$, $p = .552$) (see Figure 3). Among the control variables, age had a significant effect on consumers' perceived service quality. When we excluded the control variables, the interaction effect for perceived service quality was only significant at the 7% level ($b_3 = -.398$, SE = .214, t(423) = – 1.861, $p = .063$).

FIGURE 3

The Moderating Effect of Review Credibility on the Impact of Organizational Response on Consumers' Perceived Service Quality

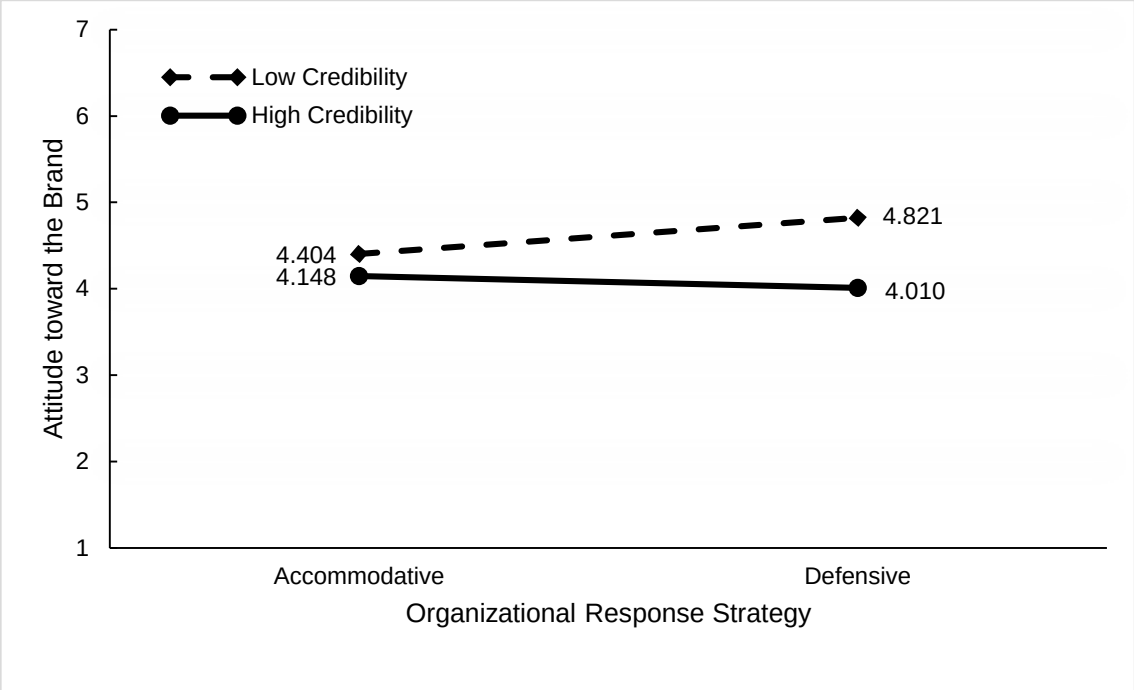


Attitude toward the brand. We also found a significant interaction effect of organizational responses with the credibility of the negative review on consumers' attitude toward the brand ($b_3 = -.555$, SE = .246, t(421) = –2.255, $p < .05$) (see Table B.5 in Appendix B). By ap-

plying a spotlight analysis, we again found that a defensive (vs. accommodative) organizational response only increased consumers' attitude toward the brand for those consumers who were shown the review of low credibility ($\theta_{(X \rightarrow Y)|M=0} = .417$, $p < .05$) but not among those who were shown the review of high credibility ($\theta_{(X \rightarrow Y)|M=1} = -.138$, $p = .452$) (see Figure 4). Among the control variables, review importance, price consciousness, gender, and age had a significant effect on consumers' attitude toward the brand. When we excluded the control variables, the interaction effect for brand attitude was not significant anymore ($b_3 = -.410$, SE = .250, $t(423) = -1.639$, $p = .102$).

FIGURE 4

The Moderating Effect of Review Credibility on the Impact of Organizational Response on Consumers' Attitude toward the Brand



Thus, when including control variables, our results show that a defensive response leads to a higher perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand than an accommodative response, when credibility of the negative eWOM is low. In contrast, when credibility is

high, the choice of response strategy (accommodative vs. defensive) does not significantly affect consumers' perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand, providing some evidence for hypotheses H_{4a} and H_{4b}.

We conducted a conditional mediation analysis using PROCESS model 7 (bootstrapping of 10,000 samples; Hayes 2013, 2015) with perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand as parallel mediators, organizational response as independent variable (0 = accommodative, 1 = defensive), and purchase intention as dependent variable. The review credibility (0 = low credibility, 1 = high credibility) served as moderator of the organizational response on consumers' perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand and the control variables as covariates. This analysis revealed a significant moderated mediation (index of moderated $\text{mediation}_{\text{perceived service quality}} = -.231$, index of moderated $\text{mediation}_{\text{attitude toward the brand}} = -.298$) where the bias-corrected 95% bootstrap confidence intervals did not include zero ($\text{CI}_{\text{perceived service quality}} = [-.4572, -.0358]$, $\text{CI}_{\text{attitude toward the brand}} = [-.5854, -.0439]$) (see Table B.6 in Appendix B). A defensive (vs. accommodative) organizational response only increased consumers' perceived service quality among those who were shown the negative review of low credibility which in turn increased their purchase intention ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow M\rightarrow Y)|M=0} = .184$, 95% CI = [.0557, .3360]) but not among those who received the negative review of high credibility ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow M\rightarrow Y)|M=1} = -.047$, 95% CI = [–.2042, .1089]). Similarly, a defensive (vs. accommodative) organizational response increased consumers' attitude toward the brand only among those who were shown the negative review of low credibility which in turn increased their purchase intention ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow M\rightarrow Y)|M=0} = .223$, [.0542, .4200]) but not among those who received the negative review of high credibility ($\theta_{(X\rightarrow M\rightarrow Y)|M=1} = -.074$, [–.2773, .1129]). Independent of participants' perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand, receiving a defensive relative to an accommodative response had no significant effect on participants' purchase in-

tention ($c_1' = .071$, $p = .479$). Among the control variables, age had a significant effect on perceived service quality, price consciousness, review importance, gender, and age on attitude toward the brand, and product involvement on purchase intention. When the control variables were excluded, the moderated mediation was not significant anymore (index of moderated $\text{mediation}_{\text{perceived service quality}} = -.188$, 95% CI = [–.4113, .0098], index of moderated $\text{mediation}_{\text{brand attitude}} = -.218$, 95% CI = [–.4972, .0405]). Therefore, when control variables are included, we find that a defensive vs. an accommodative response increases consumers' perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand which in turn increase purchase intention only when credibility of the negative review is low but not when it is high, providing some evidence for hypothesis H_5.

The fact that our moderation effects were only significant under inclusion of control variables means that our control variables, especially participants' gender, age, review importance, and price consciousness play an important role in explaining our dependent variables. However, these control variables are all related to the individual whom the company cannot influence. Therefore, our moderation effect is highly relevant because it shows that a company can increase consumers' perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand by an adequate response above the effect that our control variables (related to the individual) have on the dependent variables.

Discussion

This study examines how negative eWOM and different organizational response strategies (accommodative, defensive, no response) to it affect other consumers' brand evaluation (i.e., perceived service quality and attitude toward the brand) and purchase intention in a situation with a majority of moderately positive and a minority of negative eWOM. Thereby, it takes the credibility of the negative eWOM into account and investigates how the adequacy of an

organizational response strategy to such negative eWOM depends on its credibility. Our results confirm that negative eWOM can damage the company by decreasing consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention (even though a minority of negative and a majority of moderately positive eWOM were presented to consumers). In addition, our study also shows that companies can decrease this damage by providing a response to the negative eWOM. Thereby, the credibility of the negative eWOM determines which response strategy is adequate. More specifically, we find that when credibility of the negative eWOM is high, the choice of response strategy does not affect consumers' brand evaluation and subsequent purchase intention. However, when credibility of the negative eWOM is low, companies should choose a defensive rather than an accommodative response to best decrease its damage.

Academic Implications and Further Research

This article makes important contributions to existing literature: First, our study provides empirical evidence that when a majority of moderately positive and a minority of negative eWOM is available, negative eWOM nevertheless negatively affects other consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention. These findings indicate that the negativity effect overruled the consensus effect to some degree, i.e., even though there was a higher consensus among reviewers for the positive eWOM, the negative eWOM still negatively affected consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention. Thereby, we contribute to the literature on eWOM by providing additional empirical evidence that negative eWOM can negatively affect companies (Chang et al. 2015; Ye, Law, and Gu 2009), even when more moderately positive than negative eWOM is available. Furthermore, prior research has already examined the consensus effect (Kelley 1967) and the negativity bias (e.g., Ahluwalia 2002) separately but, to the best of our knowledge, not its interaction. With our initial evidence that the negativity effect overruled the consensus effect to some degree, we also contribute to theories of attribution and impression formation. However, further research is needed to determine the boundary conditions

of this interplay by examining different proportions of positive and negative eWOM combined with different levels of credibility.

Second, our empirical study shows that an organizational response (accommodative or defensive) compared to no response increases consumers' brand evaluation which in turn increase their purchase intention. With these findings, we contribute to the literature on eWOM and response effectiveness (Chang et al. 2015; Lee and Cranage 2012; Lee and Song 2010) in that we show that an organizational response can indeed decrease the damage of negative eWOM by increasing consumers' brand evaluation and subsequent purchase intention (indirectly via their brand evaluation) compared to no response.

Surprisingly, in our study, the relative direct effects of an accommodative and a defensive response compared to no organizational response on consumers' purchase intention were negative. A possible explanation for these findings could be the potential impact of platform type. Prior research has found that organizational responses to negative eWOM were evaluated less favorably in consumer-generated platforms such as review sites or consumer blogs than in brand-generated platforms such as brand-generated blogs (Van Noort and Willemsen 2012). On consumer-generated platforms, consumers may perceive the company's response as intrusive because their presence is unsolicited (Fournier and Avery 2011). In our experiment, the negative eWOM as well as the organizational response were posted on a fictitious virtual opinion platform which may be considered as a consumer-generated platform by consumers. Therefore, consumers did not expect a response by the company and may have considered it as intrusive, decreasing their purchase intention for the brand. An alternative explanation may lie in consumers' risk aversion (Forsythe and Shi 2003). Due to the organizational response to negative eWOM, consumers could believe that there must be some truth in the

negative eWOM because otherwise, the company would not make the effort to provide a response. Due to consumers' risk aversion of a negative purchase experience, they might not want to purchase products or services of that brand.

These counterintuitive negative relative direct effects of organizational responses on consumers' purchase intention indicate that consumers' attitude toward the brand and perceived service quality do not simply translate into behavior (here: purchase intention) (see also Ajzen 2001) but that for consumers' purchase intention other additional mechanisms and factors (e.g., platform type, risk aversion) may be involved. Thus, these counterintuitive findings open an interesting path for further research to examine and understand its underlying mechanisms.

Third, when including control variables, our results showed that when credibility of the negative eWOM is low, a defensive response leads to a higher brand evaluation than an accommodative response. By contrast, when credibility is high, the choice of organizational response (accommodative vs. defensive) has no effect on consumers' brand evaluation. In addition, we show that an organizational response (defensive vs. accommodative) influences consumers' purchase intention via their brand evaluation and that this indirect effect is moderated by the credibility of the negative eWOM. Therefore, organizational responses again not only affect consumers' brand evaluation depending on the credibility of eWOM but also their purchase intention. By including credibility of eWOM into our analysis, we make an important contribution to existing literature on the effectiveness of organizational responses to eWOM. Prior research has already studied organizational responses by taking different factors into account such as the severity of the service failure (Chang et al. 2015), the company's culpability (Kim et al. 2004), and consensus for positive and negative eWOM (Lee and Cranage 2012). However, so far the credibility of eWOM has not been examined in the context of organizational responses, despite its high relevance in the context of eWOM (Chang et al.

2015). Prior research has reported that credibility strongly influences information adoption of eWOM (e.g., whether the consumer learns from the eWOM and uses it; Cheung et al. 2009). Yet, credibility is often problematic in the context of eWOM due to the anonymity in the online environment. Therefore, it represents a highly relevant factor in the context of eWOM which further research should take into account when examining adequate response strategies to eWOM.

Finally, our study also provides some evidence for the service recovery paradox in the context of responding to negative eWOM. We conducted another MANCOVA to compare the brand evaluation of the participants who were shown the negative review of low credibility commented with a defensive organizational response to the control group, including the control variables as covariates. Using Roy's largest root, for the negative eWOM with low credibility, a defensive response led to a significantly higher brand evaluation, i.e., perceived service quality (EMM = 4.594, SE = .091) and attitude toward the brand (EMM = 4.764, SE = .098, $\Theta = .030$, $F(2, 220) = 3.266$, $p < .05$), than when consumers were only confronted with moderately positive eWOM and no negative eWOM was presented (i.e., compared to the control group; $EMM_{\text{perceived service quality}} = 4.275$, $SE_{\text{perceived service quality}} = .088$, $EMM_{\text{brand attitude}} = 4.562$, $SE_{\text{brand attitude}} = .095$). Thus, this study shows that the service recovery paradox could also be a valid concept in the context of negative eWOM (e.g., de Matos, Henrique, and Rossi 2007). Thereby, our study further contributes to the literature on response effectiveness to negative eWOM by providing some initial evidence that an adequate response strategy can increase consumers' brand evaluation above the initial level prior to the product or service failure.

To determine the scope and boundaries of our observed effects, further research should replicate our findings with a different setting (e.g., a different service such as a restau-

rant or a product such as a camera) and also empirically examine the processes by which organizational responses affect consumers depending on the credibility of eWOM. For example, a future study should measure the persuasiveness of negative (and positive) eWOM to determine the impact of the negativity bias on the effect of the response strategy on other consumers in situations when credibility for eWOM is high or low. In addition to persuasiveness, consensus with others' views of the reviewer's opinion and subsequent blame attribution should also be measured to examine their interactions with the negativity bias. Such a proceeding would allow for a determination of whether the company's responses increased (decreased) the consensus for positive (negative) eWOM, which in turn increased consumers' brand evaluation through their blame attribution. Furthermore, prior research has suggested that distinctiveness and consistency of the communicator's opinions or experiences interact with the consensus of others' views of the brand (Kelley 1967; Laczniak, DeCarlo, and Ramaswami 2001). Further research should examine how these two factors affect consensus of others' views of the company or brand.

In addition, a future study could examine the distinct influence of source credibility and message characteristics on consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention. For example, Luo and et al. (2013) found that the effect of information credibility on information adoption is moderated by source credibility. As such, examining both concepts separately could provide an interesting path for further research, allowing for a more detailed view on the effects of credibility on information adoption and subsequent response effectiveness.

Overall, this article adds to a highly relevant yet understudied field of research. Whereas existing research focused on the impact of negative WOM, especially on its detrimental effect on companies' sales (Chang et al. 2015; Ye, Law, and Gu 2009), research on adequate response strategies to it has been scarce. There is considerable research on recovery efforts after a service failure which focuses on the dyad between the company that committed

the service failure and the customer who experienced it (e.g., Hess, Ganesan, and Klein 2003; Keller 1993; Kelley, Hoffman, and Davis 1993). Yet, the present setting is different from this dyad as it involves other consumers outside this dyad who read about the negative experience of another customer and possible organizational responses to it. Thereby, this paper takes a network perspective on all the potential customers who can be affected by the negative eWOM and subsequent organizational responses. The examination of organizational responses to negative eWOM provides a fruitful path for further research in lowering the detrimental impact of such communication. Furthermore, the study of adequate organizational responses could also be worthwhile in other research fields such as positive eWOM. For example, can a company amplify the beneficiary impact of positive eWOM by thanking the reviewer for it? Other interesting research fields for the investigation of organizational responses include negative consumer behaviors such as customer revenge (Grégoire, Tripp, and Legoux 2009) or even more hostile forms of consumer aggression such as consumer brand sabotage (Kähr et al. 2016).

Managerial Implications

In the last 10 years, more and more virtual opinion platforms have emerged to help consumers decrease their search costs and reduce their risk of the buying decision (Dickinger 2011; Hennig-Thurau and Walsh 2003; Kim, Mattila, and Baloglu 2011). At the same time, research has empirically shown that negative reviews on such virtual opinion platforms can significantly decrease company's sales (Chang et al. 2015; Ye, Law, and Gu 2009). In the era of Web 2.0, dissatisfied customers can now significantly harm a company by engaging in negative eWOM. Against that background, our study provides important insights for managers on the damage of negative eWOM and how to respond to it. First, we replicate findings of prior research on the adverse effects of negative eWOM on companies by showing that negative eWOM decreases consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention. In addition, we show

that companies can buffer these adverse effects of negative eWOM by actively responding to it. Furthermore, our findings also show that when responding to negative eWOM, companies need to take the credibility of negative eWOM into account. More specifically, while for highly credible negative eWOM the response strategy (i.e., accommodative or defensive) to negative eWOM does not affect consumers' brand evaluation and subsequent purchase intention, for negative eWOM with low credibility, the company should respond by a defensive rather than an accommodative response.

Whereas in previous research an accommodative response is generally regarded as increasing customers' trust and brand reputation (Lee and Cranage 2012), a defensive response is often seen as threat to the brand reputation (Chang et al. 2015). In this study, we show that an adequate response strategy also depends on situational factors such as the message credibility of negative eWOM. Thus, our results not only suggest that companies can reduce the adverse effects of negative eWOM on consumers' brand evaluation and purchase intention by providing a response to it but also that the adequacy of a company's choice of response strategy depends on the credibility of the negative eWOM. Therefore, we recommend managers to take a more contingency-based point of view when determining an adequate response strategy to negative eWOM.

Additionally, our results provide initial evidence for a service recovery paradox when responding defensively to negative eWOM with low credibility. More specifically, consumers who were shown the negative eWOM of low credibility commented with a defensive organizational response evaluated the company more favorably than consumers who were only shown moderately positive eWOM. Thus, by choosing an adequate response strategy to negative eWOM, managers can not only reduce its negative impact on the company's sales but they can also use negative eWOM as an opportunity to raise consumers' brand evaluation above the initial level prior to the product or service failure.

References

Ahluwalia, Rohini (2002), "How Prevalent Is the Negativity Effect in Consumer Environments?," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29 (2), 270–79.

Ajzen, Icek (2001), "Nature and Operation of Attitudes," *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52 (1), 27–58.

———, and Martin Fishbein (1977), "Attitude-Behavior Relations: A Theoretical Analysis and Review of Empirical Research," *Psychological Bulletin*, 84 (5), 888–918.

———, Thomas C. Brown, and Lori H. Rosenthal (1996), "Information Bias in Contingent Valuation: Effects of Personal Relevance, Quality of Information, and Motivational Orientation," *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management*, 30 (1), 43–57.

Baker, Michael J. and Gilbert A. Churchill (1977), "The Impact of Physically Attractive Models on Advertising Evaluations," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 14 (4), 538–55.

Boulding, William and Amna Kirmani (1993), "A Consumer-Side Experimental Examination of Signaling Theory: Do Consumers Perceive Warranties as Signals of Quality?," *Journal of Consumer Research*, 20 (1), 111–23.

Bughin, Jacques, Jonathan Doogan, and Ole Jørgen Vetvik (2010), "A New Way to Measure Word-of-Mouth Marketing," *McKinsey Quarterly*, April, 113–16.

Chandrashekaran, Rajesh (2004), "The Influence of Redundant Comparison Prices and Other Price Presentation Formats on Consumers' Evaluations and Purchase Intentions," *Journal of Retailing*, 80 (1), 53–66.

Chang, Hsin Hsin, Yao-Chuan Tsai, Kit Hong Wong, Jian Wei Wang, and Fang Ju Cho (2015), "The Effects of Response Strategies and Severity of Failure on Consumer Attribution with regard to Negative Word-of-Mouth," *Decision Support Systems*, 71, 48–61.

Cheung, Cindy Man-Yee, Choon-Ling Sia, and Kevin K. Y. Kuan (2012), "Is This Review Believable? A Study of Factors Affecting the Credibility of Online Consumer Reviews from an ELM Perspective," *Journal of the Association for Information Systems*, 13 (8), 618–35.

———, Chuan Luo, Choon Ling Sia, and Huaping Chen (2009), "Credibility of Electronic Word-of-Mouth: Informational and Normative Determinants of On-line Consumer Recommendations," *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 13 (4), 9–38.

Chevalier, Judith A. and Dina Mayzlin (2006), "The Effect of Word of Mouth on Sales: Online Book Reviews," *Journal of Marketing Research*, 43 (3), 345–54.

Chiou, Jyh-Shen and Cathy Cheng (2003), "Should a Company Have Message Boards on its Web Sites?," *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 17 (3), 50–61.

Coombs, W. Timothy (1998), "An Analytic Framework for Crisis Situations: Better Responses from a Better Understanding of the Situation," *Journal of Public Relations Research*, 10 (3), 177–91.

——— (2007), "Attribution Theory as a Guide for Post-Crisis Communication Research," *Public Relations Review*, 33 (2), 135–39.

DeCarlo, Thomas E., Russell N. Laczniak, Carol M. Motley, and Sridhar Ramaswami (2007), "Influence of Image and Familiarity on Consumer Response to Negative Word-of-Mouth Communication About Retail Entities," *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 15 (1), 41–51.

de Matos, Celso Augusto, Jorge Luiz Henrique, and Carlos Alberto Vargas Rossi (2007), "Service Recovery Paradox: A Meta-Analysis," *Journal of Service Research*, 10 (1), 60–77.

Dickinger, Astrid (2011), "The Trustworthiness of Online Channels for Experience- and Goal-Directed Search Tasks," *Journal of Travel Research*, 50 (4), 378–91.

Doh, Sun-Jae and Jang-Sun Hwang (2008), “How Consumers Evaluate eWOM (Electronic Word-of-Mouth) Messages,” *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 12 (2), 193–97.

Fazio, Russell H., Martha C. Powell, and Carol J. Williams (1989), “The Role of Attitude Accessibility in the Attitude-to-Behavior Process,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 16 (3), 280–88.

Folkes, Valerie S. (1984), “Consumer Reactions to Product Failure: An Attributional Approach,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 10 (4), 398–409.

——— and Barbara Kotsos (1986), “Buyers’ and Sellers’ Explanations for Product Failure: Who Done It?,” *Journal of Marketing*, 50 (2), 74–80.

Forsythe, Sandra M. and Bo Shi (2003), “Consumer Patronage and Risk Perceptions in Internet Shopping,” *Journal of Business Research*, 56 (11), 867–75.

Fournier, Susan and Jill Avery (2011), “The Uninvited Brand,” *Business Horizons*, 54 (3), 193–207.

Gelbrich, Katja (2010), “Anger, Frustration, and Helplessness after Service Failure: Coping Strategies and Effective Informational Support,” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 38 (5), 567–85.

Grégoire, Yany, Thomas M. Tripp, and Renaud Legoux (2009), “When Customer Love Turns into Lasting Hate: The Effects of Relationship Strength and Time on Customer Revenge and Avoidance,” *Journal of Marketing*, 73 (6), 18–32.

Hayes, Andrew F. (2013), *Introduction to Mediation, Moderation, and Conditional Process Analysis: A Regression-Based Approach*, New York, NY: Guilford Press.

——— (2015), “An Index and Test of Linear Moderated Mediation,” *Multivariate Behavioral Research*, 50 (1), 1–22.

Heider, Fritz (1958), *The Psychology of Interpersonal Relations*, Psychology Press.

Hennig-Thurau, Thorsten, Kevin P. Gwinner, Gianfranco Walsh, and Dwayne D. Gremler (2004), “Electronic Word-of-Mouth Via Consumer-Opinion Platforms: What Motivates Consumers to Articulate Themselves on the Internet?,” *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 18 (1), 38–52.

——— and Gianfranco Walsh (2003), “Electronic Word-of-Mouth: Motives for and Consequences of Reading Customer Articulations on the Internet,” *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 8 (2), 51–74.

Herr, Paul M., Frank R. Kardes, and John Kim (1991), “Effects of Word-of-Mouth and Product-Attribute Information on Persuasion: An Accessibility-Diagnosticity Perspective,” *Journal of Consumer Research*, 17 (4), 454–62.

Hess, Ronald L., Shankar Ganesan, and Noreen M. Klein (2003), “Service Failure and Recovery: The Impact of Relationship Factors on Customer Satisfaction,” *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, 31 (2), 127–45.

Hovland, Carl I., Irving L. Janis, and Harold H. Kelley (1953), *Communication and Persuasion; Psychological Studies of Opinion Change*, New Haven, CT, US: Yale University Press.

Jain, Shailendra Pratap and Steven S. Posavac (2001), “Prepurchase Attribute Verifiability, Source Credibility, and Persuasion,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 11 (3), 169–80.

Kähr, Andrea, Bettina Nyffenegger, Harley Krohmer, and Wayne D. Hoyer (2016), “When Hostile Consumers Wreak Havoc on Your Brand: The Phenomenon of Consumer Brand Sabotage,” *Journal of Marketing*, 80 (3), 25–41.

Keller, Kevin Lane (1993), “Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity,” *Journal of Marketing*, 57 (1), 1–22.

Kelley, Harold H. (1967), “Attribution Theory in Social Psychology,” in *Nebraska Symposium on Motivation*, 15, D. Levine, ed., Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 192–238.

——— and John L. Michela (1980), “Attribution Theory and Research,” *Annual Review of Psychology*, 31 (1), 457–501.

Kelley, Scott W., K. Douglas Hoffman, and Mark A. Davis (1993), “A Typology of Retail Failures and Recoveries,” *Journal of Retailing*, 69 (4), 429–52.

Kim, Ellen Eun Kyoo, Anna S. Mattila, and Seyhmus Baloglu (2011), “Effects of Gender and Expertise on Consumers’ Motivation to Read Online Hotel Reviews,” *Cornell Hospitality Quarterly*, 52 (4), 399–406.

Kim, Peter H., Donald L. Ferrin, Cecily D. Cooper, and Kurt T. Dirks (2004), “Removing the Shadow of Suspicion: The Effects of Apology versus Denial for Repairing Competence-Versus Integrity-Based Trust Violations,” *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89 (1), 104–18

Klein, Lisa R. (1998), “Evaluating the Potential of Interactive Media through a New Lens: Search versus Experience Goods,” *Journal of Business Research*, 41 (3), 195–203.

Laczniak, Russell N., Thomas E. DeCarlo, and Sridhar N. Ramaswami (2001), “Consumers’ Responses to Negative Word-of-Mouth Communication: An Attribution Theory Perspective,” *Journal of Consumer Psychology*, 11 (1), 57–73.

Lee, Chung Hun and David A. Cranage (2012), “Toward Understanding Consumer Processing of Negative Online Word-of-Mouth Communication: The Roles of Opinion Consensus and Organizational Response Strategies,” *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Research*, 38 (3), 330–60.

Lee, Young Lyoul and Seokwoo Song (2010), “An Empirical Investigation of Electronic Word-of-Mouth: Informational Motive and Corporate Response Strategy,” *Computers in Human Behavior*, 26 (5), 1073–80.

Litvin, Stephen W., Ronald E. Goldsmith, and Bing Pan (2008), “Electronic Word-of-Mouth in Hospitality and Tourism Management,” *Tourism Management*, 29 (3), 458–68.

Luo, Chuan, Xin Robert Luo, Laurie Schatzberg, and Choon Ling Sia (2013), “Impact of Informational Factors on Online Recommendation Credibility: The Moderating Role of Source Credibility,” *Decision Support Systems*, 56, 92–102.

Marcus, Alfred A. and Robert S. Goodman (1991), “Victims and Shareholders: The Dilemmas of Presenting Corporate Policy During A Crisis,” *Academy of Management Journal*, 34 (2), 281–305.

Menon, Geeta, Robert D. Jewell, and H. Rao Unnava (1999), “When a Company Does Not Respond to Negative Publicity: Cognitive Elaboration vs. Negative Affect Perspective,” E. J. Arnould and L. M. Scott, eds., Provo, UT: Advances in Consumer Research, 325–29.

Metzger, Miriam J. (2007), “Making Sense of Credibility on the Web: Models for Evaluating Online Information and Recommendations for Future Research,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 58 (13), 2078–91.

Mukherjee, Arjun, Bing Liu, and Natalie Glance (2012), “Spotting Fake Reviewer Groups in Consumer Reviews,” in *Proceedings of the 21st International Conference on World Wide Web*, WWW ’12, New York, NY, USA: ACM, 191–200.

Naz, A. (2016), “Hartley Hotel (London, England) - UPDATED 2016 Reviews,” *TripAdvisor*, (July 30), [available at https://www.tripadvisor.com/Hotel_Review-g186338-d1509424-Reviews-Hartley_Hotel-London_England.html#review_399367820].

Papathanassis, Alexis and Friederike Knolle (2011), “Exploring the Adoption and Processing of Online Holiday Reviews: A Grounded Theory Approach,” *Tourism Management*, 32 (2), 215–24.

Park, Do-Hyung, Jumin Lee, and Ingoo Han (2007), “The Effect of On-Line Consumer Reviews on Consumer Purchasing Intention: The Moderating Role of Involvement,” *International Journal of Electronic Commerce*, 11 (4), 125–48.

Rosenbaum, Milton E. and Irwin P. Levin (1968), “Impression Formation as a Function of Source Credibility and Order of Presentation of Contradictory Information,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 10 (2), 167–74.

Sandes, Fabio Shimabukuro and Andre Torres Urdan (2013), “Electronic Word-of-Mouth Impacts on Consumer Behavior: Exploratory and Experimental Studies,” *Journal of International Consumer Marketing*, 25 (3), 181–97.

Senecal, Sylvain and Jacques Nantel (2004), “The Influence of Online Product Recommendations on Consumers’ Online Choices,” *Journal of Retailing*, 80 (2), 159–69.

Serra Cantallops, Antoni and Fabiana Salvi (2014), “New Consumer Behavior: A Review of Research on eWOM and Hotels,” *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 36, 41–51.

Shim, Soyeon and Kenneth C. Gehrt (1996), “Hispanic and Native American Adolescents: An Exploratory Study of Their Approach to Shopping,” *Journal of Retailing*, 72 (3), 307–24.

Sinha, Indrajit and Rajeev Batra (1999), “The Effect of Consumer Price Consciousness on Private Label Purchase,” *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 16 (3), 237–51.

Skowronski, John J. and Donal E. Carlston (1987), “Social Judgment and Social Memory: The Role of Cue Diagnosticity in Negativity, Positivity, and Extremity Biases,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 52 (4), 689–99.

Slater, Michael D. and Donna Rouner (1996), “How Message Evaluation and Source Attributes May Influence Credibility Assessment and Belief Change,” *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 73 (4), 974–91.

Sparks, Beverley A., Kevin Kam Fung So, and Graham L. Bradley (2016), “Responding to Negative Online Reviews: The Effects of Hotel Responses on Customer Inferences of Trust and Concern,” *Tourism Management*, 53, 74–85.

Sun, Tao, Seounmi Youn, Guohua Wu, and Mana Kuntaraporn (2006), “Online Word-of-Mouth (or Mouse): An Exploration of Its Antecedents and Consequences,” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11 (4), 1104–27.

Sussman, Stephanie Watts and Wendy Schneier Siegal (2003), “Informational Influence in Organizations: An Integrated Approach to Knowledge Adoption,” *Information Systems Research*, 14 (1), 47–65.

Taylor, Steven A. and Thomas L. Baker (1994), “An Assessment of the Relationship between Service Quality and Customer Satisfaction in the Formation of Consumers’ Purchase Intentions,” *Journal of Retailing*, 70 (2), 163–78.

Van Noort, Guda and Lotte M. Willemsen (2012), “Online Damage Control: The Effects of Proactive Versus Reactive Webcare Interventions in Consumer-Generated and Brand-Generated Platforms,” *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, 26 (3), 131–40.

Wathen, C. Nadine and Jacquelyn Burkell (2002), “Believe It or Not: Factors Influencing Credibility on the Web,” *Journal of the American Society for Information Science and Technology*, 53 (2), 134–44.

Xiang, Zheng and Ulrike Gretzel (2010), “Role of Social Media in Online Travel Information Search,” *Tourism Management*, 31, 179–88.

Ye, Qiang, Rob Law, and Bin Gu (2009), “The Impact of Online User Reviews on Hotel Room Sales,” *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 28 (1), 180–82.

Yoo, Boonghee and Naveen Donthu (2001), “Developing and Validating a Multidimensional Consumer-Based Brand Equity Scale,” *Journal of Business Research*, 52 (1), 1–14.

APPENDIX A

SCENARIOS

Basic Scenario

Hotel Zentrum

Das Hotel Zentrum ist ein 3*-Hotel in zentraler Lage. Das Hotel verfügt über ein Restaurant, das Frühstück ist inbegriffen. Die 40 Zimmer auf 4 Stockwerken sind mit Doppelbetten oder 2 Einzelbetten ausgestattet. Computer mit Internetzugang sind in der Lobby verfügbar. Ein Pool ist nicht vorhanden.

Bewertungen von Reisenden

„Mit Abstrichen in Ordnung“

●●●○○

Das Preis-Leistungsverhältnis ist gut, die Zimmer sind gross und sauber.
Sehr zentral gelegen ist es auch, was mir ziemlich wichtig war. Weniger gut war das Essen, war für mich aber weniger wichtig da ich selten im Hotel gegessen habe. Die Angestellten sind nicht die Freundlichkeit in Person, ich hatte jedoch auch kein Problem mit ihnen. Insgesamt knapp eine Empfehlung.

Anzahl Reviews des Autors: 8
Bewertung des Autors: 4.1 / 5

„Ideal gelegen“

●●●●○

Das Hotel ist wirklich ideal als Ausgangspunkt für die Erkundung der Stadt: Direkt neben dem Hotel befindet sich eine Metrostation mit verschiedenen Linien, alle wichtigen Sehenswürdigkeiten sind somit schnell erreichbar. Auch zu Fuss gibt’s im Umkreis einiges zu entdecken! Mit dem Hotel bin ich auch zufrieden, die Zimmer waren gross und sauber und der Zimmerservice erledigte seinen Job gut. Das Hotel hält was es verspricht!

Anzahl Reviews des Autors: 9
Bewertung des Autors: 4.2 / 5

Negative Review of Low Credibility

„Schlechtestes Hotel!!!“

Dieses Hotel ist eine Katastrofe ich gehe nie mehr dorthin!!! Die haben uns behandelt wie Dreck!! Wir mussten ewig warten bis wir ein Zimmer bekamen aber sie haben sich nicht entschuldigt sondern gesagt ich könne sonst in dreckigem Zimmer wohnen wenn ich will!!! Die an der Rezeption ist sowieso sehr arogant und auch die anderen Angestelten sind nicht besser… Der schlechteste Service denn ich erlebt habe!! Ich wollte eine Stadtkarte aber die gaben mir keine, unglaublich!! Die Zimmer sind schrott alle anderen Hotels wo ich gewesen bin sind viel besser!!! Das Essen ist auch scheuslich wir haben dann nur einmal im Hotel sonst immer im Restorant gegessen auch wenn wir im Hotel schon bezahlt haben. Ich habe euch gewahrnt geht nie in dieses Hotel, es gibt viel bessere Hotels!!!

Anzahl Reviews des Autors: 2
Bewertung des Autors: 2.1 / 5

Negative Review of High Credibility

„Miserabel“

Ich war nun bereits zum 9. Mal in dieser Stadt in verschiedensten Hotels. Dieses hier war eine einzige Enttäuschung und das bisher schlechteste Hotel in der Gegend. Ich muss allen dringend davon abraten, hier zu übernachten.

Zuerst zum Positiven: Gebucht habe ich dieses Hotel primär wegen der Lage, diese war dann auch ideal. Zudem sind die Zimmer einigermassen sauber. Das wars dann leider schon mit den positiven Punkten.

Die Zimmer machen einen stark heruntergekommenen und schmuddeligen Eindruck. Eine Renovation wäre hier längstens überfällig! Auch zur Küche gibt’s leider nichts Positives zu sagen. Die Qualität der Speisen ist schlicht schlecht. Obwohl ich das Hotel inklusive Frühstück gebucht habe, habe ich daraufhin nur einmal im Hotel gegessen…

Die Krönung des Ganzen sind schliesslich der Service und die Umgangsformen der Angestellten. Beim Einchecken mussten wir eine Stunde warten, bevor wir das Zimmer beziehen konnten. Statt sich zu entschuldigen, meinte die Rezeptionistin in arrogantem Tonfall, wir könnten ja ein schmutziges Zimmer beziehen, wenn uns dies nicht passe! Und als ob dies nicht genug gewesen wäre, verweigerte sie auch noch meinen Wunsch nach einer Stadtkarte. Dass man als Gast so behandelt wird, habe ich noch nirgends erlebt! Auch die anderen Angestellten geben einem das Gefühl, in diesem Haus lediglich geduldet zu sein.

Ich möchte mit diesem Review alle warnen, welche dieses Hotel in Betracht ziehen. Das Hotel ist sein Geld nicht wert, es gibt weitaus bessere Alternativen!

Anzahl Reviews des Autors: 15
Bewertung des Autors: 4.6 / 5

Organizational Response: Accommodative Response

Managementantwort von Hotel Zentrum

Vielen Dank für Ihr Review. Die negativen Erfahrungen, die Sie in unserem Hotel gemacht haben, tun uns leid. Wir sind den Schilderungen nachgegangen und werden Gegenmassnahmen ergreifen. Konkret möchten wir uns wie folgt äussern:

- Die einstündige Wartezeit beim Check-In war eine Ausnahmesituation, welche der verspäteten Abreise der vorherigen Gäste geschuldet war. Wir werden die Zeitplanung zukünftig anders handhaben, um solche Vorkommnisse zu vermeiden.
- Die Umgangsformen der Rezeption und des übrigen Personals haben noch nie zu Beschwerden Anlass gegeben. Dennoch nehmen wir Ihre Kritik ernst. Wir sind uns bewusst, dass auch unsere Angestellten nicht unfehlbar sind und möchten uns für den Eindruck, den Sie von unserem Personal hatten, entschuldigen. Anlässlich der nächsten Personalschulung werden wir Ihren Fall behandeln und entsprechende Konsequenzen ziehen.
- Vielen Dank für Ihr Feedback bezüglich Essensqualität. Wir bedauern, dass Ihnen unsere Küche nicht geschmeckt hat und nehmen dies als Anregung auf, uns weiter zu verbessern. Wir werden erst zufrieden sein, wenn es sämtliche Kunden auch sind. Dennoch möchten wir betonen, dass wir bezüglich unserer Küche fast ausschliesslich positive Reaktionen erhalten.

Wir nehmen Ihre Kritik ernst, sie wurde bereits dem Top-Management und den betreffenden Angestellten weitergeleitet. Für Ihre negativen Erfahrungen möchten wir uns entschuldigen. Es würde uns freuen, Sie bald wieder bei uns begrüssen zu dürfen, damit Sie sich von den Qualitäten unseres Hotels überzeugen können.

Organizational Response: Defensive Response

Managementantwort von Hotel Zentrum

Vielen Dank für Ihr Review. Leider ist Ihr Bericht jedoch sehr subjektiv und enthält einige Halb- und Unwahrheiten. Um für Transparenz zu sorgen und unserer Informationspflicht unseren Kunden gegenüber nachzukommen, möchten wir Ihren Bericht nach ausführlicher Recherche der geschilderten Vorfälle wie folgt kommentieren:

- Es ist zwar korrekt, dass Sie eine Stunde bis zum Zimmerbezug warten mussten. Dies war jedoch nicht auf einen Fehler unsererseits zurückzuführen. Wie auf unserer Homepage vermerkt ist, können die Zimmer jeweils um 14.00 Uhr bezogen werden, um eine vorgängige Reinigung zu ermöglichen. Da Sie bereits um 13.00 Uhr angereist sind, liess sich die Wartefrist leider nicht vermeiden.
- Die Umgangsformen der Rezeption und des übrigen Personals haben bisher noch nie zu Beschwerden Anlass gegeben. Wir sind ein stark serviceorientiertes Unternehmen und investieren viel in die Ausbildung unserer Mitarbeiter. In zahlreichen Gästefeedbacks wird die Freundlichkeit unserer Angestellten denn auch stets geschätzt. Nach Rücksprache mit den betreffenden Angestellten gehen wir davon aus, dass die geschilderten Vorfälle nicht in dem geschilderten Ausmass stattgefunden haben können, sondern stark einseitig und überzeichnet wiedergegeben wurden.
- Wir legen grossen Wert auf gute Küche und sind überzeugt, in unserem Preissegment hier einen Spitzenplatz innezuhaben. Umfragen bei unseren Gästen bestätigen

dies regelmässig. Da Sie leider nur einmal bei uns gegessen haben, können Sie die Qualität unserer Speisen nur schlecht beurteilen. Dennoch bedauern wir natürlich, dass Sie mit unserer Küche nicht zufrieden waren.

Wir hoffen, mit diesem Statement unsere Sicht der Dinge klar dargelegt zu haben. Die Beurteilung des Sachverhalts obliegt nun unseren Kunden.

APPENDIX B

TABLE B.1

CONSTRUCTS INDICATORS, MEASUREMENT ITEMS, SCALE RELIABILITIES

Measure	**Items**	**Cronbach's alpha (α)**
Dependent Variables		
Perceived Service Quality		.745
	I believe that the general quality of the hotel's services is low. [a] (r) [b]	
	Overall, I consider the hotel's services to be excellent. [a]	
	The quality of the hotel's services is generally poor / excellent [c]	
Attitude toward the Brand [c]		.940
Instruction: Please rate *Hotel Zentrum* on the following scales.	bad / good	
	not trustworthy / trustworthy	
	not likeable / likeable	
	not customer-oriented / customer-oriented	
	negative / positive	
Purchase Intention [d]		.858
	Would you like to visit this hotel?	
	Would you book this hotel if offered by a travel agency?	
	Would you actively seek out offers of this hotel to book it?	
Control Variables		
Product Involvement [a]		.794
	I am particularly interested in hotel accommodation.	
	Given my personal interests, hotel accommodation is not very relevant to me. (r) [b]	
	Overall, I am quite involved when I am booking a hotel accommodation for personal use.	
Quality Consciousness [a]		.875
	Getting very good quality is very important to me.	
	When it comes to purchasing products, I try to get the very best or perfect choice.	
	In general, I usually try to buy the best overall quality.	
	I make special effort to choose the very best quality products.	
Price Consciousness [a]		.837
	I tend to book the lowest-priced hotel that fits my needs.	
	When booking a hotel, I look for the cheapest hotel available.	
	When it comes to booking hotels, I rely heavily on price.	
	Price is the most important factor when I am choosing a hotel.	
Review Importance [a]		.872
	I regularly read user reviews on important products.	
	I do not buy important and expensive products without reading user reviews first.	
	User reviews have already influenced my purchase decision.	
	To me, user reviews are more credible than official communication of the manufacturer.	

[a] measured with a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = "strongly disagree," 7 = "strongly agree," [b] indicates reversed scoring, [c] measured by a 7-point semantic differential scale; [d] measured by a 7-point Likert scale anchored by 1 = "no, definitely not," 7 = "yes, definitely"

TABLE B.2

ESTIMATED MARGINAL MEANS, STANDARD ERRORS, PILLAI-BARTLETT'S TRACE, F- AND P-VALUES FOR MANCOVA MODELS

	Perceived Service Quality		**Attitude toward the Brand**		**Purchase Intention**						
Measures	**EMM**	**Standard Error**	**EMM**	**Standard Error**	**EMM**	**Standard Error**	**V**	**df1**	**df2**	**F**	**Sig.**
Baseline Effect Negative Review											
Condition							.118	3	363	16.264	.000
Control Group	4.269	.100	4.561	.108	4.248	.138					
Negative Review (No Response)	3.775	.067	3.674	.073	3.464	.093					
Product Involvement							.003	3	363	.315	.815
Product Category Purchase Experience							.009	3	363	1.057	.368
Quality Consciousness							.026	3	363	3.189	.024
Price Consciousness							.023	3	363	2.796	.040
Review Importance							.012	3	363	1.526	.207
Gender							.003	3	363	.343	.795
Age							.004	3	363	.457	.713
Main Effect Organizational Response											
Condition							.065	4	1336	11.227	.000
Negative Review, No Response	3.784	.070	3.700	.078	-	-					
Negative Review, Accommodative	4.111	.077	4.277	.087	-	-					
Negative Review, Defensive	4.271	.077	4.434	.086	-	-					
Product Involvement							.004	2	667	1.231	.293
Product Category Purchase Experience							.001	2	667	.258	.773
Quality Consciousness							.003	2	667	.891	.411
Price Consciousness							.011	2	667	3.552	.029
Review Importance							.018	2	667	6.154	.002
Gender							.005	2	667	1.778	.170
Age							.010	2	667	3.331	.036

TABLE B.3

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY AND ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BRAND PARALLEL MULTIPLE MEDIATOR MODEL

		Consequent										
		Perceived Service Quality (M_1)				Attitude toward the Brand (M_2)				Purchase Intention (Y)		
Antecedent		Coeff.	SE	*p*		Coeff.	SE	*p*		Coeff.	SE	*p*
Accommodative vs. No Response (X_1)	a_1	.327	.106	.002	a_2	.577	.121	.000	c_1'	–.321	.102	.002
Defensive vs. No Response (X_2)	a_3	.487	.106	.000	a_4	.733	.116	.000	c_2'	–.254	.096	.008
Perceived Service Quality (M_1)		—	—	—		—	—	—	b_1	.406	.076	.000
Attitude toward the Brand (M_2)		—	—	—		—	—	—	b_2	.607	.072	.000
Constant	i_{M1}	3.709	.344	.000	i_{M2}	3.783	.410	.000	i_1	–.502	.377	.183
Product Involvement	f_1	*.038*	*.039*	*.325*	h_1	*.003*	*.045*	*.953*	g_1	*.082*	*.036*	*.024*
Product Category Purchase Experience	f_2	*.004*	*.040*	*.919*	h_2	*–.015*	*.047*	*.743*	g_2	*–.021*	*.036*	*.555*
Quality Consciousness	f_3	*–.053*	*.042*	*.205*	h_3	*–.052*	*.048*	*.285*	g_3	*–.074*	*.042*	*.077*
Price Consciousness	f_4	*.073*	*.034*	*.031*	h_4	*.095*	*.040*	*.017*	g_4	*.048*	*.032*	*.134*
Review Importance	f_5	*.029*	*.031*	*.355*	h_5	*.094*	*.036*	*.010*	g_5	*–.010*	*.029*	*.732*
Gender	f_6	*–.060*	*.093*	*.524*	h_6	*–.168*	*.105*	*.109*	g_6	*.034*	*.086*	*.697*
Age	f_7	*–.006*	*.004*	*.135*	h_7	*–.010*	*.004*	*.017*	g_7	*.002*	*.003*	*.585*
		$R^2 = .056$				$R^2 = .113$				$R^2 = .597$		
		$F(9, 668) = 4.345$, $p < .001$				$F(9, 668) = 9.012$, $p < .001$				$F(11, 666) = 130.554$, $p < .001$		

Note.— Regression Coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator (see Hayes and Cai 2007; Long and Ervin 2000). Covariates are in italics.

TABLE B.4

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE REVIEW CREDIBILITY AND PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY SIMPLE MODERATION MODEL

		Coeff.	SE	*t*	*p*
Intercept	i_1	3.583	.486	7.378	.000
Organizational Response (X)	b_1	.394	.138	2.853	.005
Review Credibility (M)	b_2	.248	.350	.709	.479
X x M	b_3	–.494	.217	–2.277	.023
Product Involvement	f_1	*.031*	*.049*	*.634*	*.526*
Product Category Purchase Experience	f_2	*.028*	*.052*	*.540*	*.590*
Quality Consciousness	f_3	*–.017*	*.053*	*–.328*	*.743*
Price Consciousness	f_4	*.078*	*.043*	*1.818*	*.070*
Review Importance	f_5	*.065*	*.039*	*1.694*	*.091*
Gender	f_6	*–.110*	*.113*	*–.976*	*.330*
Age	f_7	*–.011*	*.005*	*–2.265*	*.024*
				$R^2 = .107$	
				$F(10, 411) = 4.489$, $p < .001$	

Note.— Regression coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator. Covariates are in italics.

TABLE B.5

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE REVIEW CREDIBILITY AND ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BRAND SIMPLE MODERATION MODEL

		Coeff.	SE	*t*	*p*
Intercept	i_1	3.734	.563	6.637	.000
Organizational Response (X)	b_1	.417	.165	2.524	.012
Review Credibility (M)	b_2	.299	.396	.755	.450
X x M	b_3	–.555	.246	–2.255	.025
Product Involvement	f_1	*–.009*	*.058*	*–.161*	*.872*
Product Category Purchase Experience	f_2	*.031*	*.062*	*.497*	*.620*
Quality Consciousness	f_3	*.005*	*.062*	*.080*	*.936*
Price Consciousness	f_4	*.112*	*.051*	*2.210*	*.028*
Review Importance	f_5	*.148*	*.045*	*3.323*	*.001*
Gender	f_6	*–.262*	*.132*	*–1.990*	*.047*
Age	f_7	*–.017*	*.005*	*–3.327*	*.001*
				$R^2 = .150$	
				$F(10, 411) = 6.738$, $p < .001$	

Note.— Regression coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator. Covariates are in italics.

TABLE B.6

REGRESSION COEFFICIENTS, STANDARD ERRORS, AND MODEL SUMMARY INFORMATION FOR THE PERCEIVED SERVICE QUALITY AND ATTITUDE TOWARD THE BRAND MODERATED MEDIATION MODEL

	Consequent											
		Perceived Service Quality (M_1)				Attitude toward the Brand (M_2)				Purchase Intention (Y)		
Antecedent		Coeff.	SE	*p*		Coeff.	SE	*p*		Coeff.	SE	*p*
Accommodative vs. Defensive (X)	a_1	.394	.138	.005	a_2	.417	.165	.012	c_1'	.071	.100	.479
Credibility (W)	a_3	.248	.350	.479	a_4	.299	.396	.450		—	—	—
X x W	a_5	–.494	.217	.023	a_6	–.555	.246	.025		—	—	—
Perceived Service Quality (M_1)		—	—	—		—	—	—	b_1	.467	.100	.000
Attitude toward the Brand (M_2)		—	—	—		—	—	—	b_2	.536	.094	.000
Constant	i_{M1}	3.583	.486	.000	i_{M2}	3.734	.563	.000	i_1	–1.180	.509	.021
Product Involvement	f_1	*.031*	*.049*	*.526*	h_1	*-.009*	*.058*	*.872*	g_1	*.110*	*.047*	*.021*
Product Category Purchase Experience	f_2	*.028*	*.052*	*.590*	h_2	*.031*	*.062*	*.620*	g_2	*-.003*	*.045*	*.943*
Quality Consciousness	f_3	*–.017*	*.053*	*.743*	h_3	*.005*	*.062*	*.936*	g_3	*-.023*	*.057*	*.685*
Price Consciousness	f_4	*.078*	*.043*	*.070*	h_4	*.112*	*.051*	*.028*	g_4	*.054*	*.042*	*.203*
Review Importance	f_5	*.065*	*.039*	*.091*	h_5	*.148*	*.045*	*.001*	g_5	*–.027*	*.034*	*.434*
Gender	f_6	*–.110*	*.113*	*.330*	h_6	*–.262*	*.132*	*.047*	g_6	*.008*	*.109*	*.938*
Age	f_7	*–.011*	*.005*	*.024*	h_7	*–.017*	*.005*	*.001*	g_7	*.000*	*.034*	*.434*
		$R^2 = .107$				$R^2 = .150$				$R^2 = .591$		
		$F(10, 411) = 4.489$, $p < .001$				$F(10, 411) = 6.738$, $p < .001$				$F(10, 411) = 90.318$, $p < .001$		

Note.— Regression Coefficients are unstandardized. PROCESS models were calculated with the HC3 estimator, which means that all standard errors for continuous outcome models were based on the hc3 estimator. Covariates are in italics.

References

Hayes, Andrew F. and Li Cai (2007), "Using Heteroskedasticity-Consistent Standard Error Estimators in OLS Regression: An Introduction and Software Implementation," *Behavior Research Methods*, 39 (4), 709–22.

Long, J. Scott and Laurie H. Ervin (2000), "Using Heteroscedasticity Consistent Standard Errors in the Linear Regression Model," *The American Statistician*, 54 (3), 217–24.

Selbständigkeitserklärung

Ich erkläre hiermit, dass ich diese Arbeit selbständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Quellen benutzt habe. Alle Koautorenschaften sowie alle Stellen, die wörtlich oder sinngemäss aus Quellen entnommen wurden, habe ich als solche gekennzeichnet. Mir ist bekannt, dass andernfalls der Senat gemäss Artikel 36 Absatz 1 Buchstabe o des Gesetzes vom 5. September 1996 über die Universität zum Entzug des aufgrund dieser Arbeit verliehenen Titels berechtigt ist.

Bern, 3.3.2017

Ort, Datum

Andrea Kähr