Abstract

Despite the progression of social media and the vast research on crisis communication, we found that little was known about how social media platforms have affected the progression of fast food chains' crisis communication strategies and to what effect a crisis can affect stakeholders' perceived image of a given company or brand. We would like to study this and thereby examine *how did Chipotle Mexican Grill and Domino's Pizza choose to manage and respond to their given crises and how have the Internet and social media platforms affected the progression of the companies' crisis communication strategies? Furthermore, we also wonder to what effect each of the crises affected stakeholders' perceived image of the companies and their individual brands.*

This thesis recovers the crisis communication strategies of both Chipotle Mexican Grill and Domino's Pizza through a comparative qualitative analysis using the *Theory of Organizational Image Management, Situational Crisis Communication Strategy*, *Image Restoration Theory* and *Critical Discourse Analysis* on press releases, social media statements, news articles and stakeholder comments for each company. In addition, we have conducted a questionnaire-based survey with 211 respondents asking them about their opinions regarding the topic of food safety issues and health violations, fast food chains in general and specifically about Domino's Pizza and Chipotle Mexican Grill's cases. An analysis of these documents yields the crisis communication strategies of each company and the perceptions of stakeholders and the results from the conducted survey are used to support these findings. The findings of this thesis add depth to understanding the significance of crisis communication and social media where both social media and eWoM constitute an opportunity and a challenge for companies when undergoing a crisis. To conclude, it is impossible to say whether Chipotle's crisis will ever reach a true conclusion, or if its ongoing crisis will merely lead the company to failure in comparison to Domino's seemingly successful crisis communication.

Regardless of a company achieving successful crisis communication, we believe that with the use of social media today, a company can never predict when negative eWoM can appear again and potentially expose a company to a new crisis threatening its reputation.

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1.   Introduction

Over the past few decades, technology has advanced and with that, the social media platforms used on a daily basis have adjusted the expectations of a company's use of social media for communication during a crisis. Due to the constant advancement of technology, companies should remain aware in regards to their reputation and respond with social media when a crisis emerges as a public relations tactic (Ott and Theunissen 2015, 97).

Timothy W. Coombs discusses the importance of crisis communication and how it can reflect on a company's reputation and if not addressed properly there are potential threats to the company that can affect its reputation or stakeholders[1] (Coombs 2011). Internet users today, who also can be seen as stakeholders of many companies', spend a majority of their time on social media platforms, and in this time *"at least once a month they [have] expressed complaints or concerns about brands or services on social media"* (Ott and Theunissen 2015, 97). This can create challenges for companies pre-crisis and post-crisis as *"the development of social media has made companies vulnerable to negative publicity and endangered their reputation"* (Horn et al. 2015, 194).

A crisis can be defined in many ways, one of the definitions being a *"sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization's operations and poses both a financial and reputational threat"* (Coombs 2007, 164). A crisis could also be defined as *"a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization as well as its publics, services, products and/or good name. It interrupts normal business transactions and can, at worst, threaten the existence of the organization"* (Fearn-Banks 2007, 2). In 2009, Domino's Pizza (henceforth, Domino's) experienced a crisis, as did Chipotle Mexican Grill (henceforth, Chipotle) in 2015. Both of the two American fast food chains experienced crises nationwide in the United States and in both of the cases the Internet and social media influenced the crises and the crisis communication.

Some argue that, *"through the emergence of social media, responsibility for occurring crises can be attributed to an organization faster and more easily"* (Horn et al. 2015, 201) and this is exactly what we believe has happened for both Chipotle and Domino's. Domino's was exposed to an undesirable YouTube video made by two of its employees breaking food violations at one of its franchise locations. Chipotle experienced a large number of food safety outbreaks (E. Coli, Norovirus and Salmonella) in several locations in the United States.

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[1] A stakeholder is "a person, group or organization that has interest or concern in an organization" (Business Dictionary, n.d.)

As the scope of the crises, especially Chipotle's, is extensive, we have created two outlines with timelines of all the major actions and reactions from the Chipotle and Domino's during the crises. The timelines will be presented on the next two pages (p. 7 and 8), and they can also be found in Appendix 1 and 2.

The objective of this thesis is not to identify right or wrong, but rather analyze how Chipotle and Domino's chose to handle the crises as neutrally as possible. Our focus in this thesis will be on a number of selected press releases and statements Chipotle and Domino's published in the United States during the crises to analyze how the companies have managed their reputations and crisis communication. Reputations are *"notoriously difficult to manage because they comprise 'soft' variables like perceptions of credibility, reliability, accountability, trustworthiness and competence"*(Helm, Liehr-Gobbers, & Storck, 2011[2]) and therefore, we are interested in examining how the Internet and various social media platforms have affected the development of the crises and the reputations of Chipotle and Domino's. We wonder if companies can use social media to repair their image? We also want to examine the power of social media and the influence of stakeholders on these platforms.

This lead us to the problem statement where we wonder *how did Chipotle Mexican Grill and Domino's Pizza choose to manage and respond to their given crises and how have the Internet and social media platforms affected the progression of the companies' crisis communication strategies? Furthermore, we also wonder to what effect each of the crises affected stakeholders' perceived image of the companies and their individual brands.*

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[2] Helm, Liehr-Gobbers, & Christopher Storck. Reputation Management. (New York: Springer, 2011). quoted in Ott, Larissa and Petra Theunissen. 2015. *Public Relations Review, Reputations at risk: Engagement during social media crises*

Chipotle's Timeline

1.	2.
August 2015: In Seattle, WA and Portland, OR reported E.Coli and different locations.	**August 2015:** An outbreak of Norovirus was exposed in Simi Valley, CA where 243 customers fell ill.

3.	4.
October 19, 2015 – **End of November 2015** E. Coli was discovered to be related to 12 states across the United States where 60 people fell violently ill.	**December 2015** In Boston, MA, the second outbreak of Norovirus was exposed sickening 143 customers.

5.	6.
December 16, 2015: Steve Ells, CEO and Founder of Chipotle announced a food safety plan called "Comprehensive Food Safety"	**February 8, 2016:** Chipotle closed all locations nationwide for an "All-Team Meeting" to discuss food safety with employees.

Domino's Timeline

1.

April 12, 2009:
An employee of Domino's (Hammonds) posted a 'prank' video on YouTube – it reached 29,000 views within a couple of hours

2.

April 13, 2009:
Domino's was alerted about the video by theconsumerist.com (morning).
Domino's found out how posted the video (evening).

3.

April 14, 2009:
 Two employees were fired.
Domino's contacted local health department.
Between April 13-14, the views of the video increased from 29,000 to 700.000

4.

April 15, 2009:
The original video is removed from YouTube –it was seen by 1,000,000.
A Twitter account was created by Domino's. and an official statement by the CEO was sent out

5.

April 20, 2009:
Multiple copies of the original video were posted on YouTube

6.

April 18, 2016:
 Copies of the original video are still available on YouTube, e.g. one of them has 939,427 views

2.   Methodology

This section will be structured in two parts. The first part will be the theory of science, here we will argue for the chosen perspective within the methodology and theory of science being social constructivism, which will be applied for this thesis. Furthermore, we will argue for the ontological and epistemological viewpoints accompanied by hermeneutics. Second, the methods and techniques used in the data collection will be accounted for.

2.1   Theory of Science: Philosophical view

The first level of methodology presents the philosophical view adopted in this thesis, a view that is guided by social constructivism. Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann first used this perspective in their work in 1966, *The Social Construction of Reality*, where social constructivism allows for the possibility that people can develop meaning from objects in the environment as well as from social interactions (Crotty, 1998[3]). We will analyze our empirical data from a social constructivist perspective, and we have chosen this perspective as we believe (crisis) communication is socially created and constructed by individuals.

Society, the assumed reality, and our knowledge of this are not inherent in human nature according to social constructivism – instead, it is believed that our knowledge is a result of human intervention, and thereby cultural and social intervention as well. One of the main focuses of social constructivism is that knowledge and reality are seen in the specific social context in which they occur (Jacobsen, n.d,), and this perspective claims that a given phenomenon is, in fact, man-made (Collin and Køppe 2012, 248). Ontology and epistemology shape social constructivism. Ontology is known as the branch of metaphysics, which is the philosophy concerning the overall nature of what things are. Whereas, epistemology is the theory of knowledge and how knowledge is acquired.

There are three based assumptions in social constructivism: reality, knowledge and learning. Reality builds on the belief that reality is constructed through human action where individuals in a society create the properties of the world together to be manufactured by individuals (Kukla, 2000[4]). The second assumption within social constructivism is knowledge, where it is a human product that

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[3] Michael Crotty, The Foundation of Social Research (London: Sage Publications, 1998), quoted in Beaumie Kim, *Social Constructivism: Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching, and technology.* Accessed May 5, 2016
[4] Andre, Kukla, Social Constructivism and the Philosophy of Science (New York: Routledge. 2000), quoted in Beaumie Kim, *Social Constructivism: Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching and technology.* Accessed May 5, 2016

is socially and culturally constructed (Ernest, 1993[5] and Gredler, 1997[6]). Lastly, learning is seen as a social process where it not based solely on an individual's view but as individuals in society who learn together to form a view on society.

Overall, social constructivism is focused on how individuals in society can create their own perceptions and interpretations of the world surrounding them through individual past experiences and interactions with the world around them (McMahon, 1997[7]).

Considering a worldview or a reality from this perspective is the essence when working with crisis communication; otherwise this would not exist as a real thing and to some individuals as a problem or issue. Fundamentally, crisis communication is based on world views that exist. In regards to Chipotle's and Domino's handling of their different crises, it is of interest to see the different worldviews and realities from the different stakeholders' and individuals' perspectives – it could be that these individuals may perceive the crises differently.

A perspective within social constructivism is *"the reality created by the media"* (Weber, 2002). Through a social constructivist perspective, the media is regarded as a creator or producer of an assumed reality. This could be what has happened in Chipotle's and Domino's situations – the media might have represented the two companies in a certain way, and then it may have become a different reality for some individuals – here, perception plays an important role.

2.2   Hermeneutics

Another important part in this thesis is hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is the interpretation and knowledge about interpretation. In order to understand a part of something, it must be understood based on the whole, and the whole must be understood based on the parts (Kjørup, 2013). In this thesis, we cannot avoid having a pre-understanding regarding the two companies, Chipotle and Domino's, as we know of the companies and their brands beforehand. Given our pre-understanding regarding the companies before working with each case, we could have some assumptions, expectations and maybe even prejudices about Chipotle, Domino's and their given cases. We enter the project with a pre-understanding, but through our analysis and interpretation, hopefully new knowledge and thereby a new understanding is acquired, which means that knowledge develops constantly, this could be called the hermeneutic circle.

[5] Paul Ernst. Social Constructivism as a Philosophy of Mathematics: Radical Constructivism Rehabilitated? (University of Exeter: 1999) Quoted in Beaumie Kim, *Social Constructivism: Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching and technology.* Accessed

[6] Margaret E. Gredler, Learning and Instruction: Theory into Practice (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1997) quoted in Beaumie Kim *Social Constructivism: Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching and technology.* Accessed May 5, 2016

[7] M. McMahon, Social Constructivism and the World Wide Web- A Paradigm for Learning (Perth, Australia: 1997) quoted in Beaumie Kim, *Social Constructivism*: *Emerging perspectives on learning, teaching and technology.* Accessed May 5, 2016

2.3 Perspectives

In order to examine the problem statement, two perspectives have been combined. Firstly, the perspective of each company's communicative strategies as the contextual part of the crisis; Secondly, the use of social media posts from stakeholders' views, as we believe they are an important part of the empirical data. The second perspective will be combined with the first in order to establish how brand image is constructed through discourses in the surveys and social media compared to each brand's crisis communication, thus influencing its reputation.

To examine the consequences of the discourses related to shaping the reputation of Chipotle and Domino's and to gain an overview of the two given cases, a focus on American stakeholders has been chosen. This perspective was chosen over an international perspective, we want to examine the effect of a crisis located in one specific area.

2.4 Research Method

In this section, the overall method of the research will be accounted for. The specific approach of data collection will be presented in order to introduce arguments for the used approach to data collection, data sample, development of research tools, data processing and limitation of validity. At the end of this section, the research tools will be presented to generate the knowledge needed to answer the problem statement.

2.4.1 Research Method and Data Collection

This thesis is inspired by social constructivism, and we believe it is important to secure the quality of methods throughout the analysis. According to Yin (2009), this can be achieved by having multiple sources of evidence, which thereby triangulates the perspectives and methods being used (Yin 2009, 45). Hence, both press releases via Chipotle and Domino's websites and social media statements have been collected in terms of a contextual part and a mediated part, both parts being socially constructed.

The first part describes the context in which the data are embedded. This includes Chipotle and Domino's press releases and statements gathered from each company's websites and the Internet. The press releases and statements are used to examine the communicative strategies of each company. The second part is the mediated part, being the collection of each company's social

media statements and stakeholder comments. The last part will be a collection of news articles and segments regarding both companies' crises. In addition, we also include a selection of stakeholder comments.

Throughout the analysis, a questionnaire-based survey's results are used to examine the communicative effects of each crisis on Chipotle and Domino's stakeholders' brand loyalty, perception of each brand and the effectiveness of the companies' crisis communication. In addition, stakeholders' responses to each crisis found on social media, specifically Facebook and Twitter are included. Using the stakeholders' view will give a broad perspective on individual views and study if the stakeholders respond to each company's attempts to use social media as an outlet for their crisis communication strategies. By collecting empirical data this way, not all stakeholders' statements on social media are incorporated therefore we are aware that there is some subjectivity in choosing stakeholders' statements. Therefore, we will be aware of choosing a wide variety of statements and comments via social media. In choosing a variety, a spectrum of responses from negative to positive will be selected, to ensure including a wide array of opinions and comments on social media platforms. By doing so, we try to limit the subjectivity.

2.4.1.1 Case Study Method

When working with a real-life case, which is greatly context-based, the quality of the research can be questioned, as many scholars critique the relevance of context-based research (Flyvbjerg 2006, 234). However, according to Flyvbjerg, a context-based case will enhance the overall understanding and provide a base for generalization at an in-depth level whereas, a context free case would offer a more theoretical discussion as Flyvbjerg states,

> *"One can often generalize on the basis of a single case, and the case study may be central to scientific development via generalization as supplement or alternative to other methods. But formal generalization is overvalued as a source of scientific development, whereas "the force of example" is underestimated"* (Flyvbjerg 2006, 228)

This is validated by Fairclough's argument that the context of a case has an underlying effect on the discourses that interpret the case (Fairclough 2010, 1215). Hence, this thesis will provide a comparative case study based on the problem statement introduced in the introduction and repeated here for convenience:

How did Chipotle Mexican Grill and Domino's Pizza choose to manage and respond to their given crises and how have the Internet and social media platforms affected the progression of the companies' crisis communication strategies? Furthermore, we also wonder to what effect each of the crises affected stakeholders' perceived image of the companies and their individual brands.

When using a case study, one is able to examine important features of a given case while analyzing credible interpretations of what is found. Also, one is able to use empirical data to test the validity of the data through a case study to create an argument behind one's analysis along with research and literature to back up those claims (Swann and Pratt 2003, 117).

Swann and Pratt argue that there are three types of case studies that can be used (2003, 117). The first type uses theories to test a certain study in a general topic, known as "*Theory-seeking and Theory-testing".* The evidence gained from a theory-based case study is argued to be speculative statements or generalizations (Swann and Pratt 2003, 117). The second type is referred to as "*Storytelling and Picture-drawing Case Studies*", where a narrative is used taking into account *"educational events, projects, programmes, institutions or systems"* (Swann and Pratt 2003, 117). The third type of case study is known as an "*Evaluative Case Study*" where a researcher uses knowledge from his/her given educational program, projects or events to analyze a given case through an analysis (Swann and Pratt 2003, 117). For this thesis, neither of the cases fit one specific type; both the methods of a "*Theory-seeking and Theory-testing*", using knowledge from theories and combining that knowledge with an "*Evaluative Case Study*", using knowledge gained during studies, are used.

2.4.1.2 Document analysis

In Brinkmann and Tanggaard's book "Kvalitative metoder" (2015), a chapter called "Dokumentanalyse" is presented by Kenneth Lynggaard.

Lynggaard argues that it is almost impossible to conduct an empirical study without including documents, and thereby a document analysis (Lynggaard 2015, 153). A document analysis can be used within a broad spectrum of different study areas e.g. discursive analysis or institutional analysis. Furthermore, a document analysis is typically focused on development over a certain timeframe (Lynggaard 2015, 153).

In order to explain what a document analysis is, it is important to establish what a document is. According to Lynggaard, a document is language that is fixated in text and time, generally speaking. A document can also include photos, but in regards to document analysis, the focus is on

written texts such as newspaper articles, letters and academic books (Lynggaard 2015, 154). Lynggaard emphasizes that even though a document is fixated in time, it does not mean that the document does not develop and he also argues that there are three types of documents; primary, secondary and tertiary (Lynggaard 2015, 154). A primary document is a document that only circulates between a certain amount of people created almost immediately after a given situation or event that the document refers to – this could be minutes of a meeting or personal letters, that is, documents that are not intended for the public. These documents can be difficult to retrieve and gain insight into as the documents potentially could hold private and/or sensitive information to a given person or company (Lynggaard 2015, 154-155).

A secondary document is a document that is available for the public and is created almost immediately after a given situation or event that the document refers to - it is not necessarily created for the public as a target group, but it is available for the general public (Lynggaard 2015, 155).

The last document type, tertiary, is a document that is available for the general public like the secondary document, but it is created at a time after the given situation or event that the document refers to or treats. This could e.g. be published memoirs or a background article where the document is an analysis of a given situation or event after it took place. (Lynggaard 2015, 155).

Lynggaard argues that it is not possible to distinguish between the three types of documents all the time, but the point, as he states, is the acknowledgement of the differences time wise and also of which target groups the sender might have had in mind when creating the document. It depends on what aspect one wants to cover, and Lynggaard emphasizes that a combination of these different types of documents could be preferable when wanting to create an in-depth analysis (Lynggaard 2015, 155-156). This thesis will mainly use secondary, but also tertiary documents. The secondary documents used are press releases and statements made immediately at the beginning of both Domino's and Chipotle's crises. These documents are available for the general public and are within people's reach by searching on Google. The tertiary documents we use are various articles and statements published during Domino's and Chipotle's crises. These will be accounted for in the following section.

Sender	Date	Type/Three Part Typology	Document Type
Chipotle	November 3, 2015	Secondary	Press Release
Chipotle	November 10, 2015	Secondary	Press Release
Chipotle	November 20, 2015	Secondary	Press Release
Chipotle	December 4, 2015	Secondary	Press Release
Chipotle	January 19, 2016	Secondary	Press Release
Chipotle	February 2, 2016	Secondary	Annual Report
Chipotle	December 16, 2015	Tertiary	CEO Letter
Domino's	April 14, 2009	Secondary	Press Statement
Domino's	April 15, 2009	Secondary	Press Statement
NBC News	September 4, 2015	Tertiary	News Article
Oregon Live	October 31, 2015	Tertiary	News Article
NBC News	December 4, 2015	Tertiary	News Article
NPR	February 1, 2016	Tertiary	News Article
NBC	April 15, 2009	Tertiary	News Segment
NBC/Today Show	April 17, 2009	Tertiary	News Segment

One of the advantages of using a document analysis is that it can, contrary to e.g. a focus group interviews, provide thorough background knowledge of data over a longer period of time – an interview might only give a snapshot of the given event or situation one wants to analyze, whereas the different document types combined can give a broader perspective of this (Lynggaard 2015, 156). Another important thing in this matter is that a document as the point of departure is not created with the purpose to be a part of an analysis, but of course some senders of documents, for example, a press release could assume that a given document could become an object in an analysis. Lynggaard emphasizes that it therefore is not that important if documents reveal the truth about a given situation or event (Lynggaard 2015, 156). In this thesis, we use both a document analysis and interview method, being a online questionnaire-based survey. The processes of the questionnaire-based survey will be accounted for in section 2.4.1.4.

Lynggaard argues that the types of documents that are collected for a document analysis depend on the research question(s) in focus, and he continues by stating that in most cases it could be important to cover a certain time frame/period (Lynggaard 2015, 156). In order to answer and cover the entire period of time regarding Domino's and Chipotle's crises, all press releases and statements made in those different periods have been reviewed. To clarify the two different time periods, two outlines of the crises are included (see p. 7 and 8, Appendix 1 and 2) – it is within these periods that the documents for this thesis are gathered.

Lynggaard presents a method to use when collecting documents called 'the snowball method' which also could be referred to as the snowball effect. With this approach one pursues references between the documents, and it begins with the analyst(s) establishing one or more

'mother document(s)'; after this, references in these documents are pursued (Lynggaard 2015, 157). In this thesis, the 'mother documents' are the press releases and statements from both Chipotle and Domino's as these are the first official statements from the two companies.

Each document will be addressed with awareness, as it is important to be aware of the documents authenticity, credibility, representativity and point of view (Lynggaard 2015, 163-165).

2.4.1.3 Definition of Genre

For this thesis, we have collected different genres of texts to use for empirical data. Genres can be defined as,

"a recognizable communicative event characterized by a set of communicative purpose(s) identified and mutually understood by the members of the professional or academic community in which it regularly occurs. Most often it is highly structure and conventionalized with constraints on allowable contributions in terms of their intent, positioning, form and functional value. These constraints, however, are often exploited by the expert members of the discourse community to achieve private intentions within the framework of socially recognized purpose(s)" (Bhatia 1993, 13)

For this thesis, we have focused on social media as a genre, a sub-genre of journalism being news articles, another sub-genre as news segments via YouTube, and lastly press releases as a genre. A genre is characterized as a *"rhetorical action based on recurrent situations"* (Miller 1984, 159[8]). Within the rhetorical situation, there are three critical elements that make up the situation. The three elements include an exigency (something needs to be done), constraints (persons, events, objects and relations) and an audience (who must be affected) (Yates and Orlikowski 1992, 301).

When depicting a genre, it is characterized by *"similar substance and form"* (Yates and Orlikowski 1992, 301). A substance could be social motives, themes and topics communicated within a text. A form could be the physical and linguistic features that are chosen for the text (Yates and Orlikowski 1992, 301). Furthermore, there are three aspects to a form, first the structural features and formatting of the text (e.g. lists and fields), second the communication medium chosen (e.g. paper, blog and intranet) and lastly, the language that differentiates in the linguistic characteristics when formatting the texts (e.g. legal jargon and technical jargon) (Yates and Orlikowski 1992, 302). In addition, genres are able to develop and change as Bhatia (1993) states,

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[8] Miller, C. Genre as social action. (London: Taylor&Francis, 1984), quoted in Yates, Joanne and Wanda J. Orlikowski. *Genres of Organizational Communication: A Structurational Approach to Studying Communication and Media*. The Academy of Management Review 1992, 301: 17 (2). Academy of Management

"any major change in the communicative purpose(s) is likely to give us a different genre; however minor changes or modifications help us distinguish sub-genres" (1993, 214).

Software genres *"include online chat, blogs, social networks and microblogs, and other types of social media, [that] can be distinguished based on their communicative characteristics and interactive functions"* (Lomborg 2011, 58). Within the software genre, there are sub-genres defined by their particular communicative purposes. Therefore, as Facebook and Twitter are social networks, they could be argued to be a sub-genre of the software genre (Lomborg 2011, 58-59). Since social media is used as a public discourse and a software genre, it could also be seen as its own genre or a sub-genre of the social network genre (Lomborg 2011, 55). To theorize social media in relation of a genre, it can be beneficial for two reasons according to Lomborg (2011, 57). The first reason being that social media provides the definition and framework that *"captures how different texts within the social media environments resemble each other"* (Lomborg 2011, 57-58). Secondly, it *"differentiates from other texts by their communicative characteristics and social functions."* (Lomborg 2011, 57).

Some may argue that social media platforms are a medium. We agree with this, but the difference between a genre and medium is that a medium is the software that *"emulates technical and material features"* (Lomborg 2011, 59), whereas a genre is the *"communication conventions and expectations"* (Lomborg 2011, 59).

Genres are subject to change and *"computer mediation is seen as a force towards change, where a genre moving from one medium to another first becomes replicated trying preserve content, structure (form) and purpose, then changes to a variant, utilizing the medium more"* (Ihlström and Lundberg, 2002). The form and structure of online articles are similar to a printed article where it contains a similar type of content that is used to convey recent news. Online articles also have a heading and time stamp similar to printed articles e.g. in newspapers.

Another form of a genre used in this thesis is the genre of press releases. Chipotle and Domino's used press releases and statements to relay information to its stakeholders. Press releases can be defined as,

> *"relatively short texts resembling news stories and containing what is considered by the issuer to be newsworthy information; they are generally send to the journalist community with the purpose of having them picked up by the press and turned into actual news stories, thus generating publicity"* (Catenaccio 2008, 11)

Since press releases can have the opportunity to become a tool for companies as either informative and or promotional information, they can be categorized as a *"hybrid genre"*

(Catenaccio 2008, 11). Although Domino's mainly used YouTube as platform to inform its stakeholders, the sub-genre of software genres, we have considered the YouTube statement to be included in the press release genre for this thesis as we mainly analyze it as a written statement.

2.4.1.4 Questionnaire-Based Survey

A questionnaire-based survey to collect a part of primary data has been chosen. In social sciences, questionnaires are one of the most commonly used methods to grasp and comprehend how societies work while testing theories (Groves et al. 2004, 3). Conducting a questionnaire-based survey, we believe, will give the best opportunity to attain a wide variety of respondents' perspectives. As each, Chipotle's and Domino's, crisis took place in the United States, an online questionnaire was chosen to be able to access sampling frame. Although a focus group interview might have been more applicable in some instances, e.g. it would have allowed us to go further in-depth to understand how stakeholders perceive and are affected by a food safety crisis. It was not chosen partially because of limits related to location during research. Access to individuals who would be able to qualify for an interview is limited because there is no Chipotle in Denmark; each of the crises took place in the United States, which made it inapplicable to use Danes.

In addition, the questionnaire was conducted online using a website called SurveyXact, access provided by Aalborg University. Questionnaires operated online can provide new opportunities, for example in this circumstance being located in Europe while studying an American brand. Conducting an online survey also provides the opportunity to *"reduce the large amount of human resources needed to conduct surveys"* (Groves et al. 2004, 7). Although not all online surveys are fitting for all research projects, we believe this option for this thesis is an applicable tool. The advantages of conducting a questionnaire can be anything from low cost, quick and direct data entry to a wide geographical reach. The geographical reach is the prime motive for choosing this form of data collecting for this thesis. Disadvantages of choosing a questionnaire can be the reliance on software, lack of knowledge of who is responding and lack of access to dig deeper (Sue and Ritter 2007, 10). For this survey, the link was posted from SuveryXact to one individuals'[9] Facebook page who is from the United States, and therefore basing an American network from which to draw from. Friends, acquaintances and family were able to respond as her network expands across the United States. Furthermore, the questionnaire-based survey was also shared in different network groups, which were not connected to the individual, encouraging people to share the survey on their own Facebook pages. Thus, this resulted in responses from a wide pool of respondents. *"Social media is*

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[9] The survey was posted on one of the authors of this thesis Facebook page.

hence called 'the world's largest focus group' " (Park et al. 2012, 283), and this is why we chose to share the survey link on Facebook to appeal to as many people as possible.

For the questionnaire, 18 questions were composed pertaining to both companies' crises. The complete questionnaire can be found in Appendix 3. As a survey is created to collect information, the goal in doing so was to design a questionnaire that was able to *"effectively access employee or customer attitudes, reactions, perceptions, and demographics"* (Rogelberg 1997, 752).

While designing an online questionnaire, authors of "*Conducting Online Surveys*"*,* Valerie M. Sue and Lois A. Ritter (2007) recommend the following steps to creating and conducting a survey. In addition, we will incorporate the work of Saris and Gallhofer (2007) *"Design, Evaluation, and Analysis of Questionnaires for Survey Research*".

1)   Define objectives

In this first step, it is suggested to choose a topic that will reflect on the research problem(s). While defining the objective of one's survey, there are two basic choices, those being, descriptive or explanatory studies in regards to choosing to conduct experimental or non-experimental research (Sue and Ritter 2012, 1-2). Descriptive research can be defined as the first research conducted on a hypothetical or theoretical idea whereas exploratory research lays the groundwork for future studies. Descriptive research is where researchers hope to investigate and enlighten on a topic while being able to provide additional information (Sue and Ritter 2012, 1-2). For this thesis and through the survey research, the intent is to discover and explain individual's responses to food safety incidents and the two companies', Chipotle and Domino's, brands.

For the questionnaire-based survey, we asked 18 questions for the respondents. We wanted to ask of both Chipotle's and Domino's crises in the same survey instead of making two separate ones, as we believe this could be inconvenient for the respondents. Our solution was to divide the survey in five small parts; first part being questions about demographical background, second part about respondents' relationship to social media and food violations in general, third part concerning Chipotle, fourth part concerning Domino's and the last part being about the respondents' opinions towards food safety violations and outbreaks in general and fast food chains.

The three first questions, being "*how old are you?",* "*where do you live?*" and "*what is the highest level of education you have completed?*", were asked to gain knowledge about the respondents demographic background. We wanted to know the age of the respondents to see if there were any correlations between their age and what they answered. We asked to the respondents' location, as we wanted to ensure that the respondents live in the United States. Furthermore, we wanted to assess if correlation between their location and the outbreak locations

of both Chipotle and Domino's had any relationship to the response of the questions. The question about education was to gain knowledge about the respondents' background, but after we have conducted the survey, we argue that this question might not have been necessary.

The next two questions, *"How often do you use social media?"* and *"How important is food safety to you?"* were asked because we wanted to know the respondents' general opinions and information about these topics. More specifically it was to define if respondents use social media, to defend that social media is a topic of interest in regards to being used as a channel utilized for crisis communication for organizations and to define if respondents consider the topic of food safety to be a priority.

The next six questions all concerned Chipotle's situation. *"Do you eat at Chipotle Mexican Grill?"* – we asked this question because we wanted to know how many of the respondents actually eat at Chipotle. Next we asked *"Are you aware of the following?"* (being E. Coli, Norovirus and Salmonella), and this was to define if respondents have heard about the different types of outbreaks that Chipotle had during the period of the crisis and to see if it was a certain type of the outbreaks people had heard about. *"Why do you eat at Chipotle?"*, this question was followed by different options to choose from and also with the opportunity to write a reply. This was to examine what made or make people eat at Chipotle and maybe this way see how they feel about the brand and which words respondents attribute to Chipotle. Next we asked, *"Did you hear about Chipotle's food safety violations/outbreaks in 2015- early 2016?"* followed by *"If answered yes, HOW did you hear about the Chipotle food crisis?"*. This was to define if the individual had heard of this specific crisis and to allow respondents to further express how they heard about the crisis specifically as to find if social media was an outlet that they heard about the crisis. The last question regarding Chipotle was *"Did these outbreaks/violations affect your choice of eating at Chipotle? Why- Why not?"* This was to define if respondents were affected by the outbreaks, and to what level that they were affected. Also, allowing for respondents to further express their reasoning behind their individual answer.

The five following question concerned Domino's. The questions and the reasons behind them are very much alike the questions in the above-mentioned paragraph about Chipotle as we were very aware of asking the questions regarding the two companies in the same way to avoid making any difference that could affect the respondents' way of replying to the questionnaire-based survey. The same questions were asked about Domino's, *"Do you eat at Domino's Pizza?"*, *"Why do you eat at Domino's?"*, *"Did you hear about Domino's food safety violation outbreaks in 2009?"*, *"If answered yes, HOW did you hear about Domino's food crisis?"* and finally, *"Did these outbreaks/violations affect your choice of eating at Domino's? Why- Why not?"*. The reasons for asking these questions are the same as in the above-mentioned paragraph, and we therefore see no

reason to repeat them. However, we now believe for the question, "*Did you hear about Domino's food safety violation outbreaks in 2009?*", we should have asked by giving a small description of what had happened in 2009 as we believe more individuals would have remembered the incident.

The last part of the survey consisted of two questions. The first being "*If you heard about the health violation or outbreak at any fast food chain, would that affect your decision to eat there?*" because we wanted to know the respondents' opinions regarding health and food safety issues and outbreaks. We also wanted to examine what the respondents' thought of it in general without mentioning a specific food chain allowing the respondents to express themselves in general. The last question we asked was "*What words do you apply to fast food chains?*", providing the respondents with 14 different words to choose from. We wanted to gain knowledge about how people perceive fast food chains in general. The reason why we provided a list of words to choose from was to create a variety of responses for respondents to choose from to give the best possible view of fast food chains.

2)   Choose a sampling frame and variables

As mentioned previously, the sampling frame is individuals located in the United States because the crises happened in the United States. Also, individuals must have access to the Internet as the survey is conducted online.

There are two different approaches that can be used when choosing a sampling frame and variables: descriptive or exploratory. When conducting a descriptive study, the choice of variables would be dependent on the purpose of the study. Whereas in an exploratory study, one must create *"an inventory of possible clauses and to develop from that list a preliminary model that indicates the relationships between the variables of interest"* (Saris and Gallhofer 2007, 5). Variables in an exploratory study are opening new topics whereas the descriptive focuses on the direct relationship of the study (Sue and Ritter 2012, 2). The purpose of this study is to discover the effects that each crisis had on Chipotle's and Domino's stakeholders, therefore a descriptive approach was chosen because no new topics were selected as mentioned above.

3)   Design data collection strategy

The website survey service called SurveyXact was utilized to collect data as the Internet was the best means to be able to access respondents; access was available via Aalborg University. When choosing the data collection strategy, it is recommended to take into account of costs, the question formulation one creates and the quality of data received. Cost was not a factor, as Aalborg University provides the survey platform. Lastly, in conducting an online survey the quality of data

was recognized through the limitations of how in depth a survey can be. To gain respondents for this survey, the platform Facebook was selected to ensure that there was a wide variety of respondents. Through the data collection of the survey, we received 211 responses.

4)   Develop Questionnaire

SurveyXact's setup and structure provides options that allow the ability to customize preferences. The questions were created with intent to be able to acquire knowledge of the respondents' attitudes, reactions and perceptions of each brand without leading participants in a certain kind of direction. This will be combined with individual's comments from news media, being news articles and segments.

When developing each survey question, there were several processes to consider (Saris and Gallhofer 2007, 4). The first decision to be made is the subject and dimension of the question. As a researcher, one could be required to choose the subject and dimension of what to evaluate for each individual question. For example, in this survey, question number five asks "*How important is food safety to you?*". The subject of the sentence is food safety, and what is being evaluated is to what degree food safety is important to them (Saris and Gallhofer 2007, 6).

After deciding the subject and dimension of one's question, the question should be formulated (Saris and Gallhofer 2007, 7). Other variations of this question could have been: "*Please tell me if food safety is important to you*," "*Now I would like to ask you if food safety is important to you*", and lastly, "*Do you agree that food safety is important*?". There are many formulations that one can choose, and the choice is important because it affects the outcome of the response. As seen in objectives (pp. 19-21), the question chosen leads to the response choice of choosing a level of how important the subject is to the respondent. If asked, "*Is food safety important?*," this would lead to a yes/no answer - this is the third decision to make when creating a question.

The fourth decision one should consider is additional text that may be beneficial for the respondent, such as an introduction, extra information, definitions, instructions, or a motivation to answer (Saris and Gallhofer 2007, 8). For this questionnaire-based survey, a short explanation of our motivations for conducting the survey was included; "*Thank you for participating in our survey! This survey is being conducted for a Master Thesis project concerning health violations and communication. We believe this survey will only take 5 minutes or less to complete*" (Appendix 4). We argue that it is important to have a small explanation presented before the respondents fill out the survey, then the respondents are aware of what the survey is about and why they are filling it out. Also included is information about how long it would take to fill out the survey. This was to

motivate and inform the respondents, maybe increasing the amount of responses by letting the respondents know how long it would take to complete it.

5)   Collect data

Before collecting any official data, it is recommended to test the quality of the questionnaire as it is important to ensure that the questions you have created are understandable, and that your motivations for each question will be measured (Sue and Ritter 2007, 9). The questionnaire-based survey was presented in a testing environment before being sent out. This testing environment involved fellow peers, friends and family. The survey was tested on respondents who may already have knowledge and pre-understanding of what is being studied and also respondents who have no previous experiences with the subjects. This was to make sure that the questions were understood by various people.

6)   Manage data

Managing data can be a challenge, and the biggest challenge could be the confidentiality of information, as conducting an online questionnaire requires addressing confidentiality differently than traditional methods (Sue and Ritter 2007, 6). For this survey, the information is not sensitive information, but of course, all responses were treated confidentially, meaning that the data collected and referenced is solely used for this thesis.

7)   Analyze Data

Sue and Ritter (2007) specify that when using an online-host for a survey, some hosts provide the researcher with several options to describe one's statistics. These online hosts also give a researcher the option to download the data so one can refrain from computing the statistics by hand, however, one is still required to interpret the results (Sue and Ritter 2007, 139). With SurveyXact one can choose between different graph types e.g. a pie chart. For this thesis, we will use the bar graphs to show the statistics from the survey (Appendix 3), and for the analysis we will only use the overall percentages from the responses.

One of the limitations when conducting a survey is that the answers (the data) are analyzed by humans, typically by the individuals who conducted the survey in the first place. There is no computer program found that can help individuals to analyze the given answers when the answers are qualitative written answers (Saris and Gallhofer 2007, V). For this thesis, there could be a risk because we manage the data and the risk of bias through analysis. It is argued that as long as

awareness of this fact together with the fact that this kind of data always is connected with the risk of too much subjectivity, this type of data collection is valid for this thesis.

Another challenge could be the risk of asking leading questions, rather than asking open questions, allowing the respondent to answer in his or her own way. It is argued that another limitation could be that one cannot control the number of respondents nor the amount of answers, as well as the quality of the answers.

Furthermore, we acknowledge that one cannot rely solely on the information conducted from a survey. The data gathered to create a picture of what and how some people might perceive both Domino's and Chipotle as a brand, thoughts about food safety issues and how food violations may affect them. This data will be combined with stakeholders' comments and tweets on Twitter, Facebook, news articles and segments.

2.4.1.5 Press Releases Collection and Limitations

In the first part of the analysis, the press releases from each company were chosen. For Chipotle, it was possible to find the written documents on its website, under the *Investor Relation* page, and from there use the information as data. Five press releases, one annual report and one letter from the Co-CEO, Steve Ells, have been collected for the analysis. For Domino's press releases during the given crisis, we were unable to find textual documents online. Therefore, in replacement, we chose to include one press release transcribed from a picture from a website (Appendix 12) and video statements that were still accessible today.

While collecting data for Domino's it was difficult to find and account for every statement it had published in 2009 as the company's website data only dates back to 2012 and therefore, we could not find the 2009 press releases (Domino's 2012 press, n.d.). We attempted to contact Domino's by email (Appendix 14) to receive the data from the source itself, but the company has not answered back. Therefore, we have been compelled to search the Internet for press releases and statements to try to make a timeline and thereby an outline of what happened in Domino's case back in 2009 (Appendix 2). We are aware that there are risks involved when using the Internet as a source, but we argue that we have been very critical and ensured to double-check sources.

According a website called BrianSolis, Domino's send out a statement April 14, 2009 (BrianSolis, 2009) via its website (Appendix 12) and a news segment video on YouTube (transcribed in Appendix 23) confirms this. We see this as Domino's first response to the crisis. April 15, 2009, Domino's published its second official statement to the public, two days after the notion of the video published on YouTube by two employees from a Domino's located in North Carolina. This statement

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was made by Patrick Doyle, the President of USA Operations at Domino's and published on YouTube as a video (Appendix 13).

We are aware that the statements online is not the same genre as a press release, but for this thesis it will be used so in comparison to Chipotle's press releases, annual report and letter as it is the form of statement Domino's published. Furthermore, we cannot find the official statement on Domino's own YouTube account – the oldest video published by Domino's on its YouTube account is from December 21, 2009 (Domino's YouTube, 2009). Therefore, we have transcribed a copy of the original press statement found on YouTube published April 18, 2009 (Domino's President Responds to Prank Video, 2009). The transcription can be found in Appendix 13. For this thesis, we will be referring to the video as a statement. We have included an overview of the press releases and statements from Chipotle and Domino's below.

Chipotle's Press Releases/Annual Report/CEO Letter	Appendix
First Press Release: November 3, 2015 *"Chipotle Moves Aggressively to Address Issues in Washington and Oregon"*	5
Second Press Release: November 10. 2015 "Chipotle to Reopen Northwest Restaurants"	6
Third Press Release: November 20. 2015 *"Chipotle Update's on E. Coli Investigation*	7
Fourth Press Release: December 4, 2015 *"Chipotle Commits to Become Industry Leader in Food Safety"*	8
Fifth Press Release: January 19, 2016 *"New Chipotle Food Safety Procedures Largely in Place; Company will share Learnings from 2015 Outbreaks at All-Team Meeting"*	9
Fourth Quarter Annual Report: February 2, 2016 *"Chipotle Mexican Grill, Inc. Announces Fourth quarter and Full Year 2015 Results, CDC Investigation Over; Chipotle Welcomes Customers Back to Restaurants"*	10
CEO Letter: December 16, 2015 *"A Letter from Founder Steve Ells: Comprehensive Food Safety Plan"*	11

Domino's Statements   **Appendix**

First Press Statement: April 14, 2009 *"Update to our Valued Customers"*	12
YouTube Video Statement: April 15, 2009 *"Domino's President Responds To Prank Video"*	13

2.4.1.6 Social Media Collection and Limitations

When collecting social media posts and tweets online, all published by each company on the day of the crisis were foremost. For Chipotle, as there were multiple incidents, there was more social media statements as data in comparison to Domino's. The main focus tool for social media in this thesis is Twitter and Facebook. To analyze the opinions of stakeholders, data was collected from the companies' social media accounts focusing on statements and comments made by stakeholders during the crises periods.

Since communication on these two platforms is almost limitless, for the collection of Chipotle's social media statements, we have chosen to focus on the content on the days (following the outline on p. 7, Appendix 1) that it published press releases on its website in regards to the on-going crisis with food safety violations. In addition, we have also chosen to include posts and tweets from days surrounding the initial start of each individual outbreak on Facebook and Twitter from Chipotle's accounts. Since social media platforms are interchangeable and one is able to share information on a social media platform with another, some of the company's posts and tweets are the same as it is suggested that, "*the social media approach of companies should be handled as an integrated strategy. If marketers use them independently, they are not able to reach the highest possible amount of influence and attention with their marketing strategy or may send contradictory messages*" (Horn et al. 2015, 201). Furthermore, as an abundance amount of people are able to comment on these statements, we have selected a variety of comments on Chipotle's posts and tweets to accompany an analysis on Chipotle's crisis communication strategy.

According to Park et al., we found that by April 15, 2009, Domino's created a Twitter account named @dpzinfo (Park et al. 2012, 283) and we assume that Domino's created a Facebook account around the same time in April. We cannot find a specific date for when Domino's created its Facebook account, but the earliest post we can find on the company's Facebook account is from April 19, 2009 (Domino's Facebook, 2016 and Appendix 17, 1.). We will look at a selection of Domino's posts on Facebook within the period of April 19 to December 30, 2009 and stakeholders' tweets on Twitter within the period of April 13 to April 20, 2009. We have been able find the posts

made by Domino's on its own Facebook page by scrolling down the page, and we have thereby selected six posts with appertaining comments from stakeholders. It was impossible for us to find tweets made by Domino's in the same time period as stated above – however, we use secondary data from a journal by Park et al. from the Association for the Advancement of Artificial Intelligence Conference on Weblogs and Social Media from 2012 (Park et al. 2012). This journal is a case study on Domino's crisis in 2009 with Twitter as the main focus because *"from the beginning to the end the medium played a central role in spreading both the bad news and the apology"* (Park et al. 2012, 282). The authors behind the journal have analyzed a total of 20,773 tweets from stakeholders regarding Domino's (Park et al. 2012, 283) and have used this data to conduct several figures and tables (p. 84 and 85). Furthermore, the authors have selected some specific examples of these tweets, they have *"sampled a total of 860 Twitter conversations from two peak times: 395 from 3:00-4:00, April, 15th, when the video prank by the employees spread, and 465 from 20:00-21:00, April 16th, when the Domino's President released an apology video in YouTube"* (Park et al. 2012, 287). From the collected tweets, Park et al. excluded a total of 117 tweets because the tweets were irrelevant; some were not about Domino's, but referred to a software product, some were written in non-English and some tweets were not related to the crisis, even though they were about Domino's (Park et al. 2012, 287-288). We also will use these data and some specific examples of tweets (Park et al. 2012, 287-289).

When collecting social media comments from stakeholders from both company's the selection of data included comments from stakeholders on the original post from each company, comments on Chipotle's tweets and tweets from Domino's stakeholders. Since there is an enormous volume of comments on the company's social media accounts, it is impossible for us to include every comment. Therefore, we have selected comments from stakeholders with a broad aspect of opinions to present both cases with the broadest range of the stakeholders' perspectives. Due to the latter, we have selected and collected this data ourselves which could be connected with a risk of being subjective. We argue that we cannot avoid being subjective as we choose the posts, tweets and comments, however we have chosen a wide variety of comments to present the cases with the broadest view and we have collected posts and tweets aligned with the two outlines (p. 7 and 8, Appendix 1 and 2).

Chipotle's Social Media Data	Appendix
Twitter Data	15
Facebook Data	16

Domino's Social Media Data	Appendix
Facebook Data	17
Twitter Data (Park et al. 2012)	None

2.4.1.7 News Articles Collection and Limitations

When collecting news articles, it was possible to find articles relevant to Chipotle's crisis. Focusing on the time that each press release was published (following the outline at p. 7 and Appendix 1), included are four articles to supplement the analysis. In Domino's case, we have selected two news media segments from YouTube. The first video is called "*Dirty Dirty Dominos pizza*" and the second one is called "*Dominos Pizza on the Today Show – Workers fired for Dominos prank video*". The first video is uploaded April 15, 2009 on an account called "*Ramox3's channel*" and has received 1,351,507 views and 2,263 comments (Dirty Dirty Dominos pizza, 2009). The second video is uploaded April 17, 2009 on an account called "*nautques4ever*" and the video has 486,673 views and 554 comments (Dominos Pizza on the Today Show, 2009). Similar to the YouTube video in the press release and statement section, when using the data for the analysis the news segments will primarily focus on the language used by the news anchors as if it was a text. We are aware that the videos are copies from the original broadcasts, as we could not find the original source, we argue that these are valid sources as they only show the original broadcasts without information added or edited. We have transcribed the two videos and they can be found in Appendix 22 and 23.

When collecting the comments from stakeholders, the comments from the news articles concerning Chipotle's crisis were fewer than the amount of comments Domino's two news segments had. We believe this is due to YouTube being a social media platform encouraging stakeholders to comment. When collecting the comments on the YouTube news segments, the collection includes a selection of comments ranging from 2009, when the crisis was present to today in 2016. As there was an endless amount of comments on the YouTube videos, five to six comments were collected on each video to present a broad view of the crisis. The selection of comments on the Chipotle news articles were slightly limited in comparison to the videos, nonetheless, five to six comments were collected on each article to present the case. Following, an outline of the collected articles and news segments used for data are presented.

News Online Articles (Chipotle)	Appendix
First Article: September 4, 2015 *"SoCal Chipotle Linked to Norovirus Outbreak Affecting Nearly 100 People"*	18
Second Article: October 31, 2015 *"E. Coli sickens at least 22 people who ate at Chipotle in Oregon and Washington"*	19
Third Article: December 4, 2015 *"Chipotle Vows to Tighten Food Safety Standards in wake of E. Coli Cases"*	20
Fourth Article: February 1, 2016 *"E. Coli Outbreaks at Chipotle Restaurants 'Appear To Be Over,' CDC says"*	21
News Article Comments	22

News Segments (Domino's)	Appendix
First Video: April 15, 2009 *"Dirty Dirty Dominos Pizza"*	23
Second Video: April 17, 2009 *"Domino's Pizza on the Today Show- Workers fired from Domino's prank video"*	24
News Segment Comments	25

2.5   Analytical Approach

In this thesis, the analysis will be conducted in three levels. For the first part, we will analyze press releases and statements from both Chipotle and Domino's. We will use Fairclough's theory of Critical Discourse Analysis (henceforth, CDA) to look at the different language in the documents. Furthermore, Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory (henceforth, SCCT) and Benoit's Image Repair Theory will also be used. This is to analyze how the two companies communicated during the crises and which communicative strategies they might have used. We will end this part with a summary where we summary of the findings and compare them to each other. In addition, we will also use the theory of Massey's organizational image management in order to try to examine if the chosen strategies might have worked.

The second part of the analysis consists of a collection of social media statements from Chipotle and Domino's. We have chosen to focus on Facebook and Twitter, as we believe these are the two most important platforms in both of the company's crisis communication regarding social media. We will refer to statements made on Facebook as posts and statements on Twitter as tweets. In Chipotle's case, we will analyze tweets and posts made by the company itself and we will also look at the company's stakeholders' comments on tweets and posts. Regarding Domino's, we will analyze posts posted by the company and we will look at different comments made by stakeholders.

Unfortunately, we were not able to find any tweets from the company itself, therefore, we will only focus on stakeholders' tweets in regards to Domino's appearance on Twitter. In this part of the analysis, we will use Coombs' and Benoit's crisis communication theories to analyze which strategies the two companies might have used in their communication on Twitter and Facebook. Furthermore, we will use CDA to look at the different language used by stakeholders in their comments and tweets to analyze what and how they might perceive the two different brands. In addition, we will also present some of the findings from the conducted questionnaire-based survey (Appendix 3). When reproducing these quotes from Facebook, Twitter, and the conducted survey, they are incorporated with any spelling, grammar and other errors from the original sources into the analysis.

In the last part of the analysis, we will analyze how Domino's and Chipotle were portrayed in the media in 2009 and 2015/2016. Therefore, we will analyze a selection of news articles and news segments regarding Chipotle and Domino's crises following the two outlines found on page 7 and 8 and in Appendix 1 and 2. In Chipotle's case, we will use four news articles from different news media and in Domino's case, we have chosen to focus on two news segments published on YouTube. We also want to analyze peoples' reactions and comments in relation to that. We have selected different comments to represent both negative and positive comments regarding the two companies – these can be found in Appendix 22 and 25. In this part of the analysis, we will be using CDA to look at the different linguistic selections.

Overall, in the analysis regarding Benoit's Image Repair Theory and Coombs' SCCT, there are a great amount of strategies and sub-strategies/categories. We have made overviews of both of the theories on page 45-46 and 48. Furthermore, to assist the readers, we will throughout the entire analysis use a bold font to stress the strategies and we will underline the sub-strategies/categories. This is to create an overview for the readers and to put emphasis on the strategies used.

3.   Theoretical Framework

This section will provide an overview of concepts and theories relevant to answering the problem statement in this thesis. First part of the theoretical section will be an explanation of Fairclough's theory on CDA, which we will account for as an analytic tool.

In the second part, different definitions and concepts are presented. First, we will present the concept of public relations (PR), as this is an important concept to understand because we argue Chipotle and Domino's PR departments were responsible for the crisis communication during each of the crises. Then a definition of corporate reputation and brand image and a definition of the Internet and social media will follow. In addition to these concepts, we will also present the

definition of an online firestorm, social media marketing and eWoM, as we believe these are important concepts to be aware of when conducted this thesis.

In the third part of this chapter, the concept of crisis communication will be presented, as this can contribute to understanding how Chipotle and Domino's reputations have been affected by their individual crises. Here, Coombs' SCCT, Benoit's Image Repair Theory and Massey's Organizational Image Management Theory will be presented.

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3.1   Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis will be used in order to try to give an understanding of the discourses constructing Domino's and Chipotle's organizational reputations, and in an attempt to examine how these different discourses might influence the two companies' reputations. First presented will be an explanation of the broad understanding of CDA and then, a presentation of Fairclough's theory regarding CDA, his views on this, and including an outline Fairclough's concrete model of analysis.

Discourse analysis can be seen as a vague term, and *"discourse analysis is not just one approach, but a series of interdisciplinary approaches that can be used to explore many different social domains in many different types of studies"* (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 1). Jørgensen and Phillips' broad definition of discourse is *"a particular way of talking about and understanding the world (or an aspect of the world)"* (Jørgensen and Phillips 2002, 1), and it is this definition that is relevant throughout this thesis.

CDA's main focus is on the relationships between discourse as social action and other facets of social life (Edwards 2013, 226); in other words CDA *"allows contextual factors to be taken into account when analyzing text"* (Edwards 2013, 226). Furthermore, CDA is interested in the connection between language and power where relationships such as institutional, political and media discourses are important (Wodak and Meyer 2002, 1-2). CDA is not only focused on written and spoken texts; it is also focused on *"a theorization and description of both the social processes and structures which give rise to the production of a text, and of the social structures and processes within which individuals or groups as social historical subjects, create meanings in their interaction with texts"* (Wodak and Meyer 2002, 3).

According to Meyer and Wodak, *"The subjects under investigation differ for the various departments and scholars who apply CDA. Gender issues, issues of racism, media discourses or dimensions of identity research have become very prominent"* (Wodak and Meyer 2002, 3). This thesis will mainly focus on media discourses.

According to Fairclough, CDA can be used as a tool in order to analyze, criticize and maybe even change the social reality (Fairclough 2014, 4). We will in this thesis use CDA to look at the discourses as social practices that shape the reputations of both Domino's and Chipotle. We will do so through various articles, press releases and statements presented in the methodology section, research method and data collection 2.4.1.

Fairclough also argues that is it impossible to just analyze one text and then understand the whole context. Here, it is important to look at it as a process where there is a development in the texts, context to context. Regarding this thesis, the context will shift between both Chipotle and Domino's statements, to the various media platforms and the comments. This is a continuing discourse, and here the analyst(s) can change between interpretation, evaluation, critique and explanation (Fairclough 2014, 7).

In 1989, the main focus of Fairclough's theory was three levels of social conditions. The first level is *"the level of social situation, or the immediate social environment in which the discourse occurs"* (Fairclough 1989, 25). The next level is *"the level of social institution which constitutes a wider matrix for the discourse"* (Fairclough 1989, 25). The last level is *"the level of society as a whole"* (Fairclough 1989, 25). To draw further on that, Fairclough argues that there are three various senses in relation to CDA, *"(1) meaning making as an element of the social process, (2) the language associated with a particular social field or practice (e.g., 'political discourse'), and (3) a way of construing aspects of the world associated with a particular social perspective"* (Fairclough 2013, 179). This could also be referred to as Fairclough's model of discourse as text, interaction and context;
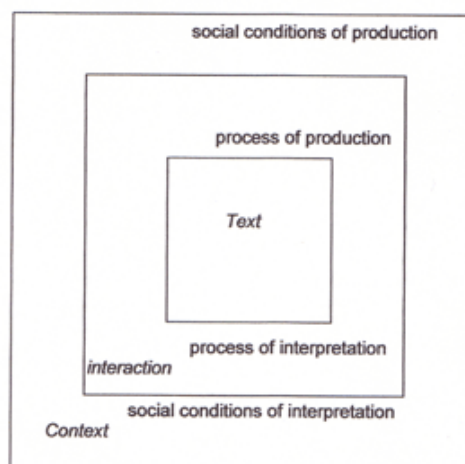
(Fairclough 1989, 25)

Furthermore, Fairclough's view of CDA stems from normative critique, which is related to explanatory critique (Fairclough 2014, 10-11). It is referred to as normative critique when *"it does not simply describe existing realities but also evaluates them"* (Fairclough 2013, 178), and it is referred to as explanatory critique when *"it does not simply describe and evaluate existing realities but seeks to explain them"* (Fairclough 2013, 178).

Fairclough also states that CDA consists of several different analyses: an interactional and conversational analysis, analysis of arguments, narratives, explanations and interdiscursivity, which is a combination of discourse, genre and style analysis (Fairclough 2014, 39). An analysis of the collected articles, press releases and statements as contextual data is presented – the relationship between the texts and their social conditions will be explored in an effort to determine the reputation and image of Domino's and Chipotle.

There are several of points of criticism related to CDA. Schegloff (1997) suggests that analysts "*should produce description of texts first, and only then should critical analysis be conducted … which arise from the bias of the researcher rather than from the text itself*" (Blackledge 2005, 17). To draw further on that, a point of criticism is also "*the dangers of bias in CDA, as researchers may start from a particular ideological position, then select for analysis only those texts which support this position*" (Blackledge 2005, 17).

It could be argued that it would be almost impossible to avoid this bias as we, in this instance, already have a pre-understanding of a given case, relative to Chipotle's and Domino's image and reputation. We have selected texts as pointed out in the above-mentioned criticism – but we argue that this subjectivity cannot be avoided 100 percent. We have been aware of this pitfall when selecting and collecting data for the analysis with every official document and text that are connected to the two cases i.e. Chipotle and Domino's.

3.2   The Concept of Public Relations

Public relations, also known as PR, is an *"aspect of communications involving the relations between an entity subject to or seeking public attention and the various publics that are or may be interested in it*" (Britannica Academic, n.d.). The given entity could, for example be a business corporation, a politician, a religious organization or any person or organization. The publics could both be a very specific target group or an audience to the stakeholders of a certain company. Furthermore, public relations covers a wide range of disciplines including "*investor relations, crisis management, internal communications, influencing government policy, and community relations*" (Ehrlich and Fanelli 2012, 75).

Public relations can also be referred to as the *"means of positioning your products or company through a perceived third-party endorsement (…) Public relations is one of the most effective means of shaping attitudes and building credibility for you, your organization, and its products"* (Ehrlich and Fanelli 2012, 75). Ehrlich and Fanelli also argue that there has been further development within the concept and definition of public relations since the appearance of new uses of the Internet. Now, it is not only the traditional journalists that can have influence, Ehrlich and Fanelli state that bloggers, comments on news sites and e.g. tweets can have a huge influence (Ehrlich and Fanelli 2012, 75). Despite this development, Ehrlich and Fanelli argue that the principles of public relations remain the same (Ehrlich and Fanelli 2012, 75).

Public relations can include e.g. press releases, brochures, background knowledge or fact sheets about a given company or products, links to websites where more information can be found, YouTube videos etc. (Ehrlich and Fanelli 2012, 77). This thesis will explore public relations in correlation with crisis communication, mainly in relation to press releases and YouTube videos.

3.3   Definition of Corporate Reputation and Brand Image

Corporate reputation can be linked closely to stakeholder theory where organizational management and ethics address the morals and values to managing an organization. Corporate reputation goes further by addressing what a company consists of, what it says it is, what it is seen as, what others see, what the brand stands for, what it should be and lastly, what the company wishes to be (Carroll 2014, 4). On a broad scale, corporate reputation is defined as *"a widely circulated, oft-repeated message of minimal variation about an organization revealing something about the organization's nature"* (Carroll 2014, 4).

When defining corporate reputation, it is important to discuss the interchangeable term of corporate identity (Feldman et al. 2014, 54). These differences can be seen in the chart below.

	Organizational Identity	**Corporate Reputation**
Stakeholders: Internal or external	Internal	Internal and External
Perceptions: Actual or Desired	Actual	Actual
Emanating from the inside or outside the firm	Inside	Inside and outside
Positive or negative perception of the firm possible	Positive or negative	Positive or negative
Relevant question	"Who/ what do we believe we are?	"What are we seen to be?"

(Feldman et al. 2014, 54)

This chart on page 34 depicts organizational identity and image both originating from the inside where corporate reputation emanates from the inside and outside of the organization. The three terms are categorized by relevant questions asked to better understand what each concept represents.

The organizational identity of a company is more concerned with the "who are we, and what do we believe we are?" based upon the organizational culture (Feldman et al. 2014, 55). Organizational image is also constructed internally, but it contradicts organizational identity through the corporate image by operating with external stakeholders to shape and maintain the image and create an impression of the organizational identity at a certain point in time (Feldman et al. 2013, 55).

As both of these concepts are constructed through the inside of the organization, they are therefore controlled by the organization. Corporate reputation builds and maintains its image and identity over time in order to be able to expand from internal construction to a two-way construction of a corporation through internal and external stakeholders. Image and reputation of a company are interrelated due to the corporate reputation being conceptualized as the accumulation of the organization's image over time (Feldman et al. 2013, 55).

Although corporate reputation is defined as a more stable concept than corporate image, corporate reputation is used as a dynamic concept as it is able to change over time because of the inside and outside environmental changes (Feldmen et al. 2013, 55). As companies are not in control of what goes on outside of the company's boundaries, stakeholders can create their own opinions through interaction with media and opinion leaders as a third-party source, which can be a challenge for a company's organizational reputation (Feldman et al. 2013, 55).

In this thesis, reputation is perceived with the understanding that a company is constantly building its image, whereas the image of a company is seen as being constructed on the outside as the public view i.e., stakeholders. Because of the latter, the terms "reputation" and "image" are used interchangeably (Feldman et al. 2013, 54) as *"corporate reputation is a function of the perceptions and attitudes toward it held by individual members of a particular stakeholder group. A reputation rests on assessments made by individuals outside the organization"* (Burke et al. 2011, 1). All in all, reputation is a long-term view that builds upon a company's image over time, and image is a short-term view that has the potential to be altered by the public (Business Dictionary, n.d.).

3.4   Definition of the Internet and Social Media

In this section, Internet and social media will be accounted for as we believe the Internet can no longer be considered as a new invention and most people are closely familiar with the use of it, there will not be a focus on the history and development of the Internet. Rather, how and why the Internet and social media are of significance to crisis communication will be explored.

We argue that social media, as Internet-based platforms of social interaction of people all around the world, is a relatively new phenomenon. When mentioning social media, some people will immediately think of applications such as Facebook and Twitter. Facebook, while initially launched in 2004, was not available to the general public until 2006, when Twitter also began its operations (Digital Trends Staff, 2016). Today, these applications are ten years old, even so, more than 58 million tweets are sent on a daily basis, and as a population the entirety of the Facebook user base would rank as the third largest country in the world (Luttrell 2015, 23 and 27). With numbers like these, it is impossible to dismiss social media platforms as unimportant for this thesis.

Luttrell (2015) initially skips the common definition of social media in favor of considering the meaning behind the term. She breaks the term down into its two constituent parts – *social* and *media*. Luttrell finds that social is the need human beings feel to connect with other people, as well as the desire to surround themselves with like-minded people, who share e.g. one's ideals or interests. She finds that this is also true regarding individuals wishing to connect and interact with companies that they somehow can relate to or in which way want to affiliate. The next part, media, refers to the channels through which people make these connections with other people (Luttrell 2015, 21-23). Social media is commonly defined as referring to the:

> *"(...) activities, practices, and behavior among communities of people who gather online to share information, knowledge and opinions using conversational media. Conversational media are web-based applications that make it possible to create and easily transmit content in the form of words, pictures, video, and audio."* (Luttrell 2015, 22)

Social media platforms include e.g. Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Pinterest, Snapchat and many others. These applications represent conversational media. Users of these applications are able to go online and communicate content in various ways, e.g. audio and video, while developing relationships (Luttrell 2015, 22-23). In this thesis, we will refer to the text on Facebook as a post, and the text on Twitter as a tweet. When posting on Facebook, currently there is a character limit of 60,000 (Protalinski 2011). And on twitter, the character limit is 140 characters ("Posting a Tweet" n.d.). One feature on Twitter is a *hashtag* (#), which is used to mark keywords or topics, and is used

to categorize Tweets, also a hashtag is searchable, whereby users are able to see Tweets tagged (Using Hashtags on Twitter, n.d.). Another feature is a retweet, where one is able to repost or forward a message posted by another user on Twitter (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). In addition, when tweeting on Twitter or posting on Facebook, one is able to include an image or video along with a link that potentially could be used to engage stakeholders.

The Internet and applications constitute more or less a global forum – everything needed to join these applications or go online is basically an Internet connection. Almost everyone is able to connect with people from all over the world, barring some country-specific blockades or entire lack of Internet connection in mind. This has made the Internet into a very accessible domain for all (Siah et al. 2010, 149). Siah et al. notes that this accessibility is also what can explain how crises can escalate when they are published or announced in online media; more people can become aware of a given crisis and they can even assist in perpetuating a crisis by circulating the information (Siah et al. 2010, 149).

This is why the Internet and social media are integral for communication in general, but crisis communication in particular. An organization is able to directly address and form connections with its stakeholders through the Internet and its dynamic platforms. Research has been done that examines how the Internet is able to help companies, e.g. in marketing and crisis communication, but Siah et al. found that all these possibilities to be a double-edged sword (Siah et al. 2010, 143). Put briefly, the characteristics of new media (which includes social media) such as user-generated content, user interactivity and integration of multimedia content, are also its Achilles heel (Siah et al. 2010, 143). In this way, social media can be both an advantage and disadvantage to companies. In regards to advantages, social media platforms can enable companies to improve their relationships with the general public, for example, by providing the latest information and news concerning a given crisis. Meanwhile, companies are also challenged because they cannot control the communication, as this kind of communication does not follow traditional top-down systems of communicating (Romenti and Murtarelli 2014, 12). Everybody can on equal terms and communication, which could be a very flat structure. Here, the communicative team behind a given company and its stakeholders e.g. followers and likes on Facebook and Twitter are on an equal footing; in a general way, as the given company is in control of what it posts on Facebook etc., but when the post is published, it can be shared, liked and commented, and that is when it becomes difficult to control.

3.5   Definition of Online Firestorm

When a brand or a company is a topic of conversation online, it can undergo an online firestorm. "*An online firestorm is the sudden discharge of large quantities of messages containing negative WoM and complaint behavior against a person, company or group in social media networks*" (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 108). An online firestorm can resemble a rumor; the definition of a rumor is a "*proposition for belief, passed along from person to person, usually by WoM, without secure standards of evidence being presented*" (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 118). The difference between a rumor and an online firestorm originates from the type of word-of-mouth. When the word-of-mouth communication is online, it is referred to as EWoM, which is also known as electronic-word-of-mouth. An online firestorm in common terms can also be referred to as a "shitstorm".

When brands or companies are presented online, they are at risk for an online firestorm and their "*brand can be jeopardized when an online firestorm is raised*" (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 118). An online firestorm is driven by the speed and flow of messages on social media, along with the amount of people the message or content of the situation are able to reach in a short period of time (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 119). Individuals on social media can connect with people who are of the same age, gender and socioeconomic status (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 122). Also, individuals connect with others who have the same perspectives as they. This results in individuals connecting with people who have "*similar interests, topics and opinions*" (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 122). When individuals on social media platforms have the same interests and discuss a given topic, this discussion can potentially grow to become an online firestorm.

The dynamics of an online firestorm can be complex and unclear. It is rational to say that a company can fear that its existence on social media could be affected by negative comments, which may lead to negative impact for the company and the brand image (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 118). It is suggested that a company should be proactive when dealing with an online firestorm (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 118). To do so, it should create networks and identify the "trusted information brokers", who are individuals educated and trusted within their field to spread information about a given company (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 124). Once a company is targeted with an online firestorm, some may perceive it as a no longer trusted source of information; therefore the company may have to rely on others who are trusted on social media to forward information (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 124). Companies should also develop a contingency plan to "*collect social information response before they are needed in order to control the overall information picture*" (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 124).

Firestorm messages are more opinion based rather than fact based (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 118) and the aggression online is higher than versus a rumor (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 118). Due to the latter, "*companies facing an upcoming online firestorm have to retain their composure and continue to*

communicate and interact" (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 123). Meaning, companies who are under a firestorm on social media should participate in social media rather than to stay away from it. Not only should a company participate, but it is *"recommended that brands under firestorm increase their social media usage"* (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 124) as it is possible that companies who say 'no comment' or ignore the online firestorm completely will then be perceived negatively (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 123). With this, companies should also increase their diversity online. When companies have achieved more diversity online, it can create a migration of the control and information flow for online firestorms (Pfeffer et al. 2013, 124).

For this thesis, online firestorm is a topic of conversation as each brand, Domino's and Chipotle, was a topic online on social media platforms during their individual crisis periods. This definition of online firestorm will aid when discussing the usage of the Internet and social media during a crisis for companies.

3.6   Social Media Marketing and eWoM

Social media marketing and word-of-mouth are considered in the same field as, *"marketing has its roots in the word of mouth conversation that have linked buyers with sellers over the past few thousand years"* (Evans 2008, xx). Social media marketing occurs when a company or a brand gain website attention or traffic through social media platforms and applications. As word of mouth tactics have been revolutionized today through the Internet, the term has moved towards the form of electronic word of mouth, also known as eWoM.

EWoM can be defined as *"any positive or negative statement made by…[an individual]…which is made available to a multitude of people and institutions via Internet"* (Hennig-Thurau et al, 2004[10]). The overall difference of WoM (Word-of-Mouth) communication and eWoM communication can be defined in the difference of WoM being person-person and oral communication, whereas eWoM is communication done on the Internet when individuals communicate with friends and family but also strangers (Gupta and Harris 2010[11]). EWoM has turned into a powerful and quick effect as *"consumers share more than 600,000 pieces of content,*

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[10] Hennig-Thurau, T., Gwinner, K.P., Walsh, G. and Gremler, D.D. (2004), *Electronic word-of-mouth via consumer-opinion platforms: what motivates consumers to articulate themselves on the internet?* quoted in José Luís Abrantes Cláudia Seabra Cristiana Raquel Lages Chanaka Jayawardhena, (2013),"Drivers of in-group and outof-group electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)", European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 47-7 pp. 1067 - 1088
[11] Gupta, P. and Harris, J. (2010), *How e-WOM recommendations influence product consideration and quality of choice: a motivation to process information perspective,* quoted in José Luís Abrantes Cláudia Seabra Cristiana Raquel Lages Chanaka Jayawardhena, (2013),"Drivers of in-group and outof-group electronic word-of-mouth (eWOM)", European Journal of Marketing, Vol. 47-7 pp. 1067 - 1088

upload 48 h of video, text greater than 100,000 messages and create over 25,000 post within social media" (Daugherty and Hoffman, 2013).

Social media marketing strategies today have to include *"a fragmentation in traditional channels as they are now faced with the outright takeover of brand communications by consumers as they remix, restate, and then republish their version of anything that comes their way"* (Evans 2008, xxi). Companies can interact with individual followers on social media platforms to create conversations, but can also respond to peoples' comments and opinions on a personal level.

Social media marketing has created a limitless process of generating content that draws attention by users and then encourages readers to share it across their social networks regardless of the borders that stand between them. When readers share it across their social media networks, the information and opinions they share can be found credible as *"consumers find the information exchanged on internet social networks more relevant and trustworthy, as the information reflects product consumption in real-world settings by other consumers and free from marketers' interests"* (Abrantes et al. 2013, 1073). Therefore, companies can market information on social media platforms in the expectation that consumers and readers will share the information alongside their personal opinions, and so forth while engaging in eWoM (Abrantes et al. 2013, 1073).

While social media marketing is a major aspect of eWoM, the Internet can also draw negative attention. In this thesis, we will focus on the effects of eWoM, not as a marketing tool pre crisis, but as the effects of eWoM post-crisis through consumer opinions and companies' usage as a crisis communication tool.

3.7   The Concept of Crisis Communication

In this section, we will first present a definition of the term 'crisis'. Next, we will explain crisis communication as a topic and lastly, we will present the three different theories we argue are linked to crisis communication and are applicable in order for us to answer the problem statement. These theories are Massey's Organizational Image Management Theory, Coombs' Situational Crisis Communication Theory, and Benoit's Image Repair Theory.

3.7.1   Crisis Definition

To better understand the need for crisis communication, it is important to understand the base and perception of a crisis. The term "crisis" can be seen as one of the most strained words in different societies around the globe (Fronz 2012, 1) but overall, *"a crisis is unpredictable but not unexpected"* (Coombs, 2015, 3). The most agreed definition of crisis is where a possible threat to the

company is at hand. Coombs (2007) describes a crisis as *"sudden and unexpected event that threatens to disrupt an organization's operations and poses both a financial and reputational threat"* (164). This can be read as a broad definition as it ignores the aspect of a crisis being anything but sudden and overlooking the impact a crisis has on stakeholders of the company at hand.

As public relations discusses the importance of relationships with and between stakeholders, Fearn-Banks (2007) describes a crisis as *"a major occurrence with a potentially negative outcome affecting an organization as well as its publics, services, products and/or good name. It interrupts normal business transactions and can, at worst, threaten the existence of the organization"* (2). For this thesis, the Fearn-Banks definition will be used as we acknowledge the health violations of both Chipotle and Domino's major impacts on not only the companies, but also on their individual stakeholders.

There are two different types of notions[12] of a crisis; organizational crisis or a disaster (Coombs, 2015, 2). Disasters are events that are sudden and may have an effect on an organization's values and social goals versus an organizational crisis where the events are unpredictable and threaten *"expectancies of stakeholders related to health, safety, environmental, and economic issues"* (Coombs 2015, 3) A disaster entails finding a different course of action to manage the interference when it poses danger to the company's values and social goals (Coombs 2015, 3). In this thesis, the focus entirely on organizational crisis of both, Chipotle and Domino's.

3.7.2   Crisis Communication

Crisis communication has become imperative as crises are universal in today's environment and *"is [a] highly important, critical and highly perceived discipline for companies to react, inform and interact with their stakeholder groups concerning crisis situations"* (Fronz 2012, 2). Because of this, communication theories try to develop meaning within the messages and construction of reality in the communication and coordination that surrounds the threatening and uncertain events that go hand in hand with crises. For a company, crisis communication can be highly important as it has the potential to offer a type of protection against damage to its reputation while minimizing the potential damage of a crisis (Coombs, 2007). Overall crisis communication requires special attention as *"a firm's reputation is based upon public's opinion which is more sensitive and needs special measure"* (Fronz 2012, 1).

Sellnow and Seeger argue that understanding the activities before, during and after a crisis to be vital as *"a significant component of that understanding involves clarifying the role of*

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[12]A notion is described as a belief about something (Cambridge Dictionary 2016).

communication processes in the onset, management, resolution and meaning of crises." (Sellnow and Seeger 2013, 1). However, this thesis will focus on the crisis communication during the crisis.

There are different perspectives within crisis communication, and Johansen and Frandsen (2007) have two different approaches regarding crisis communication, a narrow approach and a broad approach. A narrow approach looks at crisis communication during a crisis or communication when a crisis has already appeared. It focuses on a crisis as an isolated event within a certain time frame (Johansen and Frandsen 2007, 15). Another important aspect of the narrow approach of crisis communication is that it sees the communication as sender-oriented as well as information. This means that a company will choose a more strategic approach where the given company is focused on being efficient and action-oriented (Johansen and Frandsen 2007, 16). "How-to" guides are also preferable within this approach.

The broad approach perceives a crisis as a process and therefore looks at the communication before, during and after a crisis. Here, two important things are proactive prevention/preparation and also to look at what you can be learned from a crisis after it has abated. (Johansen and Frandsen 2007, 16). Another important aspect with the broad approach is that it perceives the communication as both sender and receiver-oriented whereas the narrow approach only sees it as sender communication (Johansen and Frandsen 2007, 17). The broad approach includes the importance of the other parties, such as the media's coverage of a given crisis.

According the Johansen and Frandsen (2007, 17), there has been a development within these two approaches, within the last twenty years, the major focus has shifted from the narrow approach to the broad approach. The broad approach offers different approach towards how to deal with the communication related to a crisis. It believes that there is not a "how-to" guide and eventually, every crisis is unique (Johansen and Frandsen 2007, 17).

In this thesis, the broad approach to crisis communication is utilized allowing focus on both the senders' (Chipotle and Domino's) communication and the receivers' (individuals/stakeholders and media) communication as we believe it is important to include both aspects and views of a given case and crisis and also to look at the societal contexts and conditions. Crisis communication has been researched in many ways but particularly by the two scholars Timothy W. Coombs and William L. Benoit. Their work is predominant in the field of crisis communication, and for this thesis, their theories will be the theoretical base of the analysis of Chipotle and Domino's crisis communication along with the theory of Organizational Image Management by Joseph Eric Massey.

3.7.3   Organizational Image Management Theory

The organizational image management theory by Joseph Eric Massey is about organizations trying to maximize potential success, it is necessary to maintain an effectual image with its stakeholders. This theory is a process model where an organization attempt to create, maintain and if needed, regain its image of itself from the stakeholder's perspective (Millar and Heath 2004, 234). Three steps which are all of a dialectic process where the organizations and stakeholders communicate with one another to create the image of the organization together (Millar and Heath 2004, 234)

The first stage of the process starts at the beginning of an organization when it is created. An organization is required to create an image of itself for the various stakeholders. The second step occurs after an organization has successfully created its image. It then has to continue to work to maintain the image. This step is intended as a continuous step; if an organization fails to sustain and monitor its image from the feedback that it receives from stakeholders, the success of its organizational image management is then threatened (Millar and Heath 2004, 234). The third and final step of this model is the process of restoration. After an organization has experienced any sort of crisis, it moves to the third stage. Not all organizations will move to the third stage, but because of the degree of the escalation and extent of crisis, many organizations will move to the final stage (Millar and Heath 2004, 235). During the final stage, organizations *"must engage in strategic communication to restore a successful image"* (Millar and Heath 2004, 235). This final stage can be argued as usage of both Coombs' SCCT and Benoit's Image Repair Theory.

Image Maintenance

Image Restoration

Successful   Unsuccessful

Organization Failure   Organizational Restructuring

(Millar and Heath 2004, 235)
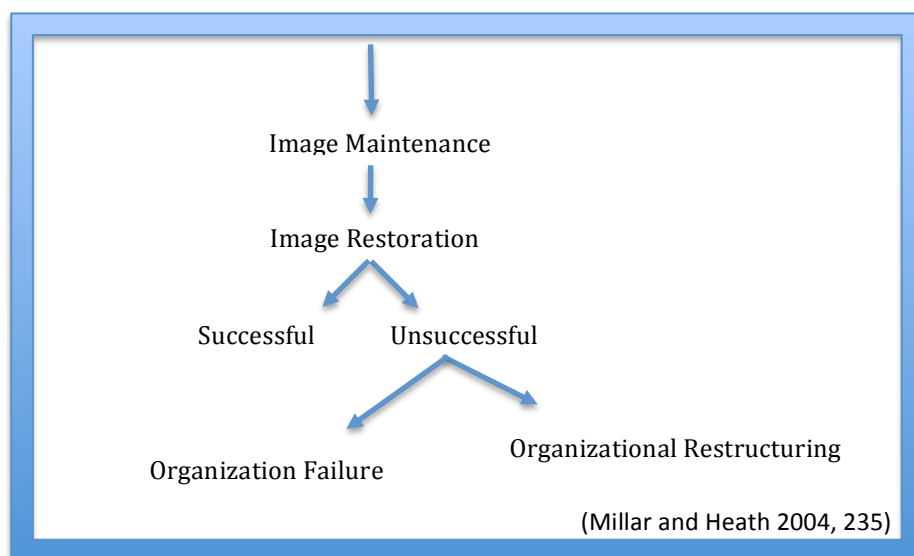
If an organization is able to successfully regain its image after a crisis, it returns to the second stage of the process to continue maintaining its image. If an organization is unsuccessful regaining its image, the organization could potentially go under or it could need to restructure as *"organizations that do not engage in successful image management increase the chances for failure"* (Sellnow et al. 1998[13]) Restructuring could include developing a new identity for the organization, and at worst a merger with another company (Millar and Heath 2004, 235).

This theory is important in this thesis as it defines the importance of perceptions of stakeholders' responses towards the company in a time of crisis. Collective perceptions of a given company make it possible for the interdependent relationships to exist between stakeholders and companies (Treadwell and Harrison, 1994[14]).

3.7.4   Situational Crisis Communication Theory

Developed by Timothy W. Coombs, the Situational Crisis Communication Theory (SCCT) is used to explain the connection between different crisis types and crisis response offering a guideline of how to analyze and manage a crisis in order to protect an organization's reputation, centered around stakeholders' reactions to different crises and crisis communication (Coombs 2007, 163). Coombs (2007) believes that there are three components of a crisis that could threaten an organization: perceived crisis responsibility, crisis history and a pre-crisis situation of an organization in crisis. These three elements directly influence the extent to which the crisis impacts an organizational reputation, where a positive reputation can function as a "buffer" for damage on organizational reputation (Coombs 2007, 165).

SCCT is built on the Attribution Theory, suggesting that individuals will seek blame for the cause of an event by attributing their beliefs about an event, particularly in negative and unexpected events (Weiner 1985, 548). When an organization has a prior crisis history record, whether or not the organization has had previous crises this may influence the perception of responsibility and the general reputation of the organization where stakeholders will then attribute greater crisis responsibility (Coombs 2007, 267).

In addition, SCCT uses Attribution Theory to foresee the reputational threat of a crisis and to be able to form proper crisis response strategies to diminish or avoid completely any reputational damage (Coombs, 2007, 166). In any crisis situation, the perceived crisis responsibility is essential as

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[13] Seeger, M. W., Sellnow, T. L., & Ulmer, R. R. (1998). *Communication, organization, and crisis. In M. E. Roloff and G. D. Paulson, (Eds.), Communication Yearbook 21,* pp. 231-275. quoted in Joseph E. Massey. (2003). A Theory of Organizational Image Management: Antecedents, Processes & Outcomes. Accessed May 9, 2016

[14] D.F Treadwell and T.M Harris (1994). *Conceptulalizing and assessing organizational image: Model images, commitment, and communication. Communication Monographs,* 61, 63-85 quoted in Blake E. Ashforth and Fred A. Mael (1996). Organizational Identity and the Strategy as a Context for the Individual. Accessed May 9, 2016

the response strategy is dependent on whether or not the organization takes responsibility for the crisis or not, but also, whether or not the organization's stakeholders believe the organization to be responsible for the crisis or not (Coombs 1995, 449).

Coombs (2007, 168) categorizes crises into three crisis clusters: victim, accidental and preventable. The table below is directly quoted from Coombs (2007, 168) and it presents the three different crisis clusters:

Victim Cluster	*Natural disaster*: Acts of nature damage an organization such as an earthquake. *Rumor*: False and damaging information about an organization is being circulated. *Workplace violence*: Current or former employee attacks current employees onsite. *Product tampering/Malevolence*: External agents causes damage to an organization.
Accidental Cluster	*Challenges*: Stakeholders claim an organization is operating in an inappropriate manner. *Technical-error accidents*: A technology or equipment failure causes an industrial accident. *Technical-error product harm*: A technology or equipment failure causes a product to be recalled.
Intentional/Preventable Cluster	*Human-error accidents*: Human error causes an industrial accident. *Human-error product harm*: Human error causes a product to be recalled. *Organizational misdeed with no injuries*: Stakeholders are deceived without injury. *Organizational misdeed management misconduct*: Laws or regulations are violated by management. *Organizational misdeed with injuries*: Stakeholders are placed at risk by management and injuries occur.

(Source: Coombs 2007, p. 168)

As a result of research, Coombs has developed several crisis communication strategies that attempt to *"repair the reputation, to reduce negative affect and to prevent negative behavioral intentions"* (Coombs 2007, 170). Coombs puts stress on the importance of ethical aspects of a crisis where the first priority is, and always will be, to protect stakeholders from harm, rather than protecting the reputation (Coombs 2007, 170). The table on the next page contains direct quotations of Coombs' model (2015, 140):

	Denial Posture
Attacking the accuser	The crisis manager confronts the person or group that claims that a crisis exists. The response may include a threat to use force (e.g., a lawsuit) against the accuser
Denial	The crisis manager states that no crisis exists. The response may include explaining why there is no crisis.
Scapegoating	Some other person or group outside of the organization is blamed for the crisis.
	Diminishment Posture
Excusing	The crisis manager tries to minimize the organization's responsibility for the crisis. The response can include denying any intention to do harm or claiming that the organization had no control of the events which lead to the crisis.
Justification	The crisis manager tries to minimize the perceived damage associated with the crisis. The response can include stating that there were no serious damages or injuries or claiming that the victims deserved what they received.
	Rebuilding Posture
Compensation	The organization provides money or other gifts to the victims.
Apology	The crisis manager publicly states that the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks for forgiveness.
	Bolstering Posture
Reminding	The organization tells stakeholders about its past good works.
Ingratiation	The organization praises stakeholders.
Victimage	The organization explains how it too is a victim of the crisis.

(Source: Coombs 2015, 140)

The first crisis response strategy involves **denying** the crisis by attacking the accuser, denial or crisis using a scapegoat approach. The second strategy is called **diminishment posture** forming an excuse or justification of the crisis. The third is **rebuilding posture** with either compensation to

victims or an apology as a sub-category. The last crisis response strategy is called **bolstering posture** and suggests reinforcing stakeholders by reminding stakeholders of preceding good work done by the organization, ingratiation where the organization praises stakeholders or victimage (Coombs 2007, 170).

Overall, SCCT focuses on analyzing the crisis situation and to examine how to approach the crisis with a communicative outlook depending on the perceived crisis responsibility, crisis history and pre-crisis reputation. This theory focuses on looking at when, where and whom the crisis is affecting. Nevertheless, SCCT is criticized for the lack of information regarding stakeholders as senders of information, i.e. the media's role in forming the crisis (Coombs and Holladay 2010, 428). In addition, as a strong focus of the theory is on the reactive part of crisis communication (after the crisis has begun), SCCT is criticized for the deficiency of in-depth investigation of processes before and after the crisis along with the lack of textual or semiotic analysis or tools to crisis communication (Coombs and Holladay 2010, 428). As the more specific communicative tools are left for the reader to decide, the criticism SCCT has received makes sense as it would be easier if some textual and semiotic analysis were made by Coombs in addition to the guidelines previously provided. Regardless of these shortcomings, Coombs' structure for crisis communication offers an involved assessment of crises and the appropriate response strategies and guidelines needed which for this thesis is useful when analyzing Chipotle and Domino's approach to crisis communication.

3.7.5   Image Repair Theory

Based on William L. Benoit's previous research, inspiration from two theoretical traditions; rhetoric and sociology (Johansen and Frandsen 2007, 204), he developed the Image Repair Theory (also known as Image Restoration Strategies) (Benoit 1995, 95). This is the theory used in this thesis. Benoit has also put the theory into practice in "real life". He has applied this theory to different company cases, e.g. the battle between Coca-Cola and Pepsi in the 90s and Texaco's crisis in 1999 (Johansen and Frandsen 2007, 203). Benoit's theory of Image Repair is within the area of the rhetorical tradition – he seeks to examine how a given company reacts and responds during a crisis.

Benoit argues that face, image and reputation are important for humans, but also for companies. He also states that in order to keep this face, image or reputation, many are willing to *"take both preventive and restorative approaches to cope with image problems"* (Millar and Heath 2004, 263). According to Benoit, "*an attack on an image, face, or reputation has two components: (a) An act occurred that is considered offensive, and (b) The accused is held responsible for that action"* (Millar and Heath 2004, 264).

If both of these components are believed to be true by the appropriate audience(s), also called salient audience (Millar and Heath 2004, 264), one's face, image or reputation are at stake, and a crisis may occur. This also means that if a given company does not find a particular group of people's beliefs important, it is no threat to the company's face, image or reputation. We argue that this might not be true today as the Internet can be a fast source to spread one's opinions and it can quickly be shared by people so it can affect the people a given company might consider as its target audience, this could potentially lead to an online firestorm.

Benoit states "*perceptions are more important than reality*" (Millar and Heath 2004, 264), which means that it is not important if the act really happened, but rather if the audience(s) believed it happened. Another important aspect, according to Benoit, is the size of the case and also how many people it involves – the bigger magnitude, negativity and the more people affected by the case, the more damage it can cause. "*The greater the (perceived) offensiveness of the act, and, perhaps, the greater the (apparent) responsibility of the accused for that act, the greater the damage to the image*" (Millar and Heath 2004, 265).

Strategy	Key Characteristics
Denial	
-Simple Denial	Did not perform act
-Shift the blame	Another performed act
Evasion of responsibility	
-Provocation	Responded to act of another
-Defeasibility	Lack of information or ability
-Accident	Mishap
-Good Intentions	Meant well
Reducing offensiveness of event	
-Bolstering	Stress good traits
-Minimization	Act not serious
-Differentiation	Act less offensive than similar acts
-Transcendence	More important values
-Attack accuser	Reduce credibility of accuser
-Compensation	Reimburse victim
Corrective Action	Plan to solve/ prevent reoccurrence of problem
Mortification	Apologize

When repairing a damaged image or reputation different strategies can be used. According to Benoit, there are five general strategies within these five, three of them have sub-strategies (Johansen and Frandsen 2007, 207 and Benoit 1995, 75-82):

They five image repair strategies are: **denial**, **evasion of responsibility**, **reduction of offensiveness**, **corrective action** and **mortification**.

The first strategy is **denial**, here there are two possible sub-strategies; simple denial and shift the blame. Simple denial means that the accused simply denies that he/she/it had anything to do with the undesirable action, and *"denial may be supplemented with explanations of apparently damaging facts or lack of supporting evidence"* (Benoit 2014, 22). This could, however, make people wonder who actually is responsible, and this is where shift the blame appears. Here, a person or a company blame another for the given wrongdoing or undesirable action. Benoit argues that this strategy might be more effective as it may remove any bad feelings targeted the accused person or company, and the feeling will be shifted from the accused to a new place (Benoit 2014, 22-23).

The second strategy is **evasion of responsibility**. This strategy concerns, *"those who are unable to deny performing the act in question and may be able to evade or reduce their apparent responsibility for it"* (Benoit 2014, 23). This strategy has four sub-strategies; provocation, defeasibility, accident and good intentions. The first sub-strategy suggests that the accused person or company can claim that he/she/it only acted in a specific way due to another wrongful act made by another part (Benoit 2014, 23). If people agree with this, then the blame might be shifted to the other part (Benoit 2014, 23). Defeasibility, the second sub-strategy, is when a person or a company uses "*lack of information about or control over important factors in the situation"* (Benoit 2014, 23) as an approach. Here, the accused tries to use the lack of information about a given event or situation as a way of saying that he/she/it cannot be held fully responsible for the act (Benoit 2014, 23). The third sub-strategy is called accidents. Here, *"the accused can make an excuse based on accidents"* (Scott & Lyman, 1968[15]). This means that the accused person or company do not deny the undesirable act, instead he/she/it tries to find information "*that may reduce his or her apparent responsibility for the offensive act"* (Benoit 2014, 23). The fourth and last sub-strategy within evasion of responsibility is good intentions. Here, a given person or company does not deny the offensive act, but *"the audience is asked not to hold the actor fully responsible, because it was done with good, rather than evil, intentions"* (Benoit 2014, 23-24). This could be considered a smart move as *"people who do bad while trying to do good are usually not blamed as much as those who intend to do bad"* (Benoit 2014, 24).

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[15] Scott & Lyman, 1968 quoted in Benoit, William L,. 2014. *Accounts, Excuses, and Apologies, Second Edition: Image Repair Theory andResearch*. New York: Suny Press.

The third strategy is called **reducing offensiveness**. This strategy is about the attempt *"to reduce the degree of ill feeling experienced by the audience"* (Benoit 2014, 24), and it has six different sub-strategies; bolstering, minimization, differentiation, transcendence, attack accuser and compensation.

The first sub-strategy is bolstering. Here, *"those accused of wrongdoing might relate positive attributes they possess or positive actions they have performed in the past"* (Benoit 2014, 24). Benoit argues that the negative affect might remain the same, but the effect of increasing positive feelings *"may help offset the negative feelings toward the act, yielding a relative improvement in the actor's reputation"* (Benoit 2014, 24).

Minimization is the second sub-strategy. Here, a given company or person will try to convince people that the act is not *"as bad as it might first appear"* (Benoit 2014, 24), which may reduce the amount of bad feelings associated with the act and the given person or company, and Benoit argues that if this approach is used successfully, a person's or a company's reputation is repaired (Benoit 2014, 24).

The third sub-strategy is differentiation. With this approach, a given company or person tries *"to distinguish the act performed from other similar but less desirable actions"* (Benoit 2014, 24). This could have the effect of the act appearing less offensive, and thereby decrease the amount of negative feeling towards the situation or act and the accused (Benoit 2014, 24).

Transcendence is the fourth sub-strategy. Here, the accused person or company can try to place the act in a different, positive context - *"this positive context may lessen the perceived offensiveness of the act and help improve the actor's reputation"* (Benoit 2014, 25).

The fifth sub-strategy is called attack accuser. With this approach, a given company or a person can try to attack the credibility of the source of accusations, which can reduce the damage to the company's or person's image. Furthermore, *"it is also possible that attacking one's accuser may divert the audience's attention away from the original accusation, reducing damage to the actor's image"* (Benoit 2014, 25).

The final sub-strategy is compensation. With this approach, a person or a company *"offers to remunerate the victim to help offset the negative feeling arising from the wrongful act"* (Benoit 2014, 25). Benoit (2014) argues that this could be seen as a bribe in form of e.g. valued good or monetary reimbursement, which can help, if accepted, repair a given person's or company's reputation.

The fourth strategy is called **corrective action**. Here, the accused company or person wants to solve the problem. *"This approach can take the form of restoring the situation to the state of affairs before the objectionable act and/or a promise to "mend one's ways" and make changes to prevent*

the recurrence of the undesirable act" (Benoit 2014, 26). With this approach and strategy, a given company or person seeks to find the actual source of injury and wants to correct the past act and/or try to prevent recurrence of this (Benoit 2014, 26).

The last strategy is called **mortification**. Here, the accused person or company *"may admit the wrongful act and ask for forgiveness, engaging in mortification"* (Benoit 2014, 26), and if the audience believe and think the apology is sincere, they might choose to forgive the act (Benoit 2014, 26). It can be risky to admit and commit to the blame, as this ties the accused to the wrongful act. Furthermore, *"it may be wise to couple this strategy with plans to correct (or prevent recurrence of) the problem"* (Benoit 2014, 26).

According to Benoit, it probably gives the best effect to use multiple strategies, unless a single strategy "is *very likely to be particularly effective with the intended audience (…)"* (Benoit 1995, 157), but at the same time *"(…) use of multiple strategies may be beneficial in that they reinforce one another"* (Benoit 1995, 157). Furthermore, Benoit states that, *"these image repair strategies attempt to alter the audience's existing beliefs or to create new beliefs in the audience"* (Benoit 2014, 29).

When using Benoit's theory in relation to a company, it is important to remember that companies often address several audiences, such as local people, stockholders, stakeholders and politicians – and each of these groups might have different concerns, views and interests, and it is therefore important to have the most important audience(s) in mind during the crisis communication (Benoit 1997, 178).

Benoit states that he may be *"(…) avoiding the extreme detail found in some descriptions of accounts (…)"* (Benoit 1995, 74), which maybe can be seen as a defect/lack in his image repair theory. It can be argued that this lack is very common in these types of theories as it is dealing with human behavior – the extreme details may have to be avoided/ignored to make the theory clear and manageable.

Furthermore, it could be a concern that the theory first was developed with individuals in mind, not companies, but Benoit himself argues, *"(…) the basic options are the same for both individual and corporate image repair efforts"* (Benoit 1997, 177).

Despite the criticism, it can be argued that Benoit's Image Repair Theory is functional and valid due to the fact that Benoit is aware of this problematic of the complexity of human behavior and the wide acceptance of his theory in the academic world.

We argue that Coombs' SCCT and Benoit's Image Repair Theory supplement each other very well, but the two theories can also be seen as very similar. Coombs argues that responsibility is the link between crisis response and reputational threat of a crisis in SCCT, stating that the *"(...) evaluation of the reputational threat (the situation) is largely a function of crisis responsibility"*

(Coombs 2007, 170). Coombs' list of crisis response strategies can seem very familiar after having been presented with the account for Benoit's Image Repair Theory strategies (mentioned above, p. 51). This is because Coombs' list is, *"(...) built around the perceived acceptance of responsibility for a crisis embodied in the response"* (Coombs 2007, 170) while drawing upon the crisis response strategies articulated in, amongst others, Benoit's Image Repair Theory.

Benoit's overall focus is on the choice of different strategies during a crisis period, whereas Coombs' SCCT can be used as an analytical tool to define the type of crisis and approach to a given company's response strategy. Due to the latter, each theory complements each other as Coombs focuses on the crisis cluster and strategies and Benoit focuses specifically on the strategies to repair a company's image.

4.   Contextual Setting

In this section of the thesis, we will first account for both Chipotle's and Domino's profiles to provide background knowledge about the two companies and their brands. Lastly, we will explain Chipotle's and Domino's crises in detail.

4.1   Chipotle's Profile

The Chipotle[16] Mexican Grill food chain was founded in 1993 by Steve Ells in Colorado, United States. In this thesis, Chipotle Mexican Grill will be referred to as "Chipotle". This Mexican grill serves an assortment of gourmet burritos, tacos, burrito bowls and salads made from high quality ingredients. From the beginning Ells was committed to establishing a brand and a high quality food chain that made food preparation related to where ingredients come from, how they were grown, and how food is prepared in the kitchen to be of high priority. On Chipotle's website, it descriptively discuss "*Food with Integrity*" to be its major value and its motto as *"Every choice they [we] make— about who they [we] work with, what they [we] serve and what they [we] stand for—affects the bigger picture: the health of the planet"* (Chipotle Food with Integrity, n.d.). Although there is a high cost of serving organic produce and the challenge of seasonal unavailability, Chipotle focuses on serving items free from GMO's to be as green as possible (Chipotle Food with Integrity, n.d.).

In focusing on being as green as possible, the customer needs and experience are of high priority at Chipotle. As Chipotle offers "*Food with Integrity*" by staying away from fast food industry staple techniques, its price stands at premium level as consumers are receiving a high level product composed of high quality foods. As for customer experience, when eating at Chipotle, a major part

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[16] Definition of Chipotle: a smoked and usually dried jalapeño pepper. (Merrium-Webster Dictionary 2016)

of its service model is built upon the relationship between customers and employees (Melnick, n.d). When one enters a Chipotle location as a customer, the customer is in control of the entire process of building e.g. a burrito from the beginning (selecting ingredients) to end (being packaged) without it leaving one's sight. On top of customer employee relationship, Chipotle focuses on transparency as a main part of its brand image, which QSR magazine in 2011 named to be a quick service restaurant trend where open kitchens give a transparency feel to customers providing that the business has nothing to hide (Tuttle, 2012).

Today, Chipotle has more than 1,500 locations internationally including the United States, United Kingdom, Canada, Germany and France (Chipotle 2016). Its headquarters is located in Denver, Colorado. Chipotle has gained a large following on social media. It has acquired 2,802,633 likes on Facebook, 743,000 followers on twitter and 292,000 followers on Instagram (Numbers from March, 2016; Chipotle Facebook 2016, Chipotle Twitter 2016, and Chipotle Instagram 2016).

4.2   Domino's Profile

Domino's Pizza is a fast food chain, more specifically a pizza delivery chain founded by Tom and James Monaghan in 1960 in the United States. In this thesis, Domino's Pizza will be referred to as "Domino's". Domino's opened its first store in 1967 and since the 60's, the company has grown very quickly (Domino's, n.d.). By 1978, Domino's opened its 200th store and later in 1983, the company opened its first international store in Canada (Domino's, n.d.). Today, Domino's has over 12,100 stores with more than 5,000 outside the United States (Domino's, n.d.). As mentioned above, Domino's is a well-established company that since the 60's has been known as a pizza delivery chain. It has developed quickly, and is now the second largest pizza chain in the world (Jones, 2015). When looking at Domino's company, it is divided into two parts; company owned restaurants and franchised restaurants. Today, 97 percent of Domino's is franchised owned (Domino's 101, n.d.) - this makes it a bit more difficult to navigate around the company's website and social media platforms as every country has its own website and many of the stores have their own e.g. Facebook account. The pizza chain's mission is to sell more pizza and have more fun (Domino's vision, mission and values, n.d.).

As previously mentioned, Domino's is visible on several social media platforms. On Facebook, Domino's has an official page (there are several of other Domino's Facebook pages concerning specific locations, but we will only focus on the official page) with 10,504,503 likes (numbers from March 11, 2016; Domino's Facebook, n.d.). Domino's can also be found on Twitter where it has

1,007,766 followers (numbers from March 11, 2016; Domino's Twitter, n.d.), and on Instagram with 566,000 followers (numbers from March 11, 2016, Domino's Instagram, n.d.).

4.3   Context of Chipotle Crisis

Between August and December of 2015, the fast food chain, Chipotle, had several food safety incidents nationwide in the United States that reportedly infected over 500 customers in the five-month span (Learn What Happened, 2016).

In August 2015, a Chipotle location located in Simi Valley, California was infected with Norovirus where 243 reported customers were sickened by the disease and later in December of 2015 another location in Boston, Massachusetts was infected with Norovirus with 143 reported customers sickened. Chipotle has stated that the virus was most likely from an employee that fell sick and remained at work while disregarding its illness policies (Learn What Happened 2016).

In addition to the two Norovirus outbreaks, 64 customers were infected with Salmonella in Minnesota and Wisconsin in August of 2015. The salmonella was linked back to a batch of tomatoes that were severed in 22 different locations within those two states (Learn What Happened, 2016).

Lastly, from October to November of 2015, 60 reported customers were infected with E. Coli pathogens in eleven different states (California, Delaware, Illinois, Kentucky, Maryland, Minnesota, New York, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon and Washington) (Learn What Happened, 2016). Chipotle was unsure where the E. Coli originated from as it stated that there can be a delay of time between individuals being infected and showing symptoms; therefore, the E. Coli was suggested to have already traveled from its locations by the time the CDC (Center for Disease Control) did testing resulting in the unknown origin of the pathogen (Learn What Happened, 2016).

On top of the food incidents involving Chipotle, the crisis continued on social media platforms as stakeholders kept sharing informing on these platforms. Also, Chipotle's stock has fallen well over 35 percent. At the tail end of the crisis, Chipotle replaced food and implemented lab analyses, hiring epidemiology and food safety experts (Learn What Happened, 2016). After the food safety experts implemented new safety programs, Chipotle closed all locations on February 8, 2016 to show a food safety instructional video to its employees.

4.4   Context of Domino's Crisis

In April 2009, two employees, Kristy Hammonds and Michael Setzer from Domino's franchise in North Carolina uploaded a video on YouTube. The video showed some images of the two employees

clearly violating health-code standards when one of the employees e.g. put cheese in his nose and then blew the cheese out on a sandwich (Clifford 2009).

The video was published on YouTube by Kristy Hammonds on Sunday April 12, 2009 and by April 15 the video was viewed over one million times – this was also the day the original video by Hammonds was removed from YouTube (The New York Times, 2009).

When the video first was published, it was without the knowledge of Domino's, and the company was not aware of this before a blogger[17] called attention to this issue Monday evening. This was almost 24 hours after the video was published (The New York Times, 2009), and from then on it quickly escalated. Tuesday morning, the two employees, Hammonds and Setzer, were fired and by Wednesday, Domino's had created an account on Twitter and responded to the public with a responsive video featuring the CEO posted on YouTube (The New York Times, 2009).

Today, the original video by Hammonds cannot be found on YouTube, but several of videos still appear on media when searching e.g. "Domino's pizza crisis" or "Domino's pizza employee prank". From this, several videos appear, one called "Dirty Dirty Dominos pizza" and another one "How to get fired from Dominos Pizza", seen by 1,338,182 and 928,908 respectively, but the different videos do not feature the full length of the original video.

5.   Analysis

The following chapter consists of three sections. In the first section, we will analyze different press statements from the two companies. In the second section, we will analyze a variety of Chipotle's social media statements on both Facebook and Twitter and we will also analyze a variety of Domino's social media statements with same approach. In addition, we will analyze the comments from stakeholders on each of the companies' social media platforms. The last section of the analysis will consist of a collection of news articles and related comments regarding Chipotle and two different news segments and related comments regarding Domino's. Each section of the analysis will conclude with a summary.

5.1   Press Statements from Chipotle and Domino's

In this section of the analysis, we will analyze five different press releases, one annual report and one letter from Chipotle following the outline (p. 7, Appendix 1). Second, we will analyze one

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[17] A writer who shares his or her *"own experiences, observations, opinions, etc., and often having images and links to other websites"* (Dictionary.com, n.d.)

press statement and one news segment from Domino's. At the end, we conclude with a comparison of the two companies.

5.1.1   Chipotle Press Releases

First Press Release, November 3, 2015:

"Chipotle Moves Aggressively to Address Issues in Washington and Oregon"

The first press release published by Chipotle regarding the health safety outbreaks it endured in 2015 was released online November 3, 2015 via its *Investor Relations* page, and shared through *Business Wire* (Chipotle, 2015). *Business Wire* is an online press release distribution site (Business Wire, 2016). As the first incident began in August, we believe that since this was the first press release, Chipotle's communication was not quick enough as Coombs suggests the importance of being quick as part of the initial response to a crisis (Coombs, 2014). By responding slowly to the initial incident when Chipotle did not initiate the first move could give stakeholders time to create their own ideas and potentially rumors as to what was happening. This statement's content discussed that E. Coli had been found in eight of its restaurants in Oregon and Washington. It also mentioned that investigators were handling the situation. This statement then led to a list format specifically stating what the company had done to take care of the E. Coli. Throughout this list, Chipotle used words like "*immediately*" (Appendix 5, Line 7), "*conducting*" (Appendix 5, Line 9 and 10), "*replacing*" (Appendix 5, Line 12) and "*continuing*" (Appendix 5, Line 14), all of these can be seen as examples of Chipotle taking **corrective action** and explaining what it was doing through **bolstering** because the word choice could lead readers to believe Chipotle attempted to resolve the outbreaks. This list could also be a way for Chipotle to try and repair its image reputation.

The title of the press release, *"Chipotle Moves Aggressively to Address Issues in Washington and Oregon"*, could be perceived by stakeholders as an insurance that Chipotle was doing everything in its power to tackle the outbreaks within the two states, Oregon and Washington, addressed in the title. Furthermore, the word "*aggressively*" could push stakeholders to interpret that Chipotle was ready to attack and tackle the crisis. Next, there is a quote from the Co-CEO of Chipotle, Steve Ells saying,

"The safety of our customers and integrity of our food supply has always been our highest priority," said Steve Ells, chairman and co-CEO of Chipotle. "We work with a number of very fresh ingredients in order to serve our customers the highest-quality, best-tasting food we can. If there are opportunities to do better, we will push ourselves to find them and enhance our already high standards for food safety. Our deepest sympathies go out to those who have been

affected by this situation and it is our greatest priority to ensure the safety of all of the food we serve and maintain our customers' confidence in eating at Chipotle." (Appendix 5, Lines 19-23)

This statement from Ells mentioned that food safety was a priority for Chipotle and that the company would continue to improve its "*already high*" food safety (Appendix 5, Line 22). This could be seen as a **corrective action** and **bolstering**, which suggests that a given company will plan to solve a given problem and remind its stakeholders of its good reputation pre crisis. The quote also stated, "*our deepest sympathies*" (Appendix 5, Line 21), which could be seen as a type of apology to those who had been affected by the outbreaks. We believe this is related to Coombs' **rebuilding posture** with apology as a sub-category in evidence to Benoit's strategy of **mortification**. "*Our deepest sympathies*" (Appendix 5, Line 21) is not a straightforward apology as "I am sorry" would be. This could come across as sympathetic, and could accomplish this through the use of pathos[18]. This could make the linguistic selection of this press release apologetic but still formal (Fairclough 2014, 39). The quote from Ells also ensured that investigating the outbreaks was at highest priority for Chipotle. At the end of the press release it stated, *"While no cause has yet been identified by investigating health officials, Chipotle continues to work swiftly and thoroughly with health department officials as they look to conclude this investigation"* (Appendix 5, Lines 24-25). We argue that both of these statements ensure a **corrective action**, suggested by Benoit, but also suggest an **evasion of responsibility** with defeasibility as there is a lack of information and Chipotle was unable to define and was uncertain what exactly caused the outbreak at that point of time. The statement followed an itemized list of what Chipotle had done to solve the problem, which could be seen as a summary to the press release where Chipotle informed stakeholders that there would be more information to follow regarding the crisis. When communicating this way, Chipotle could be working towards having a transparent communication strategy by informing stakeholders that there would be more information to follow and that the company was willing to report this information regarding the crisis.

Coombs (2007), discusses that there are four different postures a company can choose to use when undergoing a crisis. For this press release, we argue that Chipotle had chosen the **rebuilding posture** by apologizing for what had happened. With this, the company also reminded stakeholders, through both the strategy and posture of **bolstering**, about the company's good traits, Chipotle told stakeholders about its previous good work and efforts in food safety, e.g. by saying, *"The safety of our customers and integrity of our food supply has always been our highest priority"* (Appendix 5,

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[18] Pathos is an argumentative strategy "*evoking pity, compassion, sympathetic sadness*" (Oxford Reference 2016)

Line 18) and *"... our already high standards for food safety"* (Appendix 5, Line 21) – this could be Chipotle's way of trying to restore its image and stakeholders' perception of *"Food with Integrity"*.

Second Press Release, November 10, 2015:

"Chipotle to Reopen Northwest Restaurants"

This press release was posted on Chipotle's *Investor Relation* page and shared on *Business Wire* on November 10, 2015 (Chipotle, 2015). Chipotle noted in its by-line *"All test results negative for E. Coli; no ongoing threat."* (Appendix 6, Line 2). This could be interpreted as an initial statement to have readers be preempted with the most important information before reading the press release.

The press release continued to say that Chipotle would be opening the 43 restaurants in Washington and Oregon that were *"voluntarily"* (Appendix 6, Line 4) closed. Using the word *"voluntarily"* could be interpreted as Chipotle was doing everything that the CDC was requesting of it, instead of forcing Chipotle to abide by instructions. This could be Chipotle wanting to show its stakeholders its willingness to correct its actions, which could be referred to as **corrective action**, and potentially regain its image.

The entire press release's content focused on what Chipotle had done in efforts to conclude the crisis, which could be seen as one of Coombs' crisis response strategies known as **bolstering** with reminding as a sub-strategy. Although the definition of bolstering stems from an organization talking about its past good traits, we argue that although at the time of the publication of the press release, all of the efforts of what it had accomplished were essentially in the past. Also, since Chipotle endured several incidents that added up to one large crisis, by listing everything and reminding stakeholders what the company had already accomplished, could be helping Chipotle by reminding its stakeholders of how active Chipotle was. Furthermore, Ells also stated that, *"The safety of our customers and integrity of our food supply has always been our highest priority"* (Appendix 6, Line 41), which may indicate that Chipotle was always thinking about food safety. At that time and prior to the food safety outbreaks of 2015, we believe that the company was trying to refer and remind the receiver of that by remaining in the **bolstering posture,** as *"Food with Integrity"* was Chipotle's original motto.

From another point of view, by listing all of the tasks Chipotle had accomplished in order to resolve the E. Coli outbreaks, it could be interpreted as reassurance of Benoit's **corrective action** strategy in an effort to repair its image. In addition, terms such as *"conducting additional"* (Appendix 6, Line 8), *"replacing all ingredients"* (Appendix 6, Line 9), *"working with health officials"* (Appendix 6, Line 12), *"actively assisting"* (Appendix 6, Line 26) and *"conducting independent testing"*

(Appendix 6, Line 24), could be interpreted by stakeholders, depending on their perceptions of the crisis, that Chipotle had done everything possible to take care of the contamination in its 43 restaurants on the West Coast of the United States in an official and proper manner.

After the lengthy list of tasks Chipotle had accomplished to resolve the E. Coli, the press release ended with a quote from the Co-CEO, Steve Ells,

"The safety of our customers and integrity of our food supply has always been our highest priority. If there are any opportunities for us to do better in any facet of our souring or food handling—from the farms to our restaurants—we will find them. We are sorry to those affected by this situation and it is our greatest priority to ensure that we go above and beyond to make certain that we find any opportunity to do better in any area of food safety." (Appendix 6, Lines 41-46)

The impression when reading this quote from the Co-CEO of Chipotle could be interpreted as sincere, which could lead to a successful crisis communication strategy by changing the language to be perceived as more sympathetic (Fairclough 2014, 39) compared to the first media statement, where it stated, "*Our deepest sympathies go out to those who have been affected by this situation*" (Appendix 5, Line 21). With a direct apology, such as *"we are sorry to those affected"*(Appendix 6, Lines 43-44), could lead stakeholders to believe that Chipotle's message was more relatable, where Chipotle could have realized the effect the crisis had had on its stakeholders and on its reputation nationwide therefore needing to rebuild its image. This could be in relation to one of Coombs' strategies known as the **rebuilding posture** with <u>apology</u> as a sub-strategy, where the company takes full responsibility for the crisis. When ending the press release, it is mentioned that additional information can be found on Chipotle's website. We find this to be a successful strategy – it could be perceived as Chipotle wanting to keep its stakeholders up-to-date and it could also give Chipotle the opportunity to try to control the information by posting it on its own website.

Third Press Release, November 20, 2015:

"Chipotle Updates on E. Coli Investigation"

This press release was published on Chipotle's *Investor Relations* page and was also shared on *Business Wire* on November 20, 2015 (Chipotle, 2015). Stakeholders could perceive the title of this press release as the crisis was not over, due to the use of the term 'updates'. This is confirmed when the press release stated that, *"Chipotle Mexican Grill continues to work closely with state and federal*

health officials" (Appendix 7, Lines 2-3). Furthermore, in the introduction to the press release, Chipotle was very specific with details through its explanatory language, which could lead to transparency and certainty, e.g. *"… continues to work closely with state and federal health officials"* (Appendix 7, Lines 2-3).

In relation to Chipotle's explanatory linguistic selection, Chipotle continued to share what the CDC had done to reveal findings in the investigation. Through CDC's findings, Chipotle stated that the number of cases related to Chipotle decreased from the original amount and the press release said that,

"The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) reduced the number of cases connected to Chipotle from 50 to 37 cases on November 18 (with 24 in Washington and 13 in Oregon). This reduction of nearly 25% was based upon more sensitive testing which revealed the cases were not related to Chipotle. The CDC has informed Chipotle that it identified six additional cases in which initial testing matches the E. coli strain involved in the Washington and Oregon incident. Although one of the individuals has no known link to Chipotle, five individuals did report eating at Chipotle, including two in Turlock, Calif., one in Akron, Ohio, one in Amherst, NY, and one in Burnsville, Minn." (Appendix 7, Lines 5-11)

In attempt to repair its image, the content in the quote above stated information that could be seen as **corrective action**, whereas situational context in the first press release (Appendix 5) published by Chipotle was not able to give specific details because there was a lack of information, which lead to an evasion of responsibility. In this press release, Chipotle avoided to evade responsibility because it was able to inform its stakeholders with factual information. Although, Chipotle informed that it was possibly not responsible for all of the E. Coli cases since it could not be connected through testing (Appendix 7, Line 7). Chipotle did accept and acknowledge the cases that were connected to its locations in Washington and Oregon through testing. This could be one of Benoit's five strategies, known as **mortification**, similar to Coombs' **rebuilding posture** with apology as sub-strategy. This strategy suggests that a given company or person admit its wrongdoing and ask for forgiveness, which Chipotle also did by stating, "*We offer our sincerest apologies to those who have been affected*" (Appendix 7, Line 32).

Also, in this press release, Chipotle mentioned the steps that it had taken in responding to the crisis through an explanatory language by using words such as *"aggressive steps"* (Appendix 7, Line 16), "*we take this incident very seriously*" (Appendix 7, Line 28) and *"conducted deep cleaning"* (Appendix 7, Line 19). Following the explanatory language, Chipotle continued with a statement

from Steve Ells, the Co-CEO. In this statement, he stated the importance of food safety and the importance of Chipotle's customers, reassuring that Chipotle would do anything to solve the crisis. Coombs (2015) stresses the importance of stakeholders during a crisis. We argue that Chipotle achieved this by making its stakeholders its first priority. After this, Ells continued with an apology to those who had been affected by the actions and reassured with an explanatory language that Chipotle would do anything to solve this matter - this could be seen as one of Benoit's strategies known as **corrective action** where a given company explains what it will do to prevent or solve a given crisis from happening again.

At the end of the press release, it was mentioned, *"According to the CDC, there are about 48 million cases of food-related illness in the U.S. annually, including 265,000 cases of E. Coli."* (Appendix 7, Lines 36-37). This statement could be perceived as being one of Coombs' strategies called **diminishing posture** with <u>justification</u> as a sub-category - we argue that this could be Chipotle's attempt to diminish the significance of E. Coli by informing its stakeholders that Chipotle is not the only restaurant to have endured an outbreak of E. Coli.

Fourth Press Release, December 4, 2015:

"Chipotle Commits to Become Industry Leader in Food Safety"

This press release was published on December 4, 2015 on Chipotle's *Investor Relation* page and published on *Business Wire* (Chipotle, 2015). From the title of this press release, it could be perceived that Chipotle was still working towards, and promising to become more involved with its food safety. Coombs discusses the importance of not making promises that one cannot keep during a crisis (2015). The by-line in the press release stated that Chipotle was continuing to work with officials and that no illnesses have been reported since November (Appendix 8, Lines 2-3).

The topic of this press release stays within the subject of what Chipotle had done to accomplish safer food practices. It also stated that Chipotle had been working with the Laboratory and Consulting Group, IEH. There was a quote included in the press release from IEH's CEO, Mansour Samadpour, expressing that, *"While Chipotle's food safety practices were already well within industry norms, I was asked to design a more robust food safety program to ensure the highest level of safety and the best quality of all meals served at Chipotle."* (Appendix 8, Lines 8-10). The reason for Chipotle to include this quote could be that the company was working with Coombs' **bolstering posture**, <u>reminding</u> stakeholders about Chipotle's past efforts in the topic of food safety.

The CEO of the consulting group informed that the program was adapted into Chipotle completely, which would send Chipotle to be *"the industry leader in this area."* (Appendix 8, Line

13). Including these quotes could be a part of Chipotle's image restoration process as its image has possibly been hurt. It is important how the public perceives the company as, "*perceptions are more important than reality*" (Millar and Health 2004, 246). "*Food with Integrity*" is Chipotle's motto and that could have been some stakeholders' perception of the company, but now both stakeholders' reality and perceptions of Chipotle could have changed after the ongoing food safety crisis. Having these outbreaks may have brought Chipotle's motto into question, and by juxtapositioning these quotes could be a way to inform its stakeholders that the company was taking action and committing to become an industry leader in food safety. We believe this decision was made in order to try to shift the stakeholders' perceptions back to Chipotle's original motto.

The press release continued by stating that through testing there had been no concrete evidence showing no relation between Chipotle and E. Coli anymore,

"Thousands of food sample tests from Chipotle restaurants linked to the incident have shown no E. coli. No ingredients that are likely to have been connected to this incident remain in Chipotle's restaurants or in its supply system. No Chipotle employees have been identified as having E. coli since this incident began" (Appendix 8, Lines 36-38)

Although the press release mentioned that there was no exact link, by choosing the words of "*that are likely*" (Appendix 8, Lines 36-37), could insinuate uncertainty. Through Chipotle's linguistic selection, we believe that although there is no actual link, by using "*likely*" one could interpret it as if it was not an actual fact, but more a likelihood.

Focusing further on the linguistic selection of this press release, it used formal explanatory language by sharing specifically what Chipotle had done since the last press release in November 2015, for example, "*Chipotle has set an objective to achieve the highest level of safety possible. The company retained Seattle-based IEH Laboratories…*" (Appendix 8, Lines 20-21). Chipotle included a list of the testing and improvements that it had conducted while using the consulting group IEH, and Chipotle used terms such as "*implementing*" (Appendix 8, Line 27), "*initiating*" (appendix 8, Line 30), "*pursuing continuous improvements*" (Appendix 8, Line 32) and "*enhancing internal training*" (Appendix 8, Line 34) - this could be seen as a way to show action and thereby possibly convince its stakeholders that a progress has been made.

This press release ended with possible **bolstering posture** with <u>reminding</u> as a sub-category as the Co-CEO, Steve Ells, expressed knowledge about Chipotle and its efforts towards food safety. Like the previous press release (Appendix 7), Chipotle mentioned that there are about 48 million food violation related cases, the press release specifically mentioned the volume of E. Coli outbreaks. We

believe at the end of this press release, Chipotle was working towards restoring its image by stating *"Chipotle has continued to serve more than 1 million customers a day in its restaurants nationwide without incident."* (Appendix 8, Lines 45-46). This statement could be an effort to regain its image as well as to remind its stakeholders that its doors are still open and some customers have remained loyal to the brand. At the end of the press release, Chipotle mentioned that there was additional information on its website which could create a sense of transparent communication as seen in all of the above mentioned press releases.

Fifth Press Release, January 19, 2016:
"New Chipotle Food Safety Procedures Largely in Place; Company Will Share Learnings from 2015 Outbreaks at All-Team Meeting"

This press release was published on January 19, 2016 on Chipotle's *Investor Relations* page, and also shared on *Business Wire* (Chipotle, 2016). The by-line for this press release stated that there would be a nationwide meeting on February 8, 2016 from 11 am to 3 pm, which would result in closing all Chipotle locations during that time. We believe this press release is different compared to the four other press releases due to the content primarily focused on Chipotle's employees and not the crisis.

The beginning of the press release stated that a meeting had been scheduled to thank its employees for their work in relation to *"implementing Chipotle's comprehensive new food safety programs in their restaurants"* (Appendix 9, Lines 5-6). Stating this information could be Chipotle's approach to try to regain its image. Being transparent could also help stakeholders in understanding what Chipotle had been doing to accomplish better food safety in its locations nationwide.

Chipotle continued with an explanatory language by quoting its Co-CEO, Steve Ells, by stating what the company had implemented into Chipotle's food safety plan along with detailed information about the testing that it had been accomplish. Furthermore, Ells stated that Chipotle also had implemented paid sick leave for its employees.

Through process analysis, we argue that there were three major purposes of this press release - informing the receiver that all of Chipotle's locations would close nationwide for a four-hour meeting, thanking its employees and informing the receiver about the initiatives the company had taken.

Chipotle stated that, "*The meeting will be broadcast live from Denver to hundreds of locations across the country. In order to allow all employees to attend, the company will be closing its restaurants for lunch that day*" (Appendix 9, Lines 28-29). We argue that it was a big decision to close all locations nationwide, and we believe this can be perceived as both positive and negative by its stakeholders. It could be perceived positively that Chipotle wanted to make sure that all employees had the opportunity to be educated in the new comprehensive food safety program (Appendix 9, Lines 5-7), and thereby be able to assure the best possible food safety for its stakeholders. It could also be seen as a negative view as stakeholders might not be able to comprehend the situation if they did not see the press release they could question "why is this store

BMI Elite, 2016

closed?" and "what is Chipotle doing?". This could end by creating a mystery or potentially rumors of why Chipotle locations were closed for five hours - this is of course only if people had not read the press release. We argue that Chipotle expected customers to not know about the meeting and stores closing, so the company placed a memo on each door of each location stating, *"BRB (Be Right Back) We're closed for lunch today to attend a meeting with all the other Chipotle employees. But don't worry, we'll be back open at 3 pm. If we messed up your lunch plans, let us make it up to you: visit Chipotle.com/raincheck see you soon"* (BMI Elite, 2016).

We argue that Chipotle used two of Coombs' and Benoit's suggested strategies throughout the whole press release; the **bolstering posture** (Coombs)/**reducing offensiveness** (Benoit) and **corrective action** (Benoit). Chipotle stressed the positive actions it had accomplished and wanted to accomplish, e.g. by stating, *"Additionally, we have implemented unprecedented food safety standards with our suppliers, which make the food coming into our restaurants safer than ever before"* (Appendix 9, Lines 12-13) and *"Over the last few months, we have been implementing an enhanced food safety plan that will establish Chipotle as an industry leader in food safety"* (Appendix 9, Lines 9-10), together by sequencing detailed information in a list format of what specific action Chipotle would take (Appendix 9, Lines 18-27), and in that way remind its stakeholders of all the good accomplishments Chipotle already had done and would do. We argue this could be connected to **corrective action** (Benoit) where Chipotle listed and mentioned all the tasks the company was planning to do in order to avoid and prevent similar cases from happening in the future.

Fourth Quarter Annual Report, February 2, 2016:

"Chipotle Mexican Grill, Inc. Announces Fourth quarter and Full Year 2015 Results, CDC Investigation Over; Chipotle Welcomes Customers Back to Restaurants"

The majority of the content in this report focused on the fourth quarter and full year results. Since a large portion of this report is not applicable to this thesis, we have selected the parts related to the on-going crisis in 2015. Although we are only analyzing parts of this report, the entire report will be included in Appendix 10.

This report was published on February 2, 2016 via Chipotle's *Investor Relation's* page and on *Business Wire* (Chipotle, 2016). The report began with the 'highlights' of Chipotle's fourth quarter in comparison to 2014's fourth quarter. Using a list format, Chipotle stated its decreases regarding accounts of revenue, sales, operating margin, net income and diluted earnings per share. Being a part of the New York Stock Exchange, Chipotle is a public company, therefore it is required by law to report this information (NYSE MKT, 2016). We do not believe publishing this information is a communication tactic as the company was required to report this, as this genre of this text is an annual report. After reporting its decreases, it communicated that Chipotle opened 79 new restaurants as the conclusion of this list. The next part was also in list format, which included the highlights from its twelve-month calendar year in comparison to the previous year. Here, there were more increases versus decreases. We believe through the company's layout of listing its information, Chipotle started with the negative to end of a positive note - we believe this is to **bolster** its image to its stakeholders.

This report continued with a quote from Co-CEO Steve Ells, noting, *"The fourth quarter of 2015 was the most challenging period in Chipotle's history, but the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has now concluded its investigation into the recent E. Coli incidents associated with Chipotle."* (Appendix 10, Lines 20-22) This quote could be seen as an attempt to be relatable with its stakeholders through its communication. The quote was followed by Chipotle declaring its **corrective action**, which we believe is to restore Chipotle's image through statements such as "*we are extremely focused*" (Appendix 10, Line 23) and "*enhanced safety measures"* (Appendix 10, Line 24). After, Chipotle **bolstered** its image by stating, *"By adding these programs to an already strong and proven food culture, we strongly believe that we can establish Chipotle as a leader in food safety just as we have become a leader in our quest for the very best ingredients we can find."* (Appendix 10, Lines 25-27).

This report continued to expand on the fourth quarter 2015 results. In this section, Chipotle published, "*the decrease in comparable restaurant sales was due to publicity during the quarter surrounding food-borne illness incidents associated with a number of Chipotle restaurants.*" (Appendix 10, Lines 31-33). We believe this was to give reason for the decreases. This transparency in its communication continued throughout the report, especially when informing its stakeholders that Chipotle was served a subpoena by the U.S Attorney's office for the Central District of California (Appendix 10, Lines 70-74). When publishing this, Chipotle was very explanatory exposing information in regards to this legal action.

A quote from the Co-CEO, Monty Moran, was included where he expressed that Chipotle was ready to welcome back customers to stores and acknowledged that 2016 will be a tough year in comparison to the past. This quote could be interpreted as an intimate discourse by stating its **corrective action** and admitting that it had been hard on Chipotle. Throughout the entirety of this report, we believe that Chipotle took in account for both Coombs' strategy of a **bolstering posture** by reminding its stakeholders about its past good work and achievements along with Benoit's strategy to take **corrective action** to restore its image to pre-crisis status.

A Letter from Chipotle Founder Steve Ells, December 16, 2015:

"Comprehensive Food Safety Plan"

This letter was from Steve Ells, the Co-CEO of Chipotle. This specific copy of the letter was published in the Chicago Tribune on December 16, 2015 (Appendix 11). It was also released on Chipotle's Twitter account the same day (Appendix 15, 19). We argue that from the title of this letter, the content could be to give an update from the company to its stakeholders of the **corrective actions** Chipotle had done. The by-line of the letter was *"A Letter from Chipotle Founder Steve Ells"* (Appendix 11, Lines X-0). This could lead the receiver, most likely its stakeholders, to know that the following letter was from a person of power at Chipotle with knowledge of every aspect of the on-going crisis. We believe that this could lead stakeholders to trust what Ells said in this letter because of his position in the company.

The first paragraph in the letter from Ells used personal linguistics, we believe this due to the use of 'me' and 'my', e.g. in line 1 (Appendix 11). Ells also continued to use the strategy of **bolstering** by stating, *"From the beginning, all of our food safety programs have met or exceeded industry standards"* (Appendix 11, Lines 2-3) - reminding the receiver that Chipotle had always been up to standards. Following that, the Co-CEO was very transparent while admitting that there were multiple outbreaks surrounding Chipotle's food safety and that Chipotle "*need*[ed] *to do better, much better*"

(Appendix 11, Line 5). This statement could be the approach of **corrective action** by being transparent with its stakeholders and expressing certainty that the company would acknowledge that something had to be done to better itself.

From the beginning, this letter had used authentic candor throughout the selection of language. This is especially apparent when Ells stated that, *"The fact that anyone has become ill eating at Chipotle is completely unacceptable to me and I am deeply sorry"* (Appendix 11, Lines 6-7). After that statement, Ells turned to share the company's **corrective action** to try to restore its image by being transparent and expressing everything that Chipotle had done to make its food safety better than it was pre-crisis.

While sharing with stakeholders what Chipotle had done to improve its food safety, the language was very professional, explanatory, informative and clear which again could have given a transparent communication, e.g. *"I want to share with our customers specifics about some of the significant steps we are taking to be sure all of the food we serve is as safe as it can be"* (Appendix 11, Lines 9-10). This letter took its time in informing about every step and process that Chipotle had, and would do, to better its food safety. Although some could interpret this letter as transparent, some might argue that it was not since the Co-CEO never gave specifics as to how or what Chipotle actually had done, e.g. *"we collaborated with preeminent food safety experts"* (Appendix 11, Lines 11-12) and "*we are implementing high-resolution and testing of many of our ingredients*" (Appendix 11, Lines 16-17) – some would wonder who those experts were and how the tests would be conducted.

Moving from the explanatory discourse, Ells continued by reporting the realistic perspective that had to be taken in account for when dealing with food safety. Although Chipotle would like to eliminate all risks, the company admitted that there is no way for it to be 100 percent safe at all times. This could be seen as a sense of insurance for the possible future food safety crises that the company might endure and it could also be Chipotle not making promises, as Coombs suggests to avoid promises during a crisis. Following this, Ells praised Chipotle for what it had accomplished in the past, **bolstering** its image by <u>reminding</u> stakeholders of all the good the company had accomplished, e.g. *"... we are known for using the very best ingredients in a fast food setting"* (Appendix 11, Line 8). We believe that through this letter, and the choice of language and information included, we argue that Chipotle believed that it had done everything possible at this time to solve the crisis, e.g., "*Chipotle is an incredibly focused company*" (Appendix 11, Line 29) and "*rest assured that we have looked at each of these ingredients.*" (Appendix 11, Line 31).

The letter ended with a powerful and confident statement of positivity, *"we are not going to shy away from this new challenge."* (Appendix 11, Lines 34-35). This could have given stakeholders

certainty through Chipotle's linguistic selection by expressing confidence. After this, Ells stated an apology and thanked customers for their loyalty - this could be seen as using Benoit's **mortification** strategy in evidence to Coombs' **rebuilding posture** with apology as a sub-category.

5.1.2   Domino's Statements

In this section, we will analyze two statements from Domino's. The first statement is a press release from Domino's website and the second is a YouTube video statement from Domino's CEO Patrick Doyle.

Press Statement, April 14, 2009: "Update to our Valued Customers"

This press release was published on Domino's website April 14, 2009 (BrianSolis April 15, 2009). It is a short statement with the title "*Update to our Valued Customers*" and the content contained what had happened from when Domino's was alerted to when the press statement was published. This press statement focused on the two employees behind the undesirable video on YouTube. We argue that Domino's used Coombs' **denial posture** with the sub-category of scapegoating in evidence to Benoit's **denial** strategy by shifting the blame in the first part of the statement. Here, Domino's stated,

> "*The opportunities and freedom of the internet is wonderful. But it also comes with the risk of anyone with a camera and an internet link to cause a lot of damage, as in this case, where a couple of individuals suddenly overshadow the hard work performed by the 125,000 men and women working for Domino's across the nation and in 60 countries around the world.*" (Appendix 12, Lines 11-15)

We argue that Domino's was trying to appear as a victim which could be connected with Coombs' **bolstering posture** with victimage as a sub-strategy where Domino's could have felt like it had been exposed to the dangers of the Internet and people's' access to it. Furthermore, Domino's made sure to mention that it was a company that worked hard and employed 125,000 employees in 60 countries worldwide. To us, this could be seen as another aspect of Coombs' **bolstering posture** with reminding as a sub-strategy similar to Benoit's **reducing offensiveness** with the sub-strategy of bolstering as Domino's was reminding people what good work the company had done before.

At the end of the press statement, Domino's stated, "*We apologize for the actions of these individuals, and thank you for your continued support of Domino's Pizza*" (Appendix 12, Lines 17-18). Through the linguistic selection, this sentence indicated that Domino's was sorry for what had happened. Due to the latter, the company used the **mortification** strategy of Benoit and Coombs' **rebuilding posture** with apology as a sub-strategy. The language in this press statement was very informative and explanatory.

YouTube Video Statement, April 15, 2009:

"Domino's President Responds To Prank Video"

This statement was published April 15, 2009 via YouTube. This statement is the second official statement made by Domino's regarding the publication of the undesirable video made by two employees. The sender was Domino's with Patrick Doyle as a spokesperson, and he began the statement by presenting himself. After the very short presentation, he addressed the incident and ended the statement by thanking people who were supportive of Domino's.

According to Coombs' SCCT, there are four strategies one can use when a company wants to *"repair the reputation, to reduce negative affect and to prevent negative behavioral intentions"* (Coombs 2007, 170). In Domino's case and in this specific statement, we argue that Domino's utilized three out of the four strategies. Patrick Doyle took full responsibility for the situation and thereby he did not use the denial posture or attack the accuser and he did not deny what had happened. However, we argue that the strategy of scapegoating, which is a sub-strategy of the **denial posture**, was slightly used as Doyle mentioned the two employees who created the video. We do not see this as a fully incorporated strategy as he immediately after stated, "*we sincerely apologize for this incident*" (Appendix 13, Line 3). Later in the statement, Doyle stated, "*it sickens me that the actions of two individuals could impact our great system*" (Appendix 13, Lines 17-18). It was clear that Doyle did not like the position Domino's was put in by the two employees and it was not intended. People are looking for someone or something to blame during a crisis situation, and therefore we argue that Doyle used this strategy to shift the blame from Domino's as a company to the two individual employees who actually caused the undesirable actions. Even though Domino's took responsibility, it still made sure to mention the two employees, but we do not believe this was a full use of Coombs' scapegoating strategy as the rest of the statement's content concentrated on what Domino's did for **corrective action**.

We argue that Domino's used **rebuilding posture** and **bolstering posture** as well. For the first strategy, Doyle used the sub-strategy apology where he publicly stated that Domino's was taking

responsibility. In the third line, as stated above, Doyle said *"we sincerely apologize for this incident"* (Appendix 13, Line 3) and throughout the entire statement, Doyle emphasized its **corrective actions** e.g. stating that it sanitized the location and re-examined its hiring practices (Appendix 13, Lines 10-15).

The last strategy used is the **bolstering posture**. Here, Domino's used the sub-strategy of ingratiation where Doyle praised Domino's stakeholders. In the third to fourth line of the statement, Doyle stated that, *"We thank members of the online community who quickly alerted us and allowed us to take immediate action"* (Appendix 13, Lines 3-5) and ended by saying, *"There are so many people who have come forward with messages of support for us, and we want to thank you for hanging in there with us as we work to regain your trust. Thank you"* (Appendix 13, Lines 22-24). The linguistic selection could show that Domino's really appreciated its stakeholders. This goes hand in hand with Benoit's strategy **corrective action** as Domino's planned to solve what had happened and emphasized that through this statement.

Analyzing the statement more in depth, we notice different language. As stated above, Doyle mentioned the people behind the undesirable act several of times, but he did not refer to them by name. He used terms as *"Domino's team members"* (Appendix 13, Line 2) and *"individuals"* (Appendix 13, Line 6 and 18). We believe this could be intended because of confidentiality reasons. This could also be an attempt to distance the two individuals from Domino's. In line 2 to 3 (Appendix 13), Doyle referred to the act as *"a funny YouTube hoax"* which we believe creates a certain distance between Domino's and the prank video. By using words as *"funny"* and *"hoax"*, we argue that it altered the discourse by using informal words. Later he stated, *"although the individuals in question claim it's a hoax, we are taking this incredibly seriously"* (Appendix 13, Lines 6-7). Here, the receiver might feel that Domino's took the very seriously, and we believe that Doyle might had chosen the words *"funny"* and *"hoax"* to avoid any direct negativity that could be connected to Domino's image.

Already in line three, Doyle apologized, and continued by thanking people who alerted Domino's, which allowed the company *"to take immediate action"* (Appendix 13, Lines 4-5). We believe this showed stakeholders that Domino's could be perceived as reliable. The receiver could interpret this as Domino's taken **corrective action** as soon as it was alerted. If we look at the bigger picture, we know that Domino's published this press statement two days after the company was alerted.

In line 7 (Appendix 13), Doyle stated that it was an isolated incident, more specifically in Conover, North Carolina. We argue that Domino's chose the words *"isolated incident"* to emphasize that this only took place at one specific location. This could be the company's way of trying to control the crisis from spreading and becoming a nationwide crisis.

Throughout the entire statement, the language was very explanatory – Doyle explained what had happened and what actions Domino's had taken. We believe this could be interpreted as transparent communication, e.g. when Doyle stated, "*it is not a surprise that this caused a lot of damage to our brand*" (Appendix 13, Line 17). In addition, Doyle stated, "*There is nothing more important or sacred to us than our customers trust*" (Appendix 13, Line 10), *"We take tremendous pride in crafting delicious food that they deliver to you every day"* (Appendix 13, Lines 21-22) and lastly *"we want to thank you for hanging in there with us as we work to regain your trust. Thank you"* (Appendix 13, Lines 23-24) – this again, could have been Doyle emphasizing what Domino's had done in order to recover and gain control. Furthermore, Doyle used pronouns such as 'we' (e.g. in line 1), 'you' and 'your' (e.g. in line 21 and 24). This could have affected the receiver to feel spoken to individually versus a large group of people.

5.1.3 Summary on Chipotle and Domino's Press Releases and Statements

The organizational image management theory by Massey discusses a process model including creating an image, maintain an image and regaining an image, if necessary. All three of these steps within the model are a dialect communication process. We argue that both Chipotle and Domino's have been exposed to incidents which meant that both of the companies moved to the third step of the model; regaining one's image.

Prior to Domino's incident with the undesirable video on YouTube, we argue that the company's image was created and maintained in accordance to Massey's organizational image management model. As stated above, due to the undesirable video posted on YouTube by two employees from Domino's, the company found itself in the position of having to regain its image. When looking at the findings in the analysis section 5.1.2, we argue that Domino's tried to restore and regain its image. There is a tendency that Domino's used Benoit's strategies of **denial** with the sub-strategy of shift the blame, **reducing offensiveness** with the sub-strategy of bolstering and **mortification** – this is in evidence to Coombs strategies of **denial posture** with scapegoating as a sub-strategy, **bolstering posture** with both reminding and victim as sub-strategies and **rebuilding posture** with apology as sub-strategy.

According to Coombs' SCCT, there can be three different types of crisis; victim cluster, accidental cluster and intentional cluster. We argue that Domino's crisis is characterized by **victim cluster** with rumor as sub-category. A rumor is when false and damaging information about an organization is being circulated (Coombs 2007, 168). We argue that this is the cluster Domino's crisis should be labeled with as two employees from Domino's published information in form of a video with damaging information, which proved to be false according to Patrick Doyle's, the President of

Domino's USA, press statement from April 15, 2009, where he referred to the act as a "*funny YouTube hoax*" (Appendix 13).

Prior to Chipotle's food safety crisis in 2015, we argue that its image was created and maintained as recommended according to Massey's model. Currently, Chipotle could be undergoing the regaining image step within the process model, which can either be successful or unsuccessful. When analyzing Chipotle's crisis communication strategy with Coombs' SCCT, we argue that Chipotle's ongoing crisis can be labeled with the **intentional/preventable cluster** with human error of product harm as a sub-category, where human error causes a product to be recalled (Coombs 2007, 168). Another sub-category that Chipotle could be labeled with is organizational misdeed with injuries where stakeholders are placed at risk by management and injuries occur (Coombs 2007, 168).

Coombs recommends several crisis communication strategies. Analyzing the steps that Chipotle took in trying to solve its crisis, we believe that it chose to follow the **rebuilding posture** with apology as a sub-category and **bolstering posture** with reminding as a sub-strategy. Chipotle released several press releases where it also continued to remind stakeholders about its prior reputation within food safety, and the company made sure to apologize in four out of six of the press releases and CEO letter.

Benoit's Image Repair Theory mentions five different strategies to regain a company's or a person's image. Chipotle's crisis was on-going nationwide in the United States. Due to the magnitude of the crisis, we argue that Chipotle have taken the **defeasibility** strategy at the beginning of the crisis (first press release, Appendix 5) because of the lack of knowledge as an investigation was underway so Chipotle was not able to pin point specifically where the crisis rooted. Through the company's press releases, many included the strategy of **reducing offensiveness** with bolstering as a sub-strategy where Chipotle stressed the good traits about itself. From the beginning, Chipotle stressed its efforts to solve the crisis and stressed the importance of food safety to the company, then and prior to the crisis. Furthermore, through the plan of solving the food safety crisis and prevent it from happening again, Chipotle utilized the **corrective action** strategy where the company listed all the steps it had taken and all the steps it would take to prevent anything similar from happening again. Lastly, Chipotle made use of the **mortification** strategy as the company apologized during its crisis communication.

The two cases of Domino's and Chipotle are very different. Domino's crisis took place back in 2009, and Chipotle's crisis started in August of 2015 and is still ongoing. In addition to the different dates, Chipotle's case is very extensive with various outbreaks located in multiple locations whereas in Domino's case, only one incident happened only connected to one specific place, North Carolina.

Another important aspect in the two cases is their different crisis types/clusters. We believe that Domino's crisis belongs with the **victim cluster** with <u>rumor</u> as a sub-category and Chipotle's crisis with the **intentional/preventable cluster** with the sub-categories <u>human-error product harm</u> and <u>organizational misdeed with injuries</u>. According to Coombs (2007, 168), an organization is a victim of the crisis with victim cluster and due to that there is weak attributions of crisis responsibility, which equals mild reputation threat. It is the opposite with intentional/preventable cluster. Here, a given company placed people at risk, took inappropriate actions or violated laws and regulations (Coombs 2007, 168) – this equals strong attributions of crisis responsibility and thereby severe reputational threat (Coombs 2007, 168).

5.2   Social Media Statements from Chipotle and Domino's

In this section of the analysis, we will analyze 24 of Chipotle's social media posts on both Facebook and Twitter. We will examine five of Domino's Facebook posts and tweets from Park et al.'s journal with same approach. In addition, we will analyze comments from stakeholders on each of the companies' social media platforms.

5.2.1   Chipotle Social Media Posts and Stakeholder Comments

Since the first outbreak of E. Coli started in August 2015, we will begin this section of the analysis with posts and tweets from this month. When the E. Coli outbreak first appeared in Simi Valley, CA which we believe from there turned into a nation wide crisis as social media spread, Chipotle posted a tweet on August 21, 2015 stating *"Chop, Chop, fresh"* (Appendix 15, 1.) This tweet included a short video of cilantro being chopped and received 58 retweets and 213 likes. A stakeholder below posted "*with da food poisoning*." (Appendix 15, 3). Chipotle responded to this specific tweet saying "*We take our customers' health very seriously, please contact us at chipotle/email-us -Rusty."* (Appendix 15, 3). Before this tweet was posted, Chipotle had not acknowledged on social media the E. Coli outbreak that sickened 243 customers. We believe that Chipotle posted this tweet in order to remind its stakeholders of its efforts to constantly provide fresh food, as "*Food with Integrity*" is Chipotle's motto. This could also be seen as one of Coombs' postures, the **bolstering posture** with the sub-category of <u>reminding.</u> We find the word 'fresh' used in the tweet to be leading stakeholders on Twitter to have a conversation regarding E. Coli and put its freshness into question. Another aspect regarding Chipotle's response is the use of including the social media manager's name when replying. This could be a linguistic choice to build a relationship

and to appear personal. Although some other companies might use this tactic as well, we argue that Chipotle chose this strategy deliberately to appear approachable.

Another tweet posted on this day stated, "*Come to me*" (Appendix 15, 2) with a picture of a chip and guacamole. We believe this tweet was posted in efforts to intrigue its loyal customers to return, regardless of the food safety crisis. This post received 665 retweets and 1,405 likes. Later that month, on August 30, 2015 Chipotle posted another tweet stating *"salsa partner"* (Appendix 15, 4) and it received 162 retweets and 523 likes. Comments regarding this post included stakeholders asking for Chipotle to bring a location to their area (Appendix 15, 5). This leads us to believe that regardless of the E. Coli outbreak, some stakeholders still are loyal to the brand and would like to see more of it as findings from the survey conducted for this thesis showed that 32 percent of respondents would continue to eat at Chipotle regardless of having a food safety crisis (Appendix 3).

Also in August 28, 2015, Chipotle posted on its Facebook page a short video with snapshots of summer sceneries with a Chipotle product in each photo, the post stated, "*Wish we could hit repeat on our summer. How was yours?*" (Appendix 16, 2). By this point, the first outbreak of Norovirus had begun in Simi Valley, California. The majority of the comments under this post mentioned summer, location requests or positive remarks about Chipotle e.g., "*It was way too hot*", "*I <3 #Chipotle*" and "*Come to New Zealand*!" (Appendix 16, 2). This post received 772 likes and 42 shares. It did not receive any negative comments, which could be due to this post being uploaded at the beginning of the outbreaks.

On September 22, 2015, Chipotle posted a tweet saying "*If aliens invade Earth, we can probably make peace over tacos*" (Appendix 15, 6). This tweet received 920 retweets and 1,314 likes. One comment regarding this tweet stated, "*I had a BURITTO yesterday and it was horrible !!!!*" (Appendix 15, 6). Chipotle replied by writing *"We apologize. May I suggest you contact the manager so they can address this and make amends?- Candice"* (Appendix 15, 6). Once again, mentioning the sender's (the Chipotle social media manager's) name could make the stakeholder feel that there was a relationship between him/her and the sender. Furthermore, since Chipotle took action by responding to this tweet, it could be seen as a **rebuilding posture** with <u>apology</u> as a sub-category to try to regain its image. We do not know if this comment was connected with the food safety outbreaks, but we believe that Chipotle might had been even more aware of such comments due to the crisis. From this, we believe that since Twitter is a conversation platform, Chipotle had chosen to use it to reach its stakeholders to have a conversation with them regarding their likes, dislikes and concerns about the company on Twitter. In addition, from the conducted survey (Appendix 3), we found that that 53 percent of individuals were informed about the outbreaks via social media, which

makes us believe that Chipotle did chose the correct platform to communicate with its stakeholders in order to regain its image.

Later on October 19, 2015, when the crisis had become a nationwide conversation surrounding the E. Coli outbreak, Chipotle posted a tweet saying "*He did the mash*" (Appendix 15, 7) with a video of one of its employees mashing the avocados for its guacamole product. This tweet received 391 retweets and 909 likes. Also on this day, Chipotle tweeted *"We know what you ate last summer (cuz we keep the recipes)*" (Appendix 15, 8). Since this was the first day where cases had been officially reported regarding Chipotle and E. Coli, we believe that the company chose this language for its tweets to keep conversation and interest of its food products relevant or a lack of knowledge regarding the outbreaks. In addition, the following tweets on Chipotle's Twitter account for the month of October stated, "*In the future you'll be able to teleport to burritos. Or have them teleport you*" (Appendix 15, 9) and "*Building it up so you can take it down"* (Appendix 15, 9). These tweets did not start conversation in regards to the food safety crisis.

On Chipotle's Facebook page on October 20, 2015, a day after the E. Coli outbreak was believed to had begun, Chipotle posted a video that was previously posted on its Twitter page a day before, "*He did the mash*" (Appendix 15, 7), except the post stated "*Guac This Way*" (Appendix 16, 3). Most of the comments were focused on the video using positive language. On the other hand, one comment stated, *"When do you add the food borne illnesses?"* (Appendix 16, 3). This comment received 13 likes, but was posted on December 10, 2015. Although this was a negative comment, it did not start a conversation between consumers on the Facebook post and Chipotle did not acknowledge this post. At this point of time, we believe that Chipotle chose Benoit's strategy of **evasion of responsibility** with <u>defeasibility</u> as a sub-strategy, as there was not enough information at the time to establish what was happening regarding to the crisis.

On November 9, 2015, three days after the press release was published Chipotle's Twitter account posted *"We've taken a number of steps to ensure our food is safe to eat in Oregon and Washington. Read more: chipotle.com/update*" (Appendix 15, 10). Comments to follow included stakeholders asking about the locations close to them, "*What about Dallas*" (Appendix 15, 11), "*are you still closing down everywhere :(((*" (Appendix 15, 11) and "*I just had a barbacoa burrito today. I hope i'm safe*" (Appendix 15, 11). Chipotle responded by telling those individuals that Chipotle was safe, and that the company was still *"going strong*" (Appendix 15, 11). Again, the social media managers included his or her name, which we believe could be Chipotle trying to build a relationship with its stakeholders. From Chipotle's choice of language, we believe it continued to use Twitter as a platform to communicate with stakeholders to rebuild its image.

After Chipotle informed stakeholders that the E. Coli was resolved in Oregon and Washington, Chipotle's Twitter updates returned to using the same language that the statements used before, for example a tweet posted on November 17, 2015 stated, "*It's rude to stare. Come over and say hi*" (Appendix 15, 14) with a picture of one of Chipotle's products. This tweet received 450 retweets and 1,444 likes. Stakeholders showed concern and interest in the E. Coli outbreaks. These tweets were not of negative concern regarding the E. Coli, both were requesting Chipotle to return to Washington, *"come back to seattle! :'("* (Appendix 15, 15) and *"REOPEN IN WASHINGTON AND I'M THERE"* (Appendix 15, 15). Chipotle took advantage of these tweets and made sure that its stakeholders were aware that Chipotle was in fact open again in Washington by responding with *"We're back already -Shane"* (Appendix 15, 15) and *"We're open! -Shane"* (Appendix 15, 15). We believe that the E. Coli outbreaks were an online conversation on Twitter between stakeholders and Chipotle's social media managers and employees. Chipotle chose to acknowledge these reactions instead of ignoring the conversation, which we believe could be an attempt from the company trying to regain its image. Responding to individual tweets could be a form of managing the damage control by acknowledging the conversation rather than not responding or saying 'no comment', which then would be the denial strategy. Chipotle did not respond to every single post or comment, e.g. *"When do you add the food borne illnesses?"* (Appendix 16, 3). We do not know whether this was a deliberate choice to not respond or if Chipotle just overlooked this comment.

On November 20, 2015, Chipotle released the press release "*Chipotle Updates on E. Coli Investigation*" (second press release, Appendix 6) also on this day Chipotle posted a tweet stated, "*The best part of a lunch meeting is the lunch*" (Appendix 15, 16). This tweet also included a picture of one of Chipotle's food items. This tweet received 137 retweets and 609 likes. Comments on this tweet did not acknowledge the picture or the tweet content, but focused on the outbreaks by stating "*Is it safe to eat at Chipotle again?*" (Appendix 15, 17) and *"no comment about the e.coli outbreak? Chickens"* (Appendix 15, 17). Chipotle responded to these tweets by saying "*Sure is. You can read all about it at chipotle.com/updates. -Candice"* (Appendix 15, 17) and "*You can read our press release here: ir.chipotle.com/phoenix.zhtml?... -Shane*" (Appendix 15, 17). By including these links for stakeholders it could lead them to discover more information regarding the crisis, we believe Chipotle was taking the **corrective action** strategy, suggested by Benoit, to enable stakeholders to know what the company was doing to take care of the crisis. However, Chipotle only provided these links and information when being questioned about the E. Coli.

On November 25, 2015, Chipotle posted on its Facebook page "*We're closed on thanksgiving day. Absence makes the heart grow fonder. See you on the 27th"* (Appendix 16, 4). Between the last Facebook post and this one, Chipotle did not mention or post any information in regards to the

ongoing food safety crisis, which we believe created a lack of transparency on its Facebook page. Most of the comments did not acknowledge the crisis. One stakeholder posted *"Any black friday specials? :)"* (Appendix 16, 4), and another stakeholder responded with *"Yes E. Coli"* (Appendix 16, 4), which received 34 likes. We believe the language in this response was humorous, by creating a joke out of the crisis. Chipotle did not acknowledge the comment.

On December 4, 2015, Chipotle published the press release, *"Chipotle commits to become industry leader in food safety"* (Appendix 8). Earlier on December 1, 2015, it posted a tweet stating, *"When dreaming of Chipotle, you 31% Swim in guac pool, 13% Honeymoon with tacos, 56% Wake up hungry"* (Appendix 15, 18). The tweet received 190 retweets and 268 likes. Comments regarding this tweet remained focused on stakeholders wanting to eat Chipotle, and stakeholders sharing this post with their friends. This could show that some stakeholders still had brand loyalty, as there were mainly positive comments after a four-month ongoing crisis.

On December 2, 2015, Chipotle posted a picture of its food products on its Facebook page saying *"You pick the movie, but hold us if it's scary"* (Appendix 16, 5). The majority of the comments from stakeholders were positive remarks stating *"Merry Christmas!"* (Appendix 16, 5) and *"See you next week! Happy Holidays!"* (Appendix 16, 5). One comment stated, *"I hope everyone continues to seek shelter in their doomsday bunkers while I keep enjoying the shorter lines"* (Appendix 16, 5). We believe the discourse in this comment insinuated that this specific customer was enjoying that there was a crisis by saying that due to the outbreaks, he then received quicker service. This post was published on December 24, 2015, after the second outbreak of Norovirus hit a restaurant in Boston. We believe that this was not a negative comment, but might show the brand loyalty that promoted other customers to return to Chipotle's stores, and we believe the person behind the post was trying to be humorous.

On December 10, 2015, Chipotle released a letter *"A letter from Chipotle Founder Steve Ells"* (Appendix 11). Chipotle tweeted this letter on its Twitter account and stated in the tweet a quote from Ells saying, *"Nothing is more important to me than serving my guests food that is safe" - Chipotle founder Steve Ells"* (Appendix 15, 19). This tweet received 489 retweets and 988 likes. The comments from stakeholders on this tweet were mainly negative. One stakeholder posted a picture of a raw piece of chicken stating *"I submitted a complaint on your website but no one followed up. Does this chicken look undercooked?"* (Appendix 15, 20). Chipotle responded by saying, *"When did you contact us? It can take a couple of days for us to get back you depending on the volume -Shane"* (Appendix 15, 21). We believe that in this moment Chipotle was using the **corrective action** to have that particular stakeholder know that Chipotle was taking action in order to fix the problem. The Twitter conversation continued between the individual and Chipotle where Chipotle apologized to

the individual for not receiving a response. Another tweet from a stakeholder stated, "*is it safe to eat at chipotle now? I'm having bad withdrawls*" (Appendix 15, 22). Chipotle responded by saying "*It sure is. Come on in -Shane*" (Appendix 15, 22). We believe that this tweet showed the brand loyalty that some of its stakeholders might have had towards Chipotle. Another tweet from a stakeholder regarding the letter from Ells said "*all kidding aside, the last two times I had Chipotle I immediately felt sick.*" (Appendix 15, 22). Chipotle responded by saying "*We take your health very seriously. Please contact us at chipotle.com/email-us -Shane*" (Appendix 15, 22). By using an apologetic and sincere tone, we believe that Chipotle was using the **bolstering posture** to remind its stakeholder of the importance of food safety to Chipotle.

Between December 17 and December 28, 2015, Chipotle's tweets, we believe, remained in an advertising posture by posting pictures and tweets to gain positive attention e.g., "*this town ain't big enough for the two of us. I got us two burritos to go*" (Appendix 15, 23). Although Chipotle's Twitter account avoided posting content regarding the outbreaks in this period, some individuals responded to Chipotle's post by saying, "*usually eat here 2 times a week but haven't been in a month. Waiting for the all clear*" (Appendix 15, 24). Chipotle responded with "*you can see the latest update here; chipotle.com/update -Shane.*" (Appendix 15, 24). The Twitter conversation continued with the stakeholder stating, "*thanks. Just a thought anybody think of doing like $3 burritos and bowls as a promo to get people to come back? Might work*" (Appendix 15, 24). Chipotle responded with "*Thanks for the suggestion. We've got some thoughts we're kicking around. Will add this. -Shane.*" (Appendix 15, 24). By responding to this individual's tweet, not only could it reassure stakeholders that Chipotle was being transparent about the negative attention it had received, but it could also give a transparent platform for stakeholders to communicate with Chipotle, which could be a part of its image repair approach.

On December 24, 2015, Chipotle posted on its Facebook page, "*Most of our restaurants will close early Christmas Eve and all day on Christmas. Confirm details with your local restaurant, and we'll see you again on the 26th. Happy Holidays!*" (Appendix 16, 6). This post was accompanied with a photograph of one of Chipotle's food products with a Christmas tree in the background. This post received 295 likes and 14 shares. The comments on this post ranged from showing brand loyalty e.g., "*I support chipotle and will remain a loyal customer. Thank you for your hard work with keeping food, real and working towards better non GMO, humane sourcing*" (Appendix 16, 6) to negative comments e.g., "*Change the name at least to shitpolti*" (Appendix 16, 6). Through the conducted survey for this thesis, we found that 30 percent respondents were likely to return to Chipotle regardless of the ongoing crisis (Appendix 3). One respondent from the survey said, "*Locally they closed down all restaurants when the outbreak was first discovered, I feel that they dealt with it in a*

very professional way and did everything to cooperate with authorities to find the source of contamination" (Appendix 3). In addition to this, a comment on the December 24, 2015 post said, *"Chipotle, you hang in there. You'll get it fixed. Find the saboteurs, either purposeful or unknowing. Change your employee health practices and food practices. I have faith in you."* (Appendix 16, 6). From these comments, we believe that Chipotle's crisis communication strategy was received positively by a majority of its consumers and stakeholders in support of brand loyalty.

On January 15, 2016, Chipotle announced on Twitter that it would be closing all locations on February 8, 2016, to *"discuss recent and future food safety changes"* (Appendix 15, 30). We believe this was Chipotle's approach to inform the public about **the corrective action** the company had done and would take in attempt to better the undesirable actions and thereby try to regain its image. By February 8, 2016, Chipotle continued informing stakeholders by giving a live update of the meeting that it had had. Chipotle stated this by saying, "*We'll be live-tweeting our national employee meeting today to discuss recent and future food safety and we'll be on #periscope at 12 pm EST*" (Appendix 15, 41). On February 8, 2016, the tweets that Chipotle posted varied from "*Founder Steve Ells kicks off meeting. Over 500,000 employees tuned in via satellite in 400+ viewing locations nationwide. #ChipotleAllTeam*" (Appendix 15, 41) to "*Steve thanks the CDC for their efforts and for declaring the E. Coli outbreak over last week*" (Appendix 15, 42). Through this transparency, we believe Chipotle stated this information in effort to update its stakeholders by using Benoit's **corrective action** and Coombs' **bolstering posture** with reminding as a sub-category to try to regain its image. While using Benoit's and Coombs' strategies, Chipotle also apologized on this day which is part of Coombs' **rebuilding posture**. All tweets from February 8, 2016, can be found in Appendix 15.

During the months of January and February 2016, Chipotle did not publish a Facebook post stating that its locations nationwide would be closed on February 8, 2016, for an all-team meeting as it did on Twitter and on its *Investor Relation* page. Instead, there was a post in January stating, "*The 'don't talk to me, I'm eating' sweater*" (Appendix 16, 7) with a picture of a customer in a sweater with a Chipotle product. Furthermore, on February 5, 2016, a post stating, *"Eat your way to a touchdown. We're catering: www.chipotle.com/catering"* (Appendix 16, 8) was posted. This post had a picture of a spread of Chipotle's products prepared for a sports game. The comments from stakeholders on these posts were similar to previous posts as there was mention of the E. Coli, e.g. *"we should get this just for the E-Coli"* (Appendix 16, 8). Regardless of that comment, there were more positive comments that use language by expressing feedback and brand loyalty e.g., "*Did you guys hear abou the millions of people that didn't get sick from Chipotle?*" (Appendix 16, 7) and "*CHIPOTLE....I stand by you guys!!! I am a LOYAL CUSTOMER <3 from NYC*" (Appendix 16, 7).

5.2.2   Domino's Social Media Posts and Stakeholder Comments

Prior to the two Domino's employees publishing the video in 2009 on YouTube, Domino's was not active on social media platforms. An article by Amy Jacques (2009), stated that Domino's had put together a social media team prior to the crisis, and that the company was planning to go online just one week after the YouTube video was published by the employees (Jacques, 2009). This means that Domino's had created a social media team prior to the crisis, and due to that, we assume that the company was almost ready to go online and had some of its communicative strategies put together, e.g. which social media platforms the company would be presented on, who and how many employees would handle the communication and what and who those employees should publish and reply to. Even though Domino's had created this social media team, the company probably did not expect this sort of exposure and due to the video published on YouTube, Domino's had to go online one week before it had planned.

Domino's first Facebook post was from April 19, 2009, which was a week after the video was published on YouTube by one of the two employees from Domino's. It received 39 likes and 12 comments (Appendix 17, 1.) The post stated, "*Domino's Pizza does great things for your community*" (Appendix 17, 1.) followed by a YouTube link. When we click on the link, we are sent to YouTube with a video that is no longer available. We cannot tell what the video is about, but on the basis of the post and the comments below the post e.g. *"quit with the counter promotion the way to do it would be to give free pizza not these fake ass ads*" (Appendix 17, 1.) and *"then apparently you haven't ever been in Killeen TX where the store there donates hundreds of pizzas to the soldiers there or when I donated 150 pizzas to the underprivaliged children in the inner Houston area. there are many stories like these, research"* (Appendix 17, 1.). We believe it could be a video about all the good traits Domino's thought it had done for the community in the form of acts of kindness and/or offers, but we cannot conclude anything as some of the comments were related to the crisis stating e.g. *"lol, tryNa rebound huh domino's?"* (Appendix 17, 1.) and *"Im sorry to the customers that have had a change of heart due to 2 ex-employees that were VERY imature … But I assure you that Those two people did not care about their Jobs or the company … and I think the 2 of them need to be seeing some serious jail time"* (Appendix 17, 1.). This could indicate that the linked video was related to the food violation crisis. We cannot determine what the linked video was about, so we will only focus on the post and comments excluding what the video might have been about.

In its first post, we believe that Domino's used Coombs' **bolstering posture** with remaining as a sub-category in evidence to Benoit's **reducing offensiveness** with the sub-strategy of bolstering as Domino's was reminding its stakeholders that the company had done good for its community. This being Domino's first Facebook post that we could collect, we believe that the post was not very

explanatory and it did not relate or state anything directly regarding the case with the two ex-employees. The comments of the post vary, some of the comments have do not directly address the post e.g. *"lol"* (Appendix 17, 1.) and *"there are no dominoes in sutton wv"* (Appendix 17, 1.) The other comments were either positive and supporting Domino's e.g. *"it's too bad people are so quick to judge and place blame on the entire Domino's system, this was an isolated incident and two stupid people doing something that caused so much harm to a grate franchisee …"* (Appendix 17, 1.), and negative comments including e.g. *"sorry , but dominos pepperoni passion (with onions) is the east food out there.. My only complaint is that they don't tell you its buy one get one free till you pick it up… DISGRACEFUL x"* (Appendix 17, 1.).

The second post we have selected is from April 28, 2009. The Facebook post received 136 likes, 32 comments and 11 people shared the post on their own Facebook pages (Appendix 17, 2.). This post stated, *"Now when you order from Domino's, you can track your pizza on Facebook. Just hit the "Share on Facebook" button from Pizza Tracker"* including a picture of what the pizza tracker looked like (Appendix 17, 2.). This could be seen as something new Domino's was trying to promote. The pizza tracker was connected to Facebook, which also could be a way for Domino's to show that the company was active on Facebook. The launch of the pizza tracker on Facebook could also be seen as a way for Domino's to create or regain confidence in its brand as the tracker gave people the opportunity to track their pizzas step-by-step. This could indicate that Domino's used Benoit's **corrective action** strategy – the company was trying to do things right and try to prevent a recurrence of the event. We argue that this cannot prevent a similar case from happening, but it could make the customers and stakeholders feel more confident when returning to Domino's.

When looking at the comments from stakeholders, they were a mix of comments that did not relate to the post made by Domino's e.g. *"I'm the first comment!lol"* (Appendix 17, 2.) and comments that used positive language regarding the new pizza tracker connected with Facebook, e.g. *"I loooove this feature ;)"* (Appendix 17, 2.). There was one comment that stood out stating, *"tomas ur free to decide wat u want but just in case u didn't see this its about that incident"* (Appendix 17, 2.) followed by a link to a YouTube video. It is not possible to gain access to the video anymore, but we can only assume that the link some how was related to the food violation video as the person referred to it as "that incident". Domino's had not had any other incidents at that time. This could be an example of eWoM. The post Domino's made about the pizza tracker was not connected to the crisis in an obvious way, but still one stakeholder chose to comment on the incident.

The third post on Facebook we have chosen to use for this analysis was posted on July 6, 2009. It stated, *"Hey fans, just an FYI we've changed our Twitter ID and will now be going by*

@dominos from now on. If you're not following yet, give us a look, fun times to be had for all!" (Appendix 17, 3.) followed by a link to the company's new Twitter account. The post received 71 likes and 22 comments (Appendix 17, 3.). Domino's started the post by referring to the stakeholders as "fans" which could be interpreted that Domino's might only be targeting this group of people. We argue that this is a word where some people might feel excluded as they might not feel as if they were "fans". "Fan" is not a negative word, but Domino's could have used a more neutral word e.g. customer. From the survey conducted for this thesis, we found that the majority of the respondents did not use language that could be interpreted as them being fans, e.g. when we asked the respondents why they eat at Domino's, some replied, *"Friends order it"* (Appendix 3), *"I'm drunk"* (Appendix 3) and *"If there are no other option"* (Appendix 3). Also, only one percent of survey respondents eat there several times a week and eight percent once a month (Appendix 3).

We think this post used informative language, and even though we know what the Twitter account's name was before (@dpzinfo) and that the Twitter account was made specifically to take care of the crisis communication online, Domino's made sure not to mention the account's previous name and not to mention anything about the crisis. We believe this was intentional and Domino's did not want to remind people of the crisis. None of the comments were related to the crisis, instead it was a mix of people that were positive about Domino's, e.g. *"Domino's is good. Twitter sucks though"* (Appendix 17, 3.), people who were negative about Domino's, e.g. "*I HATE PIZZA AS LAST TIME I HAD DOMINOS WAS VERY COLD PIZZA AND CHEESE JUST WAS LIKE RUBBER …*" (Appendix 17, 3.) and comments that did not have anything to do with the post e.g., *"parmesan cheese is really cool …. Bus it's smell is olny bad ……but its taste great!!!"* (Appendix 17, 3.).

The fourth post we have selected from Domino's Facebook page stated, *"Domino's recently announced we were #1 in martket share for online ordering, beating both Pizza Hut and Papa Johns. So we decided to ask our customers what they thought made our online ordering so great. Want to find out what they had to say? Hit the '25"* (Appendix 17, 4.)*.* This was posted on July 23, 2009 and the post received 70 likes and 26 comments (Appendix 17, 4.). We believe Domino's had posted this because the company wanted to be perceived as a respected company and it may have felt that it still had to regain its image. This could be seen as Benoit's **reducing offensiveness** with the sub-strategy of <u>bolstering</u> similar to Coombs' **bolstering posture** with <u>reminding</u> as a sub-category. We believe that Domino's was reminding its stakeholders of the company's strong position. We argue that the linguistic selection in this post was different from the other posts. If we compare this to post number three (Appendix 17, 3.), there was a change in the way Domino's referred to its stakeholders. In post number three it stated, *"If you're not following yet …"* (Appendix 17, 3.), here Domino's referred to its stakeholders with the use of "you" whereas in post number four, Domino's

used "our" and "they" when referring to its stakeholders. The first sentence was also constructed differently, it stated "*Domino's recently announced*" and then "*we were*" (Appendix 17, 4.) – we argue that it sounds like "Domino's" and "we" were two different categories and this could be contradictory compared to the other posts and it could also be interpreted as the post had been written by someone who was not used to writing posts on Domino's Facebook. It is argued that a company should have "*a team of employees that is responsible for managing the firm's social media accounts*" (Horn et al. 2015, 204). We argue that it seemed like Domino's did not had that. A stakeholder had also noticed this by stating, "*Who are WE!*" (Appendix 17, 4.). Which to us indicates that this individual was confused about the post's sender. Another stakeholder stated, *"They started out as the company in the dark, but now I really like them! ☺"* (Appendix 17, 4.) – we cannot be 100 percent sure of what the stakeholder meant by this, but we assume that he was referring to the crisis. This could prove that Domino's crisis communication strategies with the **bolstering posture** and **reducing offensiveness** had helped regain its image. In one of the comments collected, we can see that for the first time Domino's interacted with its stakeholders. The company answered a stakeholder by commenting, "*Hey Ralph, the data was provided by NPD Group's Crest research, a third party*" (Appendix 17, 4.). By engaging with this stakeholder, Domino's could be attempting to regain its image. Previously, Domino's had not engaged with any stakeholders on Facebook. We believe that Domino's responded to this stakeholder because his question might have been specific and needed an answer.

The final post, post number five, was posted December 30, 2009 and received 339 likes and 134 comments. The post stated, "*If you haven't seen it yet, check out the full Pizza Turnaround video right here on Facebook!*" (Appendix 17, 5.), and was followed by a video with the text, "*Go behind the scenes of Domino's new pizza with the real people who made it happen. Want to know why we made a new pizza? Take a look.*" (Appendix 17, 5.). Here, we see the same pattern as the comments in the previous posts; comments from people who were positive regarding Domino's e.g. "*DOMINO'S RULES!!!!*" (Appendix 17, 5.), comments from people who were negative about Domino's e.g. *"I just had Domino's today and a few weeks ago….the one a few weeks ago had garic and this time it tasted like the old pizza…so honestly I gave up and im back to making my own ☺"* (Appendix 17, 5.) and comments that were not related to the post e.g. "hyghj" (Appendix 17, 5.) and "*i want free pizza*" (Appendix 17, 5.). Even though, none of the comments were related to the crisis, we still see the post as a strategy for Domino's to **bolster** itself by <u>reminding</u> its stakeholders that Domino's did listen to them and acted according to that.

None of Domino's Facebook posts in 2009 forwardly acknowledged the crisis. We believe this is a deliberate act because of the consistency. We believe this was because Domino's chose to

start its Facebook page with positive posts. Going over the selected posts and looking at the first post in April 19, 2009 and the last one in December 30, 2009, we noticed a change in the activity from the company's stakeholders; post number one received 39 likes and 12 comments and the last post received 339 likes and 134 comments. This could be because of several reasons. It could be because Facebook in 2009 was very new, and Domino's just created the account prior to the first post and in this way there could be a lack of people following and who liked Domino's Facebook page. It could also be due to the content where people might have been more engaged in certain topics.

As stated above, some of the comments in the various posts were negative against Domino's and expressed anger. These comments could potentially have led to an online firestorm, especially because Domino's did not interact with its stakeholders in the selected comments except for the one example in Appendix 17, 4. We believe that the reason for the comments not evolving into an online firestorm could be because Domino's Facebook account had just been created and the attention surrounding Facebook for companies was not as established as it is today.

If we look at Twitter, the activity from stakeholders related to Domino's was different from the Facebook activity. According to Park et al.'s case study "*Twitter was one of the key places where discussions took place*" (Park et al. 2012, 282) and based on the authors' estimation, "*more than 15,000 Twitter users posted a message about the event*" (Park et al. 2012, 282) were posted. This created a total of 20,773 tweets, which was extracted from April 13 to April 20, 2009 (Park et al. 2012, 283). Another reason for the larger amount of activity on Twitter could be that Domino's used its Twitter account to share a link to the company's CEO's official statement on YouTube. The table below shows "*the number of users, tweets, mentions, re-tweets (RTs), and tweets with URLs on the Domino's case*" (Park et al. 2012, 283).
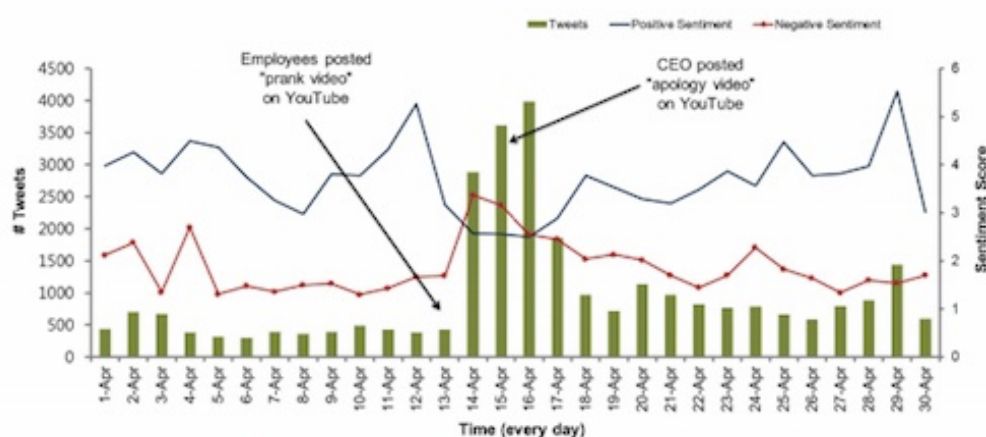

Figure 1: Temporal evolution of the positive and negative sentiment scores

(Park et al. 2012, 284)

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The green columns show how many tweets were posted with Domino's as a topic in the month of April in 2009. April 14, 2009, there was a large increase in the number of tweets. We argue that this is due to the video by the two employees being published on YouTube. During the next three days, there was a change from mainly positive tweets to negative tweets, but from April 16, 2009, it changed again and the tweets remained mainly positive for the rest of the period. On the basis of this, it could be argued that Domino's crisis communication strategies and its video on YouTube had worked. Furthermore, from this table we can assume that the crisis subsided rather quickly – the amount of tweets peaked on April 16, 2009 and already the day after, the amount of tweets decreased around 50 percent. However, we argue that even though the amount of tweets quickly decreased again, there were more tweets post crisis than prior crisis.

According to the journal's case study, 217 of the relevant tweets were facts. Of these, 57 (16.7%) were sent during the first peak and 160 (39.9%) during the second peak (Park et al. 2012, 288). We argue that it might not be the facts that start the most conversations as they simply state links and could include a little information. The other type is opinions – these tweets had either positive or negative sentiments (Park et al. 2012, 288). According to the case study, only 2 (0.6%) of the collected tweets were positive during the first peak while 283 (82.8%) were negative. The same tendency was seen during the second peak with 22 (5.5%) positive tweets and 219 (54,6%) negative (Park et al. 2012, 288).

	The 1st peak	The 2nd peak
Facts	57 (16.7%)	160 (39.9%)
Positive opinions	2 (0.6%)	22 (5.5%)
Negative	283 (82.8%)	219 (54.6%)
Total	342 (100%)	401 (100%)

(Park et al. 2012, 288)

We believe that due to the nature of the event, the majority were negative opinionated tweets. The table above shows a decrease in negative tweets from the first peak to the second peak, and an increase in positive tweets during the same period. We find this very interesting as this could indicate that Domino's crisis communication, or at least a part of it, had worked. According to Park et al. (2012), companies using crisis communication do not expect to receive praise or to be viewed positively, *"rather, they expect the public's negative sentiment to calm down and become more rational because of the apology"* (Park et al. 2012, 288). The numbers in the table above confirm this. If we look further at the numbers, we see that there has also been an increase in the amount of

tweets with links (facts) – from 57 (16.7%) to 160 (39.9%). This could also support that Domino's crisis communication strategies had worked as more facts were shared. Furthermore, there were slightly more positive tweets that were posted and the negative tweets had declined from the first peak to the second peak.

Park et al. (2012) looked further into the opinion tweets and found that there were three types of opinions that could have impacted Domino's sales; future intent, persuasion and perception (Park et al. 2012, 288). Tweets that indicated stakeholders that would not eat at Domino's in the future (future intent) could be a tweet such as, *"No more Domino's at my house"* (Park et al. 2012, 288). We argue that it sounds like the person had eaten Domino's before due to the choice of the words "no more" and because of the food violations, which resulted in the person claiming that he/she would not eat Domino's again. The second type of negative purchase intent tweets was when a person recommended others to not eat Domino's, e.g. *"If you didn't have a reason to not eat Domino's pizza http://tinyurl.com/cd62h3"* (Park et al. 2012, 288). We believe that this person did not like Domino's prior to the crisis because of the words "If you didn't" as the "if", to us, indicates that the person was giving a reason for others to not eat at Domino's. The last type is perception where people confirm their past negative purchase, e.g. *"@TheDLC Due to their disgusting pizza, I also haven't eaten at Domino's pizza in about 20 years. Thanks for confirming my decision!"* (Park et al. 2012, 288). We believe the people who posted these tweets were already people who did not eat at Domino's, so one could argue that this would not harm Domino's reputation. However, we believe that all news travels fast, especially on social media, through the process of eWoM. This could potentially inform a person who liked Domino's prior to the crisis, but the person's perception could change if he/she read a negative tweet. This could also be seen as an online firestorm if the conversation had been initiated further.

According to Park et al.'s table on page 88 (from Park et al. 2012, 284), it would seem like Domino's crisis communication on Twitter was successful, but there were still some people who did not like the official statement on YouTube. A total of 71 tweets talked about the statement from Domino's President; 34 with negative sentiments, ten with positive sentiments and 27 tweets were more factual than opinionated (Park et al. 2012, 288). These numbers show us that negative tweets were posted more often than positive ones. One of the negative tweets stated, *"Very insincere response from Domino's - http://ow.ly/31mF. Compare to Jet Blue's very sincere response 2 yrs ago - http://ow.ly/31mV"* (Park et al. 2012, 288) and a positive one stated, *"via @hollisthomases http://bit.ly/2lZr8m kudos to Dominos for taking swift action via social media in response to the nasty employee videos."* (Park et al. 2012, 288). Both of these tweets could start eWoM between Twitter users, and we argue that Domino's would prefer the positive media coverage. However, we

believe that bad news travels faster, the numbers stated above also support this claim. However, Park et al. argue that when "*people interact with others in social media, they share their feelings and this act could reduce the negative sentiments*" (2012, 289) – this could also explain why the negative opinions decreased during the period. Even though the numbers above showed that there were more negative tweets about the statement from the President of Domino's than positive, the statement caused a significant decrease in the negative tweets in general (see p. 89).

Looking at the numbers from the conducted survey for this thesis, 12 percent of the respondents remember Domino's crisis in 2009 (Appendix 3). However, according to Park et al., "*a total of 16,553,169 or 30% of all Twitter users were exposed to the news during an eight-day period (April 13th-20th, 2009)*" (Park et al. 2012, 284). This argues that a large amount of people were informed about the crisis at that point in 2009, which could be conflicting with the number from the survey. We believe that it could be due to the phrasing of the question being; "*Did you hear about Domino's employee health violations in 2009?*" (Appendix 3). Some people might not remember a single crisis event that is seven years old by only mentioning the name of the company. We could have asked the question differently by e.g. describing the crisis very shortly, which might have sparked the respondents' memories, but we refrained from that as we were very careful not to construct leading questions. Looking back, we believe that we could have been more specific when asking about Domino's without leading people to respond in a certain way by asking e.g., "*Did you hear about Domino's health violations with two employees that made a prank video in 2009?*". We argue that this would make the question more specific, which could have helped some respondents to remember the crisis. On the other hand, this could show that Domino's crisis communication strategies were successful since 88 percent of the survey respondents could not remember the crisis (Appendix 3).

It was impossible for us to find any of Domino's Twitter posts on the company's own Twitter account regarding the crisis, but we know that it used Twitter to communicate and spread its video statement on YouTube (Park et al. 2012, 283). We argue that Domino's has used Facebook and Twitter differently. The company has not used its Facebook account to communicate openly and directly about the crisis, instead Domino's chose to use its account to publish new initiatives. Furthermore, we cannot know what Domino's actually tweeted on Twitter, but we know the company addressed the crisis on this social media platform.

5.2.3   Summary of Chipotle and Domino's Social Media Usage

When analyzing the comments on each company's Facebook and Twitter accounts, there are both similarities and differences. On both platforms, for each company, we found stakeholders that

had negative remarks and positive remarks. However, we argue that there is more communication on Twitter as this platform enables users to communicate with each other through hashtags and retweets. Facebook enables communication as well, but we argue that Twitter is a place to express one's feelings and thoughts and while sharing it with others. Because of the potential spread of stakeholder opinions and the endless amount of content on social media platforms, we believe that both companies did not necessarily endure an online firestorm via social media, but social media informed other social media users of each crisis through eWoM.

Specifically, Chipotle remained in a **rebuilding posture** while communicating with stakeholders on social media. The company constantly made each tweet response personal by adding the social media manager's name. We believe this was to remind stakeholders that there was a person behind the tweet in order to build a relationship and that the person took his or her time to answer the user. Also, Chipotle was very consistent in selecting positive language on its social media platforms, and even when responding to a stakeholder's negative comment, it remained positive. On Chipotle's Facebook page there were no specific posts regarding E. Coli or Norovirus food safety outbreaks. Under Chipotle's Facebook posts, which mostly were shared on Twitter as well, stakeholders' comments ranged from positive to negative around the time of the different outbreaks.

When Domino's used social media during its crisis, the company had just jumped on the social media trend for companies in 2009. This could be because of the year that its crisis was occurring in versus Chipotle's crisis taking place in 2015. Social media has only expanded and changed since 2009, and we argue that social media now has become very common to stakeholders and therefore companies should be aware and monitor what is happening on social media. Domino's also made a specific Twitter account (@dpzinfo) during the crisis, since then the company's account has change to @dominos. On the other hand, Chipotle used its company's account that was already established to communicate with stakeholders about the crisis. Again, this could be because of the developmental purpose of Twitter between 2009-2016. This also provided Chipotle with a greater reach of people, which could be helpful when trying to repair one's image.

In addition, Domino's started using Facebook around the same time as the crisis in 2009. We believe this could have been because it was a new marketing tactic for companies, or it could have been in attempt to **bolster** its reputation prior to the crisis, even though Domino's had planned to start an account pre crisis (Jacques, 2009). However, both Chipotle and Domino's did not address the crisis on Facebook, whereas both companies used Twitter to communicate with stakeholders about its crises. Although both companies did not specifically address its individual crises on its Facebook pages, some stakeholders commented on the different posts mentioning the crises.

The comments on Domino's Facebook posts were not as relevant as the comments on Twitter pertaining to the crisis. Chipotle, on the other hand, had many relevant comments regarding the crisis on its Facebook page. Some of the stakeholders' comments on Chipotle's tweets were also relevant. Regardless, we argue that people will not tweet or write a comment unless they have some sort of interest or perspective on the topic to actively express themselves. Also, many of the comments on both Chipotle's Twitter or Facebook discussed the brand and some of them portrayed brand loyalty.

Due to the latter, we believe stakeholders' loyalty was shown by some through their linguistic selection on both Chipotle's Facebook page and Twitter account via comments. This may be due to Chipotle's motto in attempt to provide *"Food with Integrity"* where stakeholders could have developed their initial loyalty to the brand due to its motto, specifically involving food reliability. Responses from the survey conducted for this thesis stated that individuals eat at Chipotle because, "*they source non GMO and hormone free meat*" (Appendix 3), "*because they use local produce*" (Appendix 3) and *"it is a healthier fast food option."* (Appendix 3). In comparison, individuals who responded to the survey said that they eat at Domino's because "*roommates order it*" (Appendix 3), "*I'm drunk,*" (Appendix 3) and "*close to home*" (Appendix 3). From the language chosen, we believe that the loyalty of Chipotle stakeholders' is built on its motto to provide "*Food with Integrity"* versus Domino's stakeholders may see it as just another pizza fast food chain with no purpose to serve quality food. We argue that Chipotle and Domino's both used social media as a tool to regain its image but in different ways as the crises and times were different.

5.3   Media Coverage of Chipotle and Domino's

In this part of the analysis, we will look at how the media portrayed both Chipotle and Domino's. In order to do so, we will analyze four different news articles and related comments from stakeholders regarding Chipotle's crisis. For Domino's crisis, we will analyze two different videos on YouTube that showed two different news segments regarding Domino's crisis in 2009 – we will also analyze related comments to the videos.

5.3.1   News Articles regarding Chipotle

First article, NBC Southern California - September 4, 2015:

"SoCal Chipotle Linked to Norovirus Outbreak Affecting Nearly 100 People"

This article was published on September 4, 2015 by the NBC's Southern California news before Chipotle published any press releases regarding the crisis. To summarize this article, it discussed the first case of Norovirus at the Simi Valley location where, *"80 restaurant customers and 18 restaurant employees reported symptoms of a gastrointestinal illness after eating at the restaurant."* (Appendix 18, Lines 10-11). As the article continued, it mentioned how Chipotle "voluntarily" closed its restaurant and threw out the rest of the food on site. Jessica Perez, the journalist of this article, included a quote from the Ventura County Public Health Officer stating that, *"Norovirus is the most common cause of acute gastroenteritis in the United States."* (Appendix 18, Line 25). The article ended with, *"there have been no further reports of illness since the initial reports, according to health officials."* (Appendix 18, Line 28). Ending the article with this statement could give comfort to stakeholders who are concerned with their health to ensure that this case had the potential to not be an ongoing crisis.

The comments on this article began with a stakeholder commenting, "*Not this location but the one in Lakewood, Ca. Every time I go their the counter is dirty. They never clean or wipe the excess food left behind after preparing a customer food. I find this annoying and lazy*" (Appendix 22, 1). We find this comment to be aggravated, but not aggressive. Another stakeholder commented by reminding individuals that, "*the virus is transmitted by fecally [fecal] contaminated food or water*" (Appendix 22, 1). This comment could have been posted in response to the article since the article included phrases such as *"seven of out 18 specimen samples tested positive for Norovirus"* (Appendix 18, Lines 15-16), *"the restaurant…threw out all remaining food products and sent home a number of affected employees,"* (Appendix 18, Lines 17-18) and *"a person can contract Norovirus from contaminated food or water, by touching contaminated surfaces and through affected people"* (Appendix 18, Lines 26-27). We believe that this stakeholder felt the need to relay the most important aspect of the Norovirus and where it actually originated. In response to this comment, another individual posted her opinion, stating that Norovirus occurs, "*way too often in So Cal.*" (Appendix 22, 1). This stakeholder seemed to be shifting the blame away from Chipotle to the Southern California as she did not mention Chipotle to be at the center of the blame.

The comments online are most likely not filtered through; individuals online have the right to post their own opinions. One stakeholder posted, "*Chipotle is fat-packed garbage. Just look at the fat morons who eat there. Even McDonalds' is healthier*" (Appendix 22, 1). From the word choice of

"f*at packed garbage*" and "*fat morons*", we believe that the person had established a previous opinion about Chipotle and would like to further share this negative opinion regarding the brand. This statement could have possibly created a negative online conversation that could have resulted in an online firestorm about Chipotle, but instead an individual responded to the comment noting, *"'Fat-packed garbage", 'McDonalds is healthier' 1) Fat is not bad for you 2) McDonalds is not healthier, nice try but no cigar....."* (Appendix 22,1). From the language used in this comment, we believe that it is a defense against the previous comment. We argue that this individual did not defend Chipotle, but the person wanted to make sure that others did not believe that McDonalds was healthier. This rebuttal received three likes. One last comment posted on this article simply said "*Yuck*" (Appendix 22, 1). Although we believe that this stakeholder was disgusted by the outbreak, he/she did not continue sharing his/her opinion by explaining his/her meaning of "*Yuck*".

Second Article, Oregon Live, October 31, 2015:

"E. Coli sickens at least 22 people who ate at Chipotle in Oregon and Washington"

This article was originally posted on October 31, 2015 and then updated on November 2, 2015 on Oregon Live's website (Appendix 19). The article began by repeating what health officials stated earlier where "*22 people have been sickened with E. Coli bacteria linked to six Chipotle Mexican Grill restaurants*" (Appendix 19, Lines 4-5). This statement continued by stating that individuals had been sent to the hospital. This could lead readers to interpret the incident as serious. In addition, this article included a quote from the Oregon Health Authority, which we believe also lead readers to interpret as certainty as the information was relayed from authorities (Appendix 19, Lines 17-19).

Readers might interpret doubt from this article as it noted, *"The number of affected people 'is more likely more than identified' because no everyone seeks medical help after becoming ill"* (Appendix 19, Lines 17-19). The article also stated that Chipotle posted a note on the doors at the Oregon location when it was closed due to supply chain issues and that employees were seen inside working (Note: this is not the BRB note referred to on p. 64). When ending the article, the journalist ensured that readers were aware of the symptoms of E. Coli and gave advice to visit the Oregon Health Authorities' website if there was concern regarding food-borne illnesses. The main focus in this article was not on Chipotle as a company, but the content was focused on E. Coli.

Due to the latter, we believe that the comments on this news article were more focused on E. Coli and Norovirus as a topic, than focused on Chipotle. For example, "*mmmm, mmmm, mmmm love those e coli burritos!*" (Appendix 22, 2), "*8 of us got norovirus at a local Pizza Restaurant. County*

said it probably came from the men's bathroom of the salad bar. The place was crowded with a lot of people. It had similar symptoms to ecoli and lasted 4-5 days, horrible!!" (Appendix 22, 2) and *"There are long-term effects of having serious food borne illness.."* (Appendix 22, 2). One stakeholder opted to comment by shifting the blame from Chipotle to food safety as a larger issue by stating,

> *"this can happen to any food service operator at anytime with the labor force as it is today. Dinning out is an 'at risk' activity today. No health inspector or any amount of washing the hands will guarantee the guest of any food risk. Food Chain supplies are sometimes affected so there are multitude of reasons this can happen. Honestly, I see better food handling in local and corporate chains than single independents. Chains have strict policies that are enforced because they have ore to lose if they have an outbreak of any kind. Eat out at your own risk."* (Appendix 22, 2)

Even though, Norovirus and E. Coli were the main focus, the article mentioned Chipotle as being the center of the incident multiple times e.g., *"Chipotle managers told state officials"* (Appendix 19, Line 28), *"on Saturday, the Chipotle at…"* (Appendix 19, Line 33) and *"E. Coli bacteria linked to six Chipotle Mexican Grill.."* (Appendix 19, Lines 4-5). Other stakeholders continued to comment food safety as a topic by stating e.g., *"this is the problem with 'single source' chains, they can spread contaminated food far and wide. This also demonstrates that the problem didn't originate at the individual restaurants, so they should be closing all outlets serviced by the same source"* (Appendix 22, 2). We believe this could be because these individuals seemed to have participated in food safety conversations before, whether it was watching information on TV, reading an article or knowing someone who was affected by a food borne illness at another food chain, due to the length and knowledge that they shared while commenting on this particular article.

Overall, we believe this article had the potential to start an online firestorm directed at Chipotle but individuals who responded to the article refrained and focused on the topic of food safety as a whole.

Third article, NBC- December 4 2015:

"Chipotle Vows to Tighten Food Safety Standards in wake of E. Coli Cases"

Written by the associated press of NBC, this article was published on December 4, 2015, three days after the press release called *"Chipotle commits to become industry leader in food safety"* (Fourth press release, Appendix 8) was published. This article talked about what Chipotle was promising to its stakeholders by using present and future tense *"Chipotle says it is tightening"*

(Appendix 20, Line 5), "*said it hired*" (Appendix 20, Line 7) and "*the new procedures will include*" (Appendix 20, Line 11). When reading this article, it mentioned Chipotle hiring a firm to help with the "additional" cases that had been reported (Appendix 20, Line 7-9). We believe this could be interpreted by some stakeholders that the crisis was uncontrollable leading to believe that there were constantly new incidents of food safety outbreaks occurring nationwide from Chipotle on top of the original E. Coli incident beginning in August, 2015.
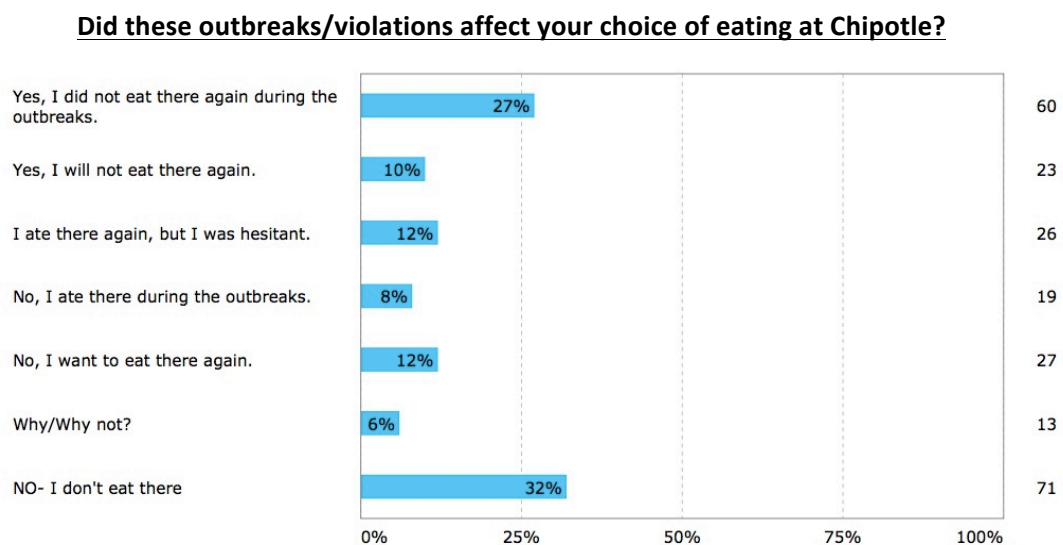
From the comments that were posted on this article, it could be understood that stakeholders who commented interpreted this article as Chipotle did not know how to manage food safety. One stakeholder suggested, "*Here's an idea Chipotle employees: WASH YOUR DAMN HANDS!*" (Appendix 22, 3). We believe that the stakeholder responded to this article possibly because at this time during the on-going crisis, there was no answers as to where the outbreak had originated, which could have possibly created uncertainty, as the article stated, "*The ingredient responsible for the illnesses has not yet been determined*" (Appendix 20, Line 32). This sentence could indicate that up until now Chipotle had not been able to connect the origin of the outbreak to an ingredient. When those affected did not have a person or a company to blame, some stakeholders could be in search for someone or something to blame. In this case, a stakeholder chose Chipotle to blame by stating, "*Good idea but bad timing. The safety standards should have been in place before people became ill*" (Appendix 22, 3).

Since the content of the article was a general summary of what the press release (Fourth press release, Appendix 8) had stated, some individuals who commented on the article might have felt that they should give suggestions to Chipotle. One said, "*But one knows that ecoli lives a long time on fresh vegetables an in uncooked meet. Wash and cook your food if you are unsure of the origin. Heat kills bacteria*" (Appendix 22, 3). Regardless of the article mentioned that Chipotle hired IEH Laboratories to help improve its food safety, some stakeholders felt the need to share their opinions e.g.,

"*start by training the staff on proper food handling. You can't get some cheese, scratch your head and then go for the lettuce with the same pair of gloves (if your server happened to use them). On another visit, a different person was putting their gloved hands on their jeans at their butt area and then using the same gloves to put the toppings on the burrito. In both cases, my wife asked them to change gloves and they acted annoyed.*" (Appendix 22, 3)

The comment above could lead the reader to believe that not only had Chipotle had food safety concerns the past few months, but that it had been an ongoing issue that some stakeholders

had noted, and this could potentially change some stakeholders' opinions of Chipotle. Furthermore, we asked in the conducted survey for this thesis, if the outbreaks affected the respondents' choice of eating at Chipotle (Appendix 3). The graph below shows that eight percent ate at Chipotle during the outbreaks, and in addition 12 percent would like to return. This shows us that some people are still willing to eat at Chipotle despite food safety issues. Also, the graph shows that 27 percent responded by selecting "*Yes, I did not eat there again during the outbreaks*" (Appendix 3). We believe that these 27 percent may return to Chipotle after the crisis and after the brand image has been restored.

Did these outbreaks/violations affect your choice of eating at Chipotle?

Response	Percent	Count
Yes, I did not eat there again during the outbreaks.	27%	60
Yes, I will not eat there again.	10%	23
I ate there again, but I was hesitant.	12%	26
No, I ate there during the outbreaks.	8%	19
No, I want to eat there again.	12%	27
Why/Why not?	6%	13
NO- I don't eat there	32%	71

(Appendix 3)

Overall, this article summarized what was published in the press release (Fourth press release, Appendix 8), while changing some of the words to fit the news article, e.g. 'commits' to 'vowed', which we believe is the news channel wanting readers to interpret that Chipotle had promised to ensure healthier food for its stakeholders.

Fourth article, NPR- February 1, 2016:

"E. Coli Outbreaks at Chipotle Restaurants 'Appear To Be Over' CDC says"

This article, written by Merrit Kennedy of NPR, was posted on February 8, 2016. The cover photo for this article was a picture of the inside of a Chipotle location in Seattle with a customer that was being served. To summarize this article, Kennedy discussed what information the CDC had released concerning the crisis and discussed what other information regarding the crisis had been released on NPR previously. Specifically mentioning how the "*outbreaks have challenged the*

country's image of serving, fresh, healthful 'food with integrity.' It's also hurt sales" (Appendix 21, Lines 25-26). Kennedy also mentioned that, *"the bad publicity has taken a toll on the bottom line at the company, which has warned that its sales fell in the last quarter"* (Appendix 21, Lines 27-28). This article ended by citing that, "*the company has vowed to implement a new plan to establish itself as an 'industry leader in food safety'"* (Appendix 21, Lines 33-34). By ending the article mentioning Chipotle's motto, "*Food with Integrity*" could be interpreted as NPR showing stakeholders that although the motto promised reliable food, Chipotle has had to re-promise its original goal due to the ongoing crisis.

From the beginning of this article, stakeholders may interpret through the title that although the CDC was an authoritative figure regarding food safety, that nonetheless it was not confident in its testing as it cannot confirm or deny that the E. Coli came from Chipotle. We believe this was confirmed in a stakeholder's comment when stating "*the 'investigation' found nothing"* (Appendix 22, 4). When the person quoted the word investigation, this could be a way of questioning Chipotle and the CDC for their efforts to solve the crisis. Also by stating that the investigation was unsuccessful could create uncertainty for stakeholders.

When considering the other comments connected to this article, one person said that the outbreaks were over "*because people have stopped eating there*" (Appendix 22, 4). Responding to this comment, another stakeholder replied, "*the line at my neighborhood store has stayed relatively long. However, I have noticed fewer diners eating inside. I'll wait another month or so. I do miss the loaded chicken tacos*" (Appendix 22, 4). We believe that some stakeholders at this point in February 2016 still questioned whether or not to return to Chipotle, even though the CDC confirmed that the outbreak was over but without promising this 100 percent. Another comment from a stakeholder voiced his/her concern by stating,

"*I hope they're trying to trace the infection. E. Coli isn't spoilage bacteria – it lives in an on animals and contaminates food in processing. Somewhere out there one of Chipotle's [hopefully former] suppliers may still be processing food and sending to unwitting restaurants. The norovirus outbreaks, however, are 100% Chipotle's fault. That's a matter of basic sanitation and decent employee treatment*" (Appendix 22, 4)

At the end of this article, Kennedy included that Chipotle 'vowed' to take corrective action to better its food safety. This statement made on NPR could have lead this stakeholder to voice his/her opinion on how Chipotle had not done or accomplished its 'vowed' statements. A stakeholder commented on how Chipotle vowed to better itself as an industry leader saying, "*Well*

yes, unless they have the absolute worst PR firm/people on hand, one would presume this would be a next step" (Appendix 22, 4). This comment could be interpreted as he/she questioned Chipotle for its efforts to better its food safety standards. This goes to show that although Chipotle had promised to better its food safety, some stakeholders may still be upset with Chipotle from the beginning as the company did not stick by its motto. In addition to this, results from the survey conducted for this thesis showed that 10 percent of respondents do not want to eat Chipotle again after the food safety violations had occurred (Appendix 3).

5.3.2   Media Coverage of Domino's

First Video, April 15, 2009:
"Dirty Dirty Dominos pizza"

The first video was called "Dirty Dirty Dominos pizza" and the video stemmed from a news segment on WCNC, Charlotte (North Carolina), this channel is a NBC news affiliate. The news segment was about Domino's food violation crisis, but the main focus was about the two employees, especially the female employee, Kristy Hammonds, as the news found out that she was a registered sex offender. The news anchor questioned why Domino's would hire Kristy in the first place by stating, *"We asked this Domino's why they would hire Kristy with her record – the cooperate response; local franchise owners are responsible for hiring. The local answer? Well, we never got one."* (Appendix 23, Lines 18-20). We believe that this statement could put Domino's in a negative position as the news portrayed Domino's as a company that did not want to answer and maybe even as a company that did not want to take responsibility. The answer from Domino's stating, "*local franchise owners are responsible for hiring"* (Appendix 23, Lines 19-20), could be interpret as Domino's was in denial where the company tried to shift the blame. Stakeholders could also interpret the fact that the news never received an answer from the franchise in North Carolina as it simply did not care. We believe that the news and media have the power to portray a given company or person in the way they find most interesting in order to produce the most interesting news, which we argue is also an important aspect here. In relation to the language used by the news media, it could had omitted some details from the cooperate response using the statement to its own advantage. However, we argue that some stakeholders would not take that into account and thereby interpret the news media's statement as the truth.

The news segment ended with a statement from the news anchor stating, *"Of course we know that their take, the people in the video, said well this was all a joke and they say they never served the food. However, police tell me that the video was the overwhelming evidence that is*

leading to this charge." (Appendix 23, Lines 26-28). We argue that this statement set up the two employees against the police, which to many people are an authority. This could create a power distance between the two parts, and because the police generally are seen as authority, some people might be more willing to believe this statement. As stated earlier, the content of the segment focused on the two employees and the only time Domino's was mentioned as a company was in lines 18-20 (Appendix 23).

Looking through the comments of the video, we find a pattern; comments from people that thought positively about Domino's, people who did not like Domino's and people who did not like the prank video, but did not mention Domino's. The first selected comment was posted on May 4, 2016 and stated "*I still love Dominos …*" (Appendix 25, 1). Another person questioned the focus of the news segment by stating, "*How is it relevant to the vandalism of the pizza that the woman is a sex offender lol.*" (Appendix 25, 1). This comment was posted on April 20, 2016. Below this comment, another person commented on May 12, 2016 stating, "*it reflects the fact that there existed prior knowledge indicating this woman is a scumbag, degenerate, unchanging cancer on society*" (Appendix 25, 1). This person clearly thought that the woman should have never been hired in the first place, which could effect the person's perception of Domino's as he might have felt that the company had a poor judgment.

The third comment was posted in February, 2016 and stated, "*Eeww I just ordered dominos (feeling-sick smiley)*" (Appendix 25, 1). This person was probably used to order Domino's and after he/she had seen the video, the person posted "eeww", which to us indicates disgust and this could alter the person's perspective to re-think his/her purchase decision next time the person is ordering food from Domino's. Even though the video is seven years old, this person watched it in February 2016 ago and was still affected by it.

The last selected comment was posted in November, 2015 and it stated, "*The sad thing is that Domino's pizza is so bad that the tainted pizzas were probably an improvement. Domino's pizza is shit. Delivered shit is still shit. And shit with a coupon is still shit*" (Appendix 25, 1). This person did not like Domino's, and we argue that the person did not like Domino's before he saw the video – the video did not alter his perception of the company, but his perception might have had the potential to alter other readers' perceptions.

Second Video, April 17, 2009:
"Dominos Pizza on the Today Show - Workers fired for Dominos prank video"

This news segment originally stemmed from the Today Show, a show on NBC news, and was uploaded on YouTube on April 17, 2009. The video began by stating that there was a crisis in

relations to Domino's that involved a "sickening" (Appendix 24) video that was posted online by two of the company's employees that "*claim it was all a harmless prank but now they are out of work, and facing criminal charges.*" (Appendix 24, Line 2). The news anchor continued by warning viewers that the video might be "*a little distasteful.*" (Appendix 24, Line 3). We believe that the choice of words could lead viewers to have an opinion about the situation before they even saw the clips from the video by warning them that it was unpleasant.

Throughout the segment, it showed small clips from the original video with the two employees that produced the video. The news mentioned that these employees were in trouble with the "food police" for posting this video online (Appendix 24, Lines 8-9), and later stated a quote from Domino's corporate, "*anyone with a camera and Internet link can cause a lot of damage*" (Appendix 24, Lines 16-17). The news anchor gave a detailed description of what was happening in the video made by the two employees, and repeated the individuals' statements that "*they insist that none of the food in question was ever served to customers*" (Appendix 24, Lines 18-19).

Next, the news anchor interviewed the franchise manager of the Conover location (in North Carolina) where the manager called the two employees "*idiots*" (Appendix 24, Line 23). Some stakeholders could perceive this linguistic selection negatively as the term "idiot" is defined as a stupid person and a person of low intelligence (Oxford Dictionaries, n.d.). After this, the news anchor shifted the conversation and brought up past examples of employees violating food safety code in other fast food restaurants, then shifting back to how the one of the employees emailed an apology to Domino's. By stating this, some viewers could believe that Domino's was not at fault for the two employees' actions, as the video never shifted the blame to Domino's corporate for the repugnant videos made by the employees.

When looking at the comments that had been posted on this uploaded news video segment, there were 554 comments posted in total. Although the crisis took place in 2009, the most recent comment was published in May 2016. To us, this could show that even though the crisis had passed, social media can prolong the life of events or even a given crisis due to online conversations. In November 2015, one stakeholder posted,

"*Profoundly and inexplicably stupid. How they could think – even for a minute that contaminating a customer's food is "funny", is beyond explanation. Hopefully, they will never work in a restaurant again. Given their aberrant sense of humor and behavior, they are more suited to be cops*" (Appendix 25, 2)

Regardless of this crisis being seven years old, this person comments as if it happened yesterday. This could show that although information and comments about crises that had been shared through eWoM, no comments and posts disappear permanently.

Although most of the comments of this video used negative language, one person posted, "*I don't see anything wrong with it. The health department are Nazis and the owners only care about profits and public image. I guarantee NO ONE would have gotten sick from this stunt. The only thing they're guilty of is a poor taste/sense of humor and that's only my opinion.*" (Appendix 25, 2). We believe this comment showed the small percentage of people who did not take food safety seriously as according to the survey conducted for this thesis, findings showed that three percent of respondents did not find food safety important (Appendix 3).

Other comments where made on this video from people who used negative language e.g., "*that's disgusting. I order from Domino's :(*" (Appendix 25, 2*), "yeah I saw this when I was like 9 and ever since I haven't ate there*" (Appendix 25, 2), "*Dominos taste like shit anyways. He's just adding more flavor*" (Appendix 25, 2). These comments could be influenced by individuals' pre-crisis perspectives.

The latest comment was posted on May 13, 2016 meaning that this video has continued to travel due to eWoM, which we believe could both remind people of the crisis or inform them of the incident from 2009. Regardless of the video, reminding individuals or informing them and having the crisis online on a social media platform could give the opportunity for a discussion that could be end up with potential for becoming an online firestorm which companies today should take in account for when enduring a crisis.

5.3.3   Summary of Chipotle and Domino's Media Coverage

Since we have chosen to analyze four written articles in regards to Chipotle and two news segment videos on YouTube in relation to Domino's, this could a difference in itself. Despite this difference, we saw almost the same pattern in the comments for both Chipotle and Domino's – the comments were a mix of people that blamed the companies, people that talked about facts (e.g. Norovirus) and a small group of people that remained positive about each company – but the tendency of the comments were negative sentiments.

Even though the media channels are different, we argue that both of the channels belong to the genre of news where the context is to inform people. In addition to informing people, we believe that news also has the potential of effecting some peoples' perception of a given brand and their brand loyalty depending on the linguistic selection.

The comments from the two news segments also showed us that even though Domino's crisis happened in 2009, some people still find, watch and then comment on the segments. To us, this shows the impact that social media can have on a given company's crisis and reputation. Once it is out on the Internet, it can be hard to control and remove. The same tendency applies to the food violation (the prank) video made by the two Domino's employees. Even though the video was removed three days after it was published on YouTube, seven years later, it is still easy to find copies of the original video.

6.   Conclusion

As mentioned in the introduction, due to the constant advancement of technology, companies should remain aware in regards to their reputation and respond with social media when a crisis emerges as a public relations tactic (Ott and Theunissen 2015, 97). In 2009, Domino's was exposed to a crisis involving social media and later, in 2015/2016, a crisis emerged for Chipotle. This thesis has examined each company's crisis communication, brand image and use of social media, when seeking to answer the following problem statement;

How did Chipotle Mexican Grill and Domino's Pizza choose to manage and respond to their given crises and how have the Internet and social media platforms affected the progression of the companies' crisis communication strategies? Furthermore, we also wonder to what effect each of the crises affected stakeholders' perceived image of the companies and their individual brands.

Social media has evolved since Domino's single-event crisis occurred seven years prior to Chipotle's ongoing crisis in 2015/2016. Along with the evolvement, the use of social media has developed over the past seven years for both stakeholders and companies. Since both Chipotle and Domino's were exposed to incidents, which placed them at the third step of Massey's image management model, each company was in need to regain its image. When regaining its image, the use of social media played a crucial role. Most stakeholders are informed of crises, such as Chipotle's, through its choice of social media platforms and by the use of the Internet. With this, social media has altered to become a fundamental point of communication for companies to communicate with its stakeholders today in 2016, and if ignored could lead to worsen that company's image further than repair. If a company chooses to ignore social media during a crisis, we believe it could lead to an online firestorm through an abundance of negative eWoM communication.

Focusing on the use of social media, Chipotle's chose to use social media as a platform to communicate with stakeholders. This gave the company the ability to communicate with its stakeholders and respond to their worries, negative opinions and questions about the company and the crisis. Domino's on the other hand, at the time of its crisis, utilized Facebook to communicate with stakeholders but not to the same volume as Chipotle. We believe this is due to the different use of social media in 2009. Regardless of Domino's crisis being in 2009, the comments from stakeholders are still posted today. Because of this, we argue that once a crisis is posted online, it is on the Internet until the user chooses to delete it and even then, a given company or person cannot be clear of the attention online. This is seen in Domino's case – even though the original video was removed three days after it was published, copies of the video can still be found today.

Because Domino's crisis was a single event that took place, the overall communication was much faster than Chipotles. Chipotle waited approximately two months to publish a press release to its stakeholders, which we believe gave time for individuals to create their own opinions about the crisis. These opinions were most likely posted on a social media platform, which could create potential for the organizations image to be affected as Twitter is used for conversation regarding all topics. Overall, Domino's regained its image in due time through its crisis communication strategies. Domino's utilized both Coombs and Benoit's strategies, some of which, are interchangeable. Because Domino's was in the **victim cluster** where there is weak attribution of crisis responsibility, the company was not to blame for the crisis as it was a rumor where information caused harm on the company. While using Benoit's strategies, Domino's used **denial** and the sub-strategy of <u>shifting the blame</u> onto the two employees who caused the crisis. Domino's also used **reducing offensiveness** with the sub-strategy of <u>bolstering</u> by informing stakeholders of its positive past efforts and **mortification** by apologizing to its stakeholders. When using Coombs strategies, Domino's used **denial** with the sub-strategy of <u>scapegoating</u>, **bolstering** with the sub category of <u>reminding</u> its stakeholders what it had done in the past. Lastly, to rebuild its image, Domino's <u>apologized</u>, with the **rebuilding posture** as a strategy, for what had happened to its stakeholders. Through Domino's crisis communication strategies, with aid from social media, we believe that it regained its image and moved back up to maintaining its image according to Massey.

For Chipotle, its crisis was ongoing and could be categorized as **intentional/preventable cluster** according to Coombs, where there are strong attributions of crisis responsibility as the two outbreaks of Norovirus were <u>human error by employees</u> working while sick and the multiple outbreaks of E. Coli were <u>product harm</u> that caused the company to undergo health investigations and close locations as suggested by the CDC. Also, the ongoing crisis could be labeled as

<u>organizational misdeed</u> as stakeholders were put at risk by the company, which resulted in hundreds of individuals becoming sick from its products.

As mentioned earlier, Chipotle responded quite slowly to the crisis, which Coombs highly suggests against. Once responding through press releases, Chipotle included three of Coombs strategies to regain its image. At the beginning of the crisis, Chipotle used the strategy of **defeasibility** due to a lack of knowledge surrounding the outbreaks at that time. Later, Chipotle moved into the **rebuilding posture** where Chipotle did <u>apologize</u> to its stakeholders along with **bolstering** its image to <u>remind</u> stakeholders of the importance of food safety to its brand. "*Food with Integrity*" being Chipotle's motto, and how stakeholders perceive the brand, did not help its food safety crisis since the company advertises food reliability. Because of this, Chipotle continued to use **bolstering** as a strategy, along with Benoit's **corrective action** strategy by informing its stakeholders what was occurring to ensure better food safety. Lastly, Chipotle used **mortification** in attempt to regain its image by apologizing through both press releases and social media statements.

Today, Chipotle is still in a state of regaining its image, as stakeholders are still hesitant to return. Individuals find food safety to be a very important issue, and when a company is in a crisis like Chipotle's, some stakeholders choose to refrain from eating at these restaurants. On the other hand, some stakeholders have high loyalty to the brand and regardless of food safety being an important issue, they choose to return to the restaurant because of their loyalty. Overall, Domino's stakeholder's loyalty differed from Chipotle's. Some of Chipotle's stakeholders were very insistent about returning to Chipotle, and even during the outbreaks wanted to eat there. Although some stakeholders were persistent about returning, its sales fell during that quarter. Throughout Chipotle's crisis communication strategies, the company continued to interact with its stakeholders, which positively influenced its communication.

Overall, since Domino's crisis took place in 2009, its overall image has been regained today through its crisis communication strategies, the use of social media and maybe even due to time passing. Chipotle, on the other hand, is still working towards regaining its image. Each company used similar strategies when regaining their images, but the major difference that sets the success of the two crises apart is the type of crisis clusters of each company. Domino's was a victim to its crisis and Chipotle's crisis was preventable. Because of Chipotle's crisis being preventable, the damage may be more influential to the process of it regaining its image, where Domino's crisis was one single-event crisis and Chipotle was several incidents creating a long ongoing crisis. For the use of social media, Domino's crisis stemmed from a social media platform, as the two employees who caused the crisis, uploaded the video to YouTube and from there, through eWoM, spread the video which turned into crisis. We believe it was a successful choice that Domino's decided to use social media to help aid its

crisis communication, as this was the center of the crisis. For Chipotle, eWoM helped aid stakeholders to be informed of the crisis and also gave Chipotle the opportunity to respond to its stakeholders to facilitate its image repair by providing transparency.

To conclude upon the significance of crisis communication and social media, we say that eWoM makes crisis communication involving social media unpredictable. It is impossible to say whether Chipotle's crisis will ever reach a true conclusion, or if its ongoing crisis will merely lead the company to failure. Social media and eWoM constitute both an opportunity and a challenge for companies today as Siah et al. (2010) refer to as the double-edged sword.

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